

## ■ Upcoming

### March 22

*Art to Mail — Make Your Own Quilted Postcards with Paula Golden*  
Blacksburg Museum & Cultural Foundation,  
204 Draper Rd. • 3-4:30 p.m. and 5:30-7 p.m.

Participants will create a small "art" quilt suitable for mailing, framing, or hanging. All supplies will be provided for this 90-minute workshop. You will learn how to design using pre-printed fabrics, how to use fusible adhesive, and what the U.S. Postal Service regulations are if you'd like to mail these small treasures to a friend. The cost is \$20 per person. Reserve your spot and purchase tickets at <http://blacksburgmuseum.org/events/>.

### March 25 and April 8

*Figure Drawing*  
The Artful Lawyer, A Fine Gallery, Inc., 318 N. Main Street, Blacksburg • 6-8 p.m.

Figure drawing is currently held every other Sunday. A \$10 fee with registration due is on Friday before each session. To register, visit <http://artfullawyergallery.org/events> or call 540-443-9350, ext. 707.

### April 2

*Influences of Africa*  
Center for the Arts, Floyd • 11 a.m.

Internationally renowned textile artist Hollis Chatelain will discuss how living in West Africa for 12 years influenced her work, which is marked by dreamlike imagery, elaborate use of color and intricate thread detail. For more information, contact Paula Golden at [paulacgolden@comcast.net](mailto:paulacgolden@comcast.net).

### April 3

*Artist Journey of Hollis Chatelain*   
St. Michael's Lutheran Church • 7 p.m.

The journey of an artist is full of twists and turns. Techniques and styles change through inspiration, influence, and experience. Internationally renowned textile artist Hollis Chatelain will be speaking about this process, showing images portraying the evolution of various well-known artists, and explaining how and why their art has evolved over the years. There is a \$5 fee for this presentation. For more information, contact [paulacgolden@comcast.net](mailto:paulacgolden@comcast.net).

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## Larry Bechtel brings clay to life

by Gerri Young

Larry Bechtel is a man of many facets. Perhaps best known as a sculptor, I was surprised to know he has spent time as a boat builder, author, English teacher, recycling expert and a very creative trash collector.

I knew many things had been written about this talented man and I found it a bit intimidating to tackle another story. I could not recall an article covering his creative and personal space, so, after struggling to get started, I settled on writing this partly first person narrative partly about the place where the magic happens.

On my visit to the Blacksburg home he shares with his wife, Ann, and cocker spaniel, Sabine, it was obvious this is the home of artistic people. Their small cottage of some age is located off Airport Road. Inside, bright colors cover the walls. Interesting art objects line the shelves. Healthy houseplants bring the outdoors in while their yard and garden will soon spill forth for spring. The home speaks of long-term occupation and making the best of compact spaces. The biggest spice rack I have ever seen is built into the stairwell wall leading to the basement. Tall Larry assures short me I will fit nicely in the low-ceilinged space.

Ann sat at the high kitchen table working on a computer art program. Sabine waddled her soft chocolate-colored butt in greeting and submitted to all scratches, finally settling on top of the couch like a fuzzy blanket tossed there. Photographer Teri Hoover and myself are dog lovers, so indulging Sabine was easy.



Larry Bechtel's daughter, Haley Jane, created this spot-on portrait of her father.

Teri H. Hoover Photography

As we headed to the basement to see the center of Larry's indoor sculpting world — his outdoor studio off limits on a cold, blustery day — he said we would go through the laundry to get to the sculpting area. We barely see the laundry as we are immediately taken by a row of two-foot-tall sculpted busts standing in front of us. They are of historic people like former slave Isaac Granger Jefferson, whom he sculpted not once, but twice; first from an 1840's daguerreotype of the subject in his late 60's and later from Larry's extrapolated and imagined mental image of him at about 18. Jefferson, the slave, is featured in Larry's in-progress historic novel. Other sculptures of note are Frederick Douglass; Rachel Bringhouse, the daughter of the tinsmith to whom Isaac is apprenticed; and Thomas Jefferson in retirement.

After recovering from the shock of this museum-worthy exhibit surrounded by the usual trappings of a basement, we enter the compact, organized workspace where so much of Larry's genius is created.

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■ **Upcoming** *continued from page 1*

**April 6**

*Christy Mackie Reception*

*Alexander Black House, Blacksburg • 5-7 p.m.*

Stop by this opening reception during Art Walk night in downtown Blacksburg. Christy Mackie's exhibit, *Explorations*, will be on display through May 5.

**April 13 and May 11**

*BRAA Monthly Lunch and Art Spot*

*Bull and Bones, First and Main, Blacksburg • 11:30 a.m.*

Join your fellow members for lunch, hear the featured speaker's Art Spot, and share news about the latest art happenings. In April, Martha Olson will talk about creating paper art.

**May 9**

*Whet Your Palette: Drawing and Sculpture Opening Exhibit*

*The Artful Lawyer, A Fine Gallery, Inc., 318 N. Main Street, Blacksburg • 5:30-8:30 p.m.*

This show features drawings (dry medium such as pen and ink, pen, charcoal, etc.) and sculpture. Works will be exhibited until July 25.

**May 10-13**

*Backyard Stone Carvers Spring Workshop*  
*Newport Community Center, Newport*

New carvers are welcomed to join experienced carvers for this event that starts on Thursday afternoon and continues until 5 p.m. on Sunday. The fee is \$50. For more information, contact Linda Correll at [lcorrell83@gmail.com](mailto:lcorrell83@gmail.com) or call 540-599-7376.

**May 25-27**

*Working in a Series*  
*Warm Hearth Village Center, Blacksburg*

Popular instructor Danie Janov will be sharing her expertise of creating works in series in this three-day workshop. For more information, contact Charloty Chan at [charlottechan@gmail.com](mailto:charlottechan@gmail.com).

**June 2-3**

*Sidewalk Art Show*  
*Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke*

This annual show attracts thousands to the downtown streets of Roanoke near the Taubman, and has featured original fine art since 1958.

**June 12**

*Opening Reception, Mary Draper Ingles Exhibit*

*Glencoe Museum, 600 Unruh Dr., Radford*

As part of the Mary Draper Ingles festival, this exhibit features work by plein air artists who will paint at the Ingles farm, the Ingles tavern and ferry, or the Ingles statue. The exhibit will run through August 3.

**Bechtel** *continued from page 1*

I see a small figure in progress on a tall pedestal. It is a leaping, nude female held in place by a metal armature. Around her are small pieces of soft, gray Plastilena clay. Larry hands me one of the pieces to play with and I am immediately taken back to the late 1980's when I studied with a marvelous sculptor in residence at Norfolk's Old Dominion University, Rita Marlier. I loved studying with her so being in Larry's place excited me. I forgot I was supposed to be interviewing toward writing a feature story and just kept asking how and why questions. My eyes wanted to take it all in instantly. My fingers kept playing with the clay.

On a nearby shelf are many figures about a foot tall. They make up a complete nativity scene commissioned by the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church and featured in a recent Roanoke Times article. "It took me six months to consider this request," recalled Larry. "I thought there would be no way of getting beyond the cliché and convention with it." It takes only a minute to see the figures are unique and different from those on many Christmas mantels in America.

What makes them more special is that Larry, the author, created imaginary lives for each character. In his writing, the innkeeper's wife tends "the only decent inn in Bethlehem, which included a grog shop, The Frothy Mug ... she knew herbs, and even some casting-out spells, it was said." The full story of all the characters can be read on his website.

His sculpting often intertwines with his writing. High above his large, clean worktable is a schematic of sorts, a guide to his second novel entitled *Angels Shall Not Keep Me*. The slave he sculpted earlier — Isaac Granger Jefferson — is the protagonist in this book. "I feel like a little boat plowing through the waves with this book," Larry commented, because it is taking so long.

On his website is a marvelous portrait painted by his daughter, Haley Jane, obviously gifted with her own creative genes. The original canvas stands at the end of the clay workshop and Larry proudly poses with it for a photo, his smiling real face clearly echoing the image in paint.



*Larry Bechtel pauses among his sculptures of historical figures.*

Teri H. Hoover Photography



Teri H. Hoover Photography

Larry's journey to clay sculpting started in his childhood in the Chicago area where he learned woodcarving from his grandfather. Once leaving home, he travelled to Texas and Oregon and had his first boat building experience. Later, in the northeast where "boat building is an art," he worked building aluminum fishing boats in Maine and got married for the first time.

By 1979, he was in Virginia working with his carpenter father-in-law building and renovating houses. Next came graduate school at Virginia Tech, adding to his bachelors from Wheaton College outside Chicago. From 1985 to 1991, he worked for Virginia Tech teaching English and later ran their recycling program and trash collecting. In 1990, he divorced and struggled with the ramifications of that life event. Remarrying in 1990, their combined three children attended the Blacksburg New School where he became a storyteller, another manifestation of his writing self.



photo by Raf Bedia

## All about watercolor pencils

Several BRAA members attended Robin Poteet's recent workshop with beautiful results! The March 7-9 class in Christiansburg was sponsored by Montgomery Museum. BRAA participants included **Raf Bedia, Kirk Carter, Jean Galloway, Gene Gourley, Teri Hoover, Betty Moore, Nancy Norton, Linda Olin, Doreen Roberts, Marvi Stine, and Gerri Young.**

## VMFA high school workshops set for April 5-6

**Betty Moore**, BRAA's high school workshop coordinator, has made arrangements for the 2018 workshops. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond is providing artist Kendra Wadsworth to teach all day abstract mixed media workshops at the high schools in Blacksburg and Christiansburg.

Wadsworth is quite well prepared for this task with these credentials: University of Pennsylvania, MFA, Painting, Philadelphia, 1998; Virginia Commonwealth University, BFA, Painting and Printmaking, Richmond, 1996; and University of Plymouth, International Student Exchange Program, Exeter, England, 1995.



Workshop dates are Thursday, April 5, at Blacksburg and Friday, April 6, at Christiansburg.

## Exhibit and other opportunities

### **Laughter is the Best Medicine**

**April 25 – July 13, 2018**

**Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, Roanoke**

The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine is inviting artists to participate in this spring 2018 art exhibition which will celebrate laughter, humor, and joie de vivre. The application deadline is 5:00 p.m. on **March 21**. The opening reception will be Wednesday, April 25, 5-7 p.m. Artists interested in participating should email Carrie Knopf at [cfknopf@carilionclinic.org](mailto:cfknopf@carilionclinic.org) for an application.

### **Plein Air Event: Mary Draper Ingles Exhibit**

**April 2018**

**Various Sites in Radford**

The Long Way Home, Inc., The Mary Draper Ingles Festival, and the Radford Heritage Foundation are sponsoring a plein air exhibit from June 12 – August 3 at the Glencoe Mansion, Museum and Gallery. During the month of April, participating artists will visit and paint at the Ingles farm, the Ingles tavern and ferry, or the Ingles statue.

The exhibit opening reception is June 12 and works will be displayed through August 3. The entry fee is \$20 and the deadline is **March 23**. Drop off of finished works will be June 5 and 6 at the Glencoe

Mansion. A 30% commission will be charged for sales of paintings.

For more information, contact Ruth Lefko at [rlefk02@gmail.com](mailto:rlefk02@gmail.com) or 540-449-1328.

### **Simply Elemental**

**Hahn Horticulture Garden, Virginia Tech**

Proposals are now being accepted for this annual outdoor art exhibit that is integrated along the paths, plantings and trees of the horticulture garden. Deadline for proposals is **April 2**. The opening reception will be August 5 and works will be on display August 1 – September 30, 2018.

For more information, visit [www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/elemental/index.html](http://www.hort.vt.edu/hhg/elemental/index.html).

### **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Bower Center National Juried Exhibition**

**May 22 – June 30, 2018**

**Bower Center for the Arts, Bedford**

All artists over the age of 18 are invited to enter up to three works for this show. The event offers more than \$1500 in awards to be presented at the reception on June 8. Entry fee is \$30 and the deadline is **April 4**. For more information, visit <https://www.bowercenter.org/>.

### **Art Across Generations**

**Various Community Venues**

This event is an AARP Blacksburg initiative

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## Now Showing

**January 15 – April 15**

(except where indicated otherwise)

**Raf Bedia**, Long and Foster, Blacksburg

**Pat Bevan**, Holtzman Alumni Center, Virginia Tech Campus (thru May 13)

**Jeanette Bowker**, Mill Mountain Coffee and Tea, Blacksburg

**Diana Dougherty**, Shaheen Law Firm, Blacksburg

**Paula Golden**, Main Street Inn, Blacksburg

**Johanna Jones**, Shaheen Law Firm, Blacksburg

**Sidra Kaluszka**, Brown Insurance, Blacksburg

**Cheryl Mackian**, Zeppoli's dining room, Blacksburg

**Christy Mackie**, Alexander Black House, Blacksburg (April 6 thru May 5)

**Elina McCartney**, See Mark Optical, Blacksburg

**Larry Mitchell**, Community Arts Information Office, Blacksburg (Feb. - Mar.)

**Martha Olson**, Community Arts Information Office, Blacksburg (Feb. - Mar.)

**David Pearce**, Blue Ridge Cancer Care, Blacksburg

**Joy Rosenthal**, Blacksburg Transit

**Robi Sallee**, Virginia Tech Library System (VTLS), Blacksburg

**Michele Walter**, First Bank and Trust, Christiansburg

**Ali Wieboldt**, Troika, Floyd (thru Mar.)

**Shaun Whiteside**, Glade Church Gallery, Blacksburg

**Norma Woodward**, Virginia Tech Women's Center

**Gerri Young**, Point West Management, Blacksburg

*"I have always been fascinated by beautiful things: architecture, furniture, books. Beautiful things are prepared with love. The act of creating something of beauty is a way of bringing good into the world. Infused with optimism, it says simply: Life is worthwhile."*

~ Alan Moore

■ **Exhibit and other opportunities** *continued from page 3*

that will take place June 1 in conjunction with the downtown art walk. The theme for this inaugural program is "The Joy of Life." The program's aim is to solicit, jury, display and celebrate artworks created by multi-generational artists (such as a student and grandparent). There will be a cash prize of \$150 for first place and lesser amounts for second and third place. Submissions are due **April 15** and will be juried prior to the June 1 Art Walk. For more information, contact Peter Magolda at [magoldpm@me.com](mailto:magoldpm@me.com) or Wendy Baldwin at [wendybburg@gmail.com](mailto:wendybburg@gmail.com).

**The Artful Lawyer, A Fine Gallery Inc.**  
318 N. Main Street, Blacksburg

Applications are now being accepted for participation in the following 2018 shows.

- Drawing and Sculpture, May 9 – July 25  
Application deadline: **April 18**
- Social Commentary, August 1 – Oct. 10  
Application deadline: **July 11**
- Black and White, Oct. 17 – Dec. 19  
Application deadline: **Sept. 26**

For more information or application form, visit [artfullawyergallery.org/gallery-shows](http://artfullawyergallery.org/gallery-shows) or contact Diana Francis at [Diana@creekmorelaw.com](mailto:Diana@creekmorelaw.com), or call 540-443-9350, ext. 707.

**23rd Annual New River Valley Garden Tour**  
**Saturday, July 7, 2018**  
**Gardens throughout the New River Valley**

This event is sponsored by the New River Friends of the Library and features seven beautiful gardens. They are requesting two plein air artists per garden, so find some shade and pull up your easel and chair, and support a great community event. A potential show of works at the Montgomery Library is being considered for the fall of 2018. Contact Teri Hoover at [crystalirisphotos@gmail.com](mailto:crystalirisphotos@gmail.com) to sign up. All levels welcome; register by **May 1**.



**Arts Depot Spotlight Gallery, 2019**  
**Abingdon, Virginia**

Proposals are now being accepted for shows in the Spotlight Gallery at the Arts Depot in Abingdon. Proposals are juried in June, 2018 for the 2019 season. All media are eligible. The Spotlight gallery offers 97 running feet of wall space and 12 foot ceilings. Proposal submissions must consist of original and recent work and include 6-12 correctly oriented images. Works done in classes, copied from books, magazines or from photographs not taken by artist are not eligible. The Arts Depot will help to hang or install work, provide publicity, mail printed invitations and host an opening reception at no cost to the artist. There is a \$20 non-refundable proposal fee and the association will retain a 35% commission on works sold. The proposal deadline is noon on **June 9**. For more information and guidelines for submission, visit [www.abingdonartsdepot.org/](http://www.abingdonartsdepot.org/) and download the Call for Spotlight Gallery Proposals 2019.

**Bechtel** *continued from page 2*

During this university time in Blacksburg, Larry "got into sculpture pretty good," going from using the craft clay, Sculpey, and his kitchen oven, to becoming well-known for life-sized figures cast in bronze.

Recently, Larry was invited by the National Sculpture Society to sculpt a bust of a U.S. Marine who died in the line of duty in Iraq. He will soon travel to Nellie's Ford, Va., to meet the marine's family and learn more about him before he begins creating. The completed sculpture will then be presented to the family. He considers this project an honor.

Larry describes the beginning of his serious sculpting career as a "climactic moment." Perhaps this commemorating of the Nellie's Ford marine will be yet another moment of import for this talented man. ■

*The art featured in this month's nameplate is "Costa Rican Sunset at 8000 feet" (left, watercolor, 12 x 17") by Rafael Bedia. This and more of his work can be viewed at Long and Foster in Blacksburg through mid-April.*



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