

## ■ Art Calendar

### December 7

*Holiday Market and Winter Lights Festival  
Downtown Blacksburg • 5–8 p.m.*

Stop by the Community Arts Information Office and check out the selection of beautiful, unique gifts by BRAA artists.

### December 8

*Newport Village Christmas Market  
Newport Comm. Center • 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.*

This event features artisans, crafters, open studios, music, food, and more!

### December 9

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

The model, easels and drawing boards are provided and the cost is \$10. Reserve your spot online by the Friday before each session at <http://artfullawyergallery.org/events>.

### December 12

*Opening Reception, Lisabeth Weisband  
Holtzman Alumni Center Gallery, Virginia  
Tech • 5:30–7 p.m.*

This “Faces, Places and Spaces” exhibition features 31 acrylic and oil paintings. Works will be displayed through May.

### December 14 and January 11

*BRAA Monthly Lunch and Art Spot  
Bull and Bones, First and Main, Blacksburg •  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.*

Join your fellow members for lunch, hear the featured speaker’s Art Spot, and share news about the latest art happenings.

### January 30

*Whet Your Palette Exhibit Reception  
The Artful Lawyer, A Fine Gallery, Inc.,  
318 N. Main Street, Blacksburg • 5:30 p.m.*

The theme of this show is “Abstracts.” Exhibit will be on display until April 17.

### February 15–16

*h’ARTS on Main Festival  
Great Road on Main, 100 W. Main St., Chris-  
tiansburg*

Visit 23 booths during the day and enjoy art and music in the evening. Tickets for evening concerts are \$30 per person. For more information, contact the Montgomery Museum at 540-382-5644.

## Joni delights in the act of visual creation

by Gerri Young

A visit with artist Joni Pienkowski is a treat. Every room in her house is a feast for the eyes; every conversation fun.

This tiny 80-year-old with the lively face and perky pony tails could be your favorite neighbor or friend just based on personality. But she is oh so much more.

Joni, a long time BRAA member and nationally known artist, comes from Wisconsin. She and her (very tall) entomologist husband, Bob, moved to Blacksburg in the 1960’s so he could teach at Virginia Tech. They had “two spoons, a card table, a mattress and the artworks from my grad show from my MFA degree in Wisconsin” when they arrived. They built their Blacksburg house in 1964. Behind it stands her studio built in 1976.

Joni holds a bachelor’s degree in art education and a master’s in fine art, graphics and painting from the University of Wisconsin. She taught art at Virginia Tech and Radford University “on and off” for five years, raised three children, entertained grandchildren, traveled and created countless works of art. Her first assignment at Virginia Tech featured 45 cadets in three different rooms, struggling to do a required drawing course. “None of them wanted to be artists,” she said. “They all said ‘yes, ma’am,’ a lot! I could tell you some tales, but I won’t!”

While I have seen two of her solo exhibitions in Virginia, it is her house and studio I am most enamored with; that, and having her as my story telling tour guide. Each visit features tea and cookies. Each visit begins and ends with her irrepressible excitement for her creative life, her family and her home. Her joy in all things seems endless, her sense of humor quick and often self-deprecating.

“Sometimes I will go to my studio just to take an empty jar up there,” she laughs. “I’m in there in my PJs, in the cold, and the next thing I know I am painting. I always have 3-4

*continued on page 2*



Prominent and prolific artist Joni Pienkowski poses in her studio among her abstract and representational works.

**Joni** *continued from page 1*

pieces going at the same time. They don't have to match, but they have to relate to each other somehow. Even if I think they are finished, it is not unusual for me to go back and change them. Finally, I decide whether they are publicly hangable. Maybe they deserve that, maybe they don't."

I have seen many Joni works during my visits with her. From little pencil or ink sketches to enormous abstracts with drizzles of paint on wooden doors, broken by scribbles of colored pencil, torn papers, words written hither and yon. All of them are publicly hangable in my limited experience and opinion. This time I have the honor of seeing two of my own small acrylic pieces in her possession. They are almost embarrassingly simple and ordinary in this company.

There is no doubt this is Joni's home, but it is also her personal gallery. Every wall is covered in her art. Many pieces of furniture have been transformed by her brushes and imagination. Realism. Abstracts. "They can mostly hang either horizontal or vertical so you don't get bored with them," she says while making a funny face.

I think anyone who can get bored with a Joni work doesn't deserve to own one. I have two. They can hang whichever way.

In a small but elegant book written by Joni and compiled in 1991 by the Alleghany Highlands Arts and Crafts Center in Clifton Forge, Va., entitled "Paradox At One Elbow, Works from 1950-1990," Joni applies her artistic talents to the written word, along with her art. Her sense of humor appears throughout. A large watercolor from 1986, 38 by 51 inches, is entitled "One-eyed Popsicle Eater." It made her wonder about what kind of art she did at age 3. Today, her own grandchildren are encouraged to create and, in several places, the "popsicle" kind of art hangs taped to a wall beneath a piece worth thousands in a serious gallery. The one-eyed reference links to a story she tells me for the first time during this recent visit.

"I have worn glasses since I was a year old," she says. "I fell out of my high chair, damaging my left eye. Sometimes I had to wear patches over the right eye to make my left eye work harder. My mom tied my glasses on my head with ribbon when I was three. I decided my right eye could see everything and that was enough. Sometimes my left eye moved into different locations and mom later wanted me to get it fixed. I asked why. Mom said "because other people have to look at you!"

I had never noticed anything wrong with either of Joni's eyes, only one of which is fully functioning to this day.

We leave the house and walk to the studio. There is one tall room lit by big, high windows, one of which she painted on years ago and later regretted. Large flat files hold hundreds of works in acrylic, watercolor, pencil, whatever. Standing around the walls are painted, full-sized birch wood doors she is known for using as her canvases. Some framed pieces hang from walls.



*Joni Pienkowski's home is full of art and fascinating objects that reflect her curiosity and delightful sense of humor.*

Teri Hoover Photography

One poster of her own work is hanging upside down. Another poster showing all the official cuts of a bovine has nothing to do with Joni's talent. It was given to her because her dad was a meat cutter and it hangs there in his honor. Cows are featured in several works. A little three-legged cow stool sits under a table when not used for painting pieces on the floor.

On this visit, she digs deep into a flat file drawer and pulls out colored pencil portraits of herself wearing a bottomless teapot as a hat; bottomless because she forgot it on a stove and melted the bottom out. Both the top and bottom are still in the studio. Something in that event spurred her to create the teapot series to again poke fun at herself, much like the casserole carrier series hanging in the house.

I could go on and on if space allowed. Empty jar, melted teapot, casserole carrier. Joni's work gives me permission to break rules in art whenever I want. To put ink on top my watercolors, to do a pencil drawing of a Stabilo marker, to draw outside the box or draw the box. There are so many more stories to be told about the incredible Joni. I will not run out of excuses to visit her any time soon. I will have to find an empty jar to take there. ■

*Joni is represented by Miller off Main, Blacksburg*

**DUES**  
**time!**

Membership fees for 2019 are due on Dec. 31. To download a membership form, select the join/forms tab at <https://www.blacksburgart.org/>. Those who have joined after Oct. 1 do not have to pay another fee for the following year. If you are over the age of 80, you do not have to pay for membership, but need to submit a form to indicate your desire to stay involved and receive BRAA communications. For more information, contact Rafael Bedia at [bediari1@cox.net](mailto:bediari1@cox.net).



photos by David Pearce

Libby Calvera (left) presents a \$5000 check to Gerri Young for BRAA's assistance in making the Jordi Art Sale a success. Photographer and author John Plashal (right) presented slides and discussed buildings across the state that were the basis for his book, "A Beautifully Broken Virginia."

## Annual meeting highlights

The 2018 BRAA annual meeting was held on November 4 at the Hahn Horticulture Garden Pavilion on the Virginia Tech campus.

Libby Calvera reported the October Jordi Art Sale was a huge success with most of the 233 pieces sold. In thanks to BRAA and Gerri Young for assistance in preparing and conducting the event, she presented a check to BRAA for \$5000 from the proceeds of the sale.

Guest speaker was John Plashal, author and photographer of the book, "A Beautifully Broken Virginia." Plashal is a member of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' speakers bureau, available due to BRAA's affiliation with the museum.

President Gerri Young recognized board members and volunteers, presented a review of 2018 events, and reported that the financial health of the association is very good.

The election of officers was held with all incumbents re-elected.

President Young stated that she plans to step down at the end of the 2019 New River Art Juried Biennial in summer 2019 and is looking for a willing candidate would who like to train with her and step into the position in 2019. All interested parties should contact Gerri at [younggerri@gmail.com](mailto:younggerri@gmail.com). ■

## Card Creations

Several BRAA members gathered at Ruth Lefko's studio in Christiansburg in November to design greeting cards and other paper goods. The get-together was organized by Terry Ellen Carter and the cards were made available to shoppers at the Montgomery County Christmas Store as well as other charitable organizations throughout the region.



## ■ Now Showing

**October 15 – January 15**  
(except where indicated otherwise)

**Lisa Acciai**, First Bank and Trust, Christiansburg

**Pat Bevan**, Virginia Tech Women's Center

**Riley Chan**, Blacksburg Transit

**Judy Crowgey**, See Mark Optical, Blacksburg

**Matt Gentry**, Hahn Horticulture Pavilion, Virginia Tech campus (thru Dec.)

**Dianne Gillis-Robinson**, Main Street Inn, Blacksburg

**Paula Golden**, Brown Insurance, Blacksburg

**Teri Hoover**, National Bank, Blacksburg

**Ava Howard**, Zeppoli's dining room, Blacksburg

**Delbert Jones**, Zeppoli's wine room, Blacksburg

**Diana Law**, Zeppoli's wine room, Blacksburg

**Ruth Lefko**, Pointe West Management, Blacksburg

**Maxine Lyons**, Long and Foster, Blacksburg

**Philip Ramsey**, Shaheen Law Firm, Blacksburg

**Joy Rosenthal**, Glade Church, Blacksburg

**Karen Sewell**, Mill Mountain Coffee and Tea, Blacksburg

**Linda Weatherly Shroyer**, Warm Hearth, Blacksburg (thru Dec.)

**Lois Stephens**, Blue Ridge Cancer Care, Blacksburg

**Lisabeth Weisband**, Holtzman Alumni Center Gallery, Virginia Tech (thru May)

*"Imagination is your creed; sentimentality and lack of feeling your foe. All art comes from love — love of doing something."*

~ Jerry Saltz

## ■ Exhibit and other opportunities

### *Women's Work Reimagined*

**The Artful Lawyer, A Fine Gallery Inc, 318 N. Main Street, Blacksburg  
December 15**

This exhibit team seeks artwork by women about women, with a contemporary spin on women's work. The application is available at [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1IHWe\\_SVbjKJmsynAOTm-oON-3vB3gwa0RBPhyb8hOFI](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1IHWe_SVbjKJmsynAOTm-oON-3vB3gwa0RBPhyb8hOFI). Entry deadline is **December 8**. Artwork drop off date is December 11 from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. Artwork pick up date is December 23 from 1–5 p.m. For more information, contact Nikki Pynn at [nikipynnstudio@gmail.com](mailto:nikipynnstudio@gmail.com) or 540-230-3844 or Tamara Ghosh at [tamara@cradlespeed.com](mailto:tamara@cradlespeed.com) or 757-604-7540.

### *Whet Your Palette 2019 Exhibitions*

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

Mark your calendar to apply for one or more of these shows — something for everyone! For more information, visit [www.artfullawyergallery.org](http://www.artfullawyergallery.org) or email [diana@creekmorelaw.com](mailto:diana@creekmorelaw.com).

**January 30 – April 17 • Abstracts**  
Application deadline: **December 28**

**April 24 – July 17 • Pottery, Poetry & Pastels**  
Application deadline: **March 22**

**July 24 – October 9 • Inside Out: Selfies**  
Application deadline: **June 21**

**October 15 – December 18 • Fiber Art**  
Application deadline: **September 13**



The art featured in this month's nameplate is "Shipwreck" (above, acrylic, 24 x24") by Ruth Lefko. This and more of her work can be viewed at Pointe West Management in Blacksburg through mid-January.

### *The Power of Art in the Palm of the Hand*

**January 31, 2019**

Carilion Clinic Foundation invites professional artists to create an original work of art for a silent auction during an annual fundraising event on January 31. This is an opportunity for local artists to create small scale works of art that are meant to be treasured as closely as that which is held in the palm of one's hand. They invite submissions of different mediums and forms, including sculpture, pottery, painting, illustration, photography, and woodwork. The overall area of a two-dimensional piece must not exceed 25 inches (area of any frame not to exceed 39 square inches). Sculptures may not exceed 5 inches in any direction. The artist will receive 50% of the realized sales price (before sales tax) for the creation; the remaining 50% of the realized sales price will benefit the Dr. Robert L. A. Keeley Healing Arts Program at Carilion Clinic. Any items not sold will be returned to the artist. To participate, email [healingarts@carilionclinic.org](mailto:healingarts@carilionclinic.org), to receive an entry form. Deadline is **December 31, 2018**.

### *2019 New River Art Juried Biennial*

**Moss Arts Center, Virginia Tech  
June 13 – August 3, 2019**

For the first time the biennial will take place in the beautiful Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech. This facility will allow for more and larger pieces to be exhibited than ever before and is expected to draw a high caliber of fine arts ranging from paintings to sculptures, textiles and more. Due to the excellent video capabilities of the center, video entries will be accepted for the first time.

Juror for the show was selected by the Moss Arts Center and is Emily Smith, executive director of 1708 Gallery, a non-profit contemporary art space in Richmond.

Full details of the biennial may be found at [www.callforentry.org](http://www.callforentry.org) and [www.blacksburgart.org](http://www.blacksburgart.org). Applications are being accepted at [www.callforentry.org](http://www.callforentry.org). Deadline is **March 1, 2019**.

### *From Paula Golden —*

If anyone is traveling to south central Virginia between now and Dec. 31, I would highly recommend a visit to the Piedmont Arts Association exhibit, The Art of the Quilt – Trends, curated by Linda Fiedler and Betty Blessin. It is excellent! The variety of stitched fiber art is impressive. Several area fiber artists are included.



### **BRAA Officers**

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