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MEET THE ARTISTS

Four wildlife artists represented in new show at The West Woods Nature Center

The West Woods Nature Center will have just completed its 10-week community art show when it unveils another collection of stunning Nature-inspired artwork this coming week!

Four wildlife artists will be represented in this new show, running May 7 through July 27, illuminating animals, landscapes, native wildflowers and more. A biography of each artist follows.

Visitors may tour the display daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with the exception of Memorial Day and Independence Day. An **opening day event** will also be held Friday, May 7, from 7 to 9 p.m.

Michele Longstreet – who will meet and greet attendees at the opening day event – is a proprietor and principal taxidermist at Wild Arts Studio in Garfield Heights, OH, who studied fine arts at the Columbus College of Art & Design. The extensive knowledge of animal anatomy required in the field of taxidermy has given Michele a firm foundation for rendering animal subjects on paper. Her pieces hanging in this show will consist of animal portraits in willow charcoal and landscapes in willow and oil.

Michele's artwork will share the gallery hallway with that of **Marty Huehner**, a collection of "texture negatives" that are transformed to clay positives in a process he calls the Clay Camera®. "The process is analogous to how some fossils (body impressions) form," said the artist. "I then use ceramic stains and glazes, often at least partly derived from local sources, to visually enhance textural contrast and to accentuate form." Marty was born in West Germany and lived, among other places worldwide, for many years in Northeast Ohio. He earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Hiram College, then a Ph.D in parasitology with minors in ecology and geology from the University of Cincinnati. Later, he'd return to Hiram College as a professor of biology and environmental studies for 20 years. During this time, Marty took undergraduate art courses and specialized in ceramics; he completed his art major in 2000, then entered a Master of Visual Arts program at the Australian National University. Upon returning to Hiram, he also returned to teaching, this time environmental art, ceramics, sculpture and environmental classes. He left Hiram to work as an environmental consultant on endangered freshwater mussels in 2007 and built a home studio in Mt. Vernon, OH. Since retiring in 2018, though, Marty has been producing art full time. "I hope that my pieces show reverence for the universe and its local manifestations and processes," said the artist. Marty's work has appeared in 28 shows in the United States and Australia. You can learn more about Marty's artwork at www.martyhuehnerart.com.

A traveling collection of watercolor paintings by the late **Lydia Curtis** will be on display in the Oak Room courtesy of her family: her surviving daughter and 13 grandchildren. The collection features 30+ wildflowers of the Upper Midwest – nearly all also native to Ohio – as well as Lydia’s written narratives for each flower. Lydia grew up on a farm southwest of Charles City, Iowa, and took private art lessons in her teens. As she raised five children, she self-developed her style using watercolors and oils, and began this project in 1958 at age 72, switching to wildflower research and writing when her vision began to fail and hand became unsteady at age 85. In 1973 the artist wrote: “In presenting these sketches of spring wildflowers, I have not attempted to show all plant structures in scientific detail. I have tried to show the coloring and beauty of these flowers so even a child may recognize them and enjoy them when found. With the rare, hard-to-find flowers, I hope to help preserve the memory of their beauty.” This exhibit was most recently displayed at the Winona County Historical Museum in Minnesota. It is one any wildflower lover will not want to miss.

Additionally, seven or eight pieces by the late **Linda Easton** of Shaker Heights, OH, will be on display in the Discovery Room hallway courtesy of family friend Rick Nowak. Linda lived from 1947 to 2017. In the words of the artist’s youngest daughter, Amy: “She had a photography business when I was growing up – taking pictures at weddings and other special occasions – but what she really loved was painting and photographing Nature and animals. ... She always caught the most expressive photos. She cared deeply for the animals, ... said the animals gave her purpose and talked about them often and fondly.” Animals featured in this collection of Linda’s work include a Monarch, turtle, snow leopard and wood duck, among others, all either watercolor/pencil, colored pencil, oil or photography.

The West Woods Nature Center is fully wheelchair/stroller accessible. Face coverings must be worn inside, and social distancing observed. Please call 440-286-9516 during business hours with any additional questions.

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