



The Virginia Artisan

Newsletter of the Artisans Center of Virginia

Spring 2009

(Editor's note: This is the new ... and temporary ... format of the newsletter, designed to cost nothing! It was sent as a simple e-mail of small file size so that even folks on dial-up will easily be able to read the important information within. If you would like an email version to forward to others, please let us know!)

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ACV Reorganizes / Gallery Closes

It is old news for a lot of folks, but on February 21st the ACV Gallery in Waynesboro sadly made its' last sale before shutting the doors. The suddenness of the closure was directly linked to a precipitous drop in gallery sales and a reduction in outside funding. Here is a letter from artisan board member Janice Arone to all artisans explaining it all:

Dear fellow artisans,

We realize that for most of you the closing of our gallery came both as an unexpected and unpleasant shock. I want to take an opportunity today to provide a more detailed explanation of why the board had to make the very hard decision we did, and to assure you that wherein it was necessary to close

the gallery, ACV is NOT closed.

The overarching fact is that the global economic crisis hit the gallery unexpectedly and hard in January 09. Although we did not anticipate the magnitude of change that began to occur in January, we had noted in late fall that sales were down somewhat from the previous year and that we needed to address the issue. We had a plan in place which included increased marketing through the holidays.

December sales were approximately 15% below previous years, which considering what was occurring globally, made for a reasonable holiday sales season. While we entered into the New Year concerned and actively fund raising to compensate for lower sales, we were not yet feeling the full impact of the economy. As January progressed we began seeing a proliferation of days with zero sales and few to no visitors. Compared to last year, in January alone, the gallery had one week of no sales days, and two weeks of days with less than \$100 in daily sales.

The savings that ACV had accrued through membership and fund raising activities in 2008 had to be drawn upon to cover the gallery expenses. As you are already aware, the business plan for the gallery as a benefit to membership required that it pay for itself so as not to tap funding from the donor and member base that is used for programs. The board determined in its January 20th meeting that all savings plus an additional \$30,000 of new fund raising dollars would be needed to sustain ACV under its current model which included the gallery, until the end of this fiscal year. Having just gone to the membership with the end of year appeal, it was decided that to raise this amount of money quickly, the board would proactively reach out to all past donors, funders and sponsors. Additionally, a personal campaign to gather patrons at Afternoon with Artisans was embarked on to garner additional support.

During the month's funding outreach, donors, funders and sponsors expressed reluctance to support retail operations of the gallery, primarily due to concerns about the stability of the gallery amidst the austere local and global economy. Likewise, the fund raising appeal that was sent in December to all artisan and patron members raised very little money relative to the organization's needs. The Afternoon with Artisans, thanks to many in-kind donations and underwriting, raised approximately \$4,000 which went toward paying December/January bills and commissions.

As we progressed into February, the situation became graver. Visitation to the gallery continued to drop ever more significantly. The initial \$30,000 goal immediately became \$50,000, with a projection that if the economy did not turn around by May 09 another \$100,000 would be needed to stabilize in fiscal year 2009/10.

Predicting the economic climate could persist for the remainder of this year, the board projected continuing and very substantial monthly losses due to gallery expenses. At the same time, it appeared likely that the gallery would continue to fail to generate sales which benefit artisans due to the shift in buyer priorities. It was immediately obvious that the organization was incapable of sustaining the gallery. More so, without the donor support in place by the February 17th meeting, the amount of unrestricted funds left in the savings was only enough upon a closure to pay final commissions to artisans, payroll, taxes and some of the overhead. ACV was below the “zero” balance point. The board realized that the only means by which the organization could fulfill its the mission of supporting artisans and survive this fiscal challenge was to close the gallery. It was a harsh reality; ACV could not continue – or be restarted – if it experienced a bankruptcy.

The board deliberated for hours from which they determined the following: The gallery must close with all financial commitments to be reconciled. Effective March 1, 2009, Sherri Smith will remain on staff on a part-time basis as Director to continue program development and week to week guidance of ACV as it repositions itself as a center for Virginia artisans.

Since then, meetings are being established with funding agencies to establish contracts for ongoing services and priorities for funding. We are maintaining all records, gallery equipment, display cases, and other organizational assets to enable a future reopening of a gallery. ACV will hold our scheduled exhibition for Virginia artisan Bert Smith on Saturday March 7th in the Waynesboro Heritage Museum. Please come out, show your support, and help us demonstrate our commitment to continuing the good work of promoting, showcasing and assisting Virginia artisans.

In addition to these proactive steps, the board will be meeting in March to discuss the priorities for programs in the coming months. These may include creating an online sales gallery, expanding retail alliances to place Virginia artisans’ work in non-ACV retail stores, creating Craft Trails to raise local and tourism awareness of artisans’ studios and galleries, hosting exhibitions around the state, and others. If, as an artisan, you would like to provide input to this

process either through volunteer efforts or as constructive advice to ACV, we are ready to hear you and work with you.

We also want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Michael Dowell and Liz Moss for their leadership and commitment to Virginia artisans these past many years and to our gallery staff who have put in a tremendous amount of work and have continued to contribute as volunteers in this time of great need. The board is working on a resolution to support each of them through recommendations and assist them as best we can as they transition to new employment.

We remain committed to the mission of ACV, and are looking to find new, cost-effective ways to achieve program goals. Because we have had to spend the reserve savings, it can't be understated that the survival of ACV will be directly related to the continuing support we receive from our members, donors and sponsors. We are pleased to inform you that as of this date, some of the donors and funders we had approached a month ago are pledging financial support for our re-organization. This tells us that there are people in the Commonwealth who are genuinely concerned about the economic conditions affecting artisans and are willing, even anxious, to help ACV continue. We believe that with similar contributions we will be successful in reorganizing our operation to cope with the harsh economy.

We will be in much closer touch with all fellow artisans through email to keep you up to date and in the know. We realize this has been a shortcoming due to the haste with which decisions needed to be made and we as the board intend to have far more involvement from our members going forward. Your involvement is important now more than ever as we grow our future as the Artisans Center of Virginia.

ACV is not closed, and we are more than just a gallery. While we share your concern for the challenges all galleries around the state face in this difficult economy, we are committed to expanding your sales opportunities in every creative way possible. Please be a partner with us as we embark on this new plan.

Yours truly,

Janice Arone
Clay Artist & ACV Trustee

Where does ACV go from here?

Here is a list of some of the programs and projects ACV has been working on. To be realistic all of these take money, something which right now we have in short supply. The board is anxious to develop relationships with those around the state who will help ACV continue with these efforts. The board will be meeting within the month to prioritize based on our capacity and funding. Please let us know your thoughts and willingness to work with us as we determine the full scope of our business plan.

- Creation of an online store to sell ACV Artisan's crafts. The intention is for the store to be set up on a zero inventory concept where ACV sets up the online portal and manages the purchases & commissions while the artisan is responsible for shipping the work, at customer expense.
- Collecting data to produce the Virginia Craft Registry, designed to be a comprehensive and current directory of artists, galleries, craft resources - schools, organizations, suppliers - and craft events in Virginia.
- Establishment of the Virginia Craft Trail Network, a variety of community loops to be established between now and July of 2010 in the Shenandoah, Allegheny and Charlottesville regions.
- Sales relationships for member artisans through the Strategic Retail Alliance Program. The first has been established with the [Virginia Shop](#) in Charlottesville and ACV is in discussions with the soon to be built [Awasaw Center](#) in Staunton, as well as with other retailers who feature Virginia-Made products.
- Business benefits for artisan members through media partnerships like the one with [The Hook](#) in Charlottesville, offering media discounts for member artisans.
- Outreach working with local schools, including the Governor's School. ACV serves 500+ school children each year at no cost to the school systems. Each year ACV creates a large demonstration and sales gallery at the [Virginia State Fair](#), attracting in excess of 250,000 people over an eleven-day period, including approximately 30,000 school students who are able to see artisans at work and discuss craft one-on-one with professionals.
- Master Artisan designation acknowledging an artisan's achievement of numerous stages of development, education, mastery of technique, and maturity of design.
- The annual [Charlottesville Studio Tour](#) ... and maybe more tours around the state.
- Establishing a Studio School in Charlottesville. Centrally located, this school can serve the entire state.
- Establishment of branch locations across the state. Currently Charlottesville and two locations in Northern Virginia are in the discussion stages.
- Development of a touring exhibit that will take place in early 2010 featuring a very special cancer survivors' ceramic quilt as well as supporting works made by Virginia artisans to draw attention to breast cancer. This exhibit would take advantage of and coincide with the statewide "Minds Wide Open" marketing campaign that is schedule for March – June of 2010, and supported by 23 major Virginia arts organizations as well as the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the Virginia Tourism Corporation.
- The second [Craft Conference and Business Institute](#) on January 22-23, 2010, with a special Craft Fair on January 24, in Roanoke, VA.
- Creation of ACV Artisan Exhibit/Shows throughout the state. Read the newsletter article "[Pilot Exhibit/Show on the Northern Neck this August](#)" for details.

An Afternoon with Artisans Brings Out the Best!

Nearly one-hundred artisans, patrons and their guests joined up at the Gallery on Sunday January 25th for the Second Annual “An Afternoon with Artisans” fund raiser. The event brought craft lovers from all parts of the state to mingle with our craftspeople, sip wine and beer, enjoy culinary delights, and best of all take home a piece of our fine Virginia hand made craft! And in the process, ACV took in \$6120 in ticket sales and donations, as well as \$1919 from sales of gallery stock the day of the event for a total of \$8039! After expenses, your center netted almost \$6000 and a cubic ton of good will!

The event was spawned last year as the result of a challenge specifically directed to the ACV Board of Trustees to match an anonymous grant. Thinking long and hard, the natural solution surfaced to get our artisans and patrons together to help us make the goal, while introducing them to each other; a win-win situation! We were really encouraged by the overwhelming generosity of our artisans in pledging their works so we could offer them to supportive patrons. The strength of ACV is clearly in our Artisans! Sixty-two Virginia artisans donated crafts of at least \$100 value, and patrons purchased tickets for \$100 to attend the event. Patron names were then drawn and folks selected one of the donated pieces. Six special tickets were sold for \$200 each and those people were the first names drawn. Throughout the event guests enjoyed wines, beer, soft drinks and simply outstanding hors d’oeuvres made by Bridget Meagher (of Alexander’s Restaurant in Roanoke), Nan Rothwell and MaryAnn Burk, while listening to the mellow piano of Richard Smith.

The entire Board of Trustees, staff, members, friends of ACV, and even some spouses pitched in to work on every aspect. It was an impressive team effort by generous artisans and an equally generous board and staff pulling together to make An Afternoon with Artisans a success!

Thanks to the donating artisans:

Janice Arone
Mary Barnes
Claudia Bean
Trew Bennett
Meredith Bennett
Gerald Boggs
Susan Brittingham
Chuck Brome

Sydney Jeffrey
Jill Jensen
John Jessiman
Elizabeth Krome
Judy Ligon
Liz Mears
Maureen Olson
Jo Perez

Mary Ann Burk
Robin Cage
Mark Campbell
Leslie Chisholm
Tom Clarkson
Jan Crowther
Virginia Dawnswir
Martha Degen
Connie Deklewa
Laurie Duxbury
Kim Eubank
Joanne Farrell
Kay Franz
Becky Garrity
Joan Griffin
Duane Hahn
Cynthia Harrison
Lotta Helleberg
Jane Hicks
Pat Hoover
Holly Horan
Rebecca Humphrey

Andy Pitts
Kathy Pitts
John Pluta
Cris Pool
Terry Porter
Peggy Printz
Brian Raynor
Nancy Ross
Nan Rothwell
Jan Russell
Judith Saunders
Elizabeth Scheid
Christine Severson
Joe Sheridan
Starke Smith
Lynn Sward
George Van Dyke
Bobbi Baumann Vischi
Mary Rouse Walters
Carol Warner
Angie Wiggins
Fred Williamson
Kathy Wooldridge

Thanks to those who worked or contributed to the event:

Dave Simpson and C&O Restaurant
Bridget Meagher and Alexander's Restaurant
Nathan Nygyun and Misaki Restaurant
The ACV Board of Trustees
Michael Dowell
Liz Moss
Sherri Smith
Linda Ayers
Linda Blake
Mary Ann Burke
Wanda Garrison
Pat Gooch
Kathy Hiserman
Kathy Pitts
Nan Rothwell

Connie Shrader
Richard Smith

Something New! – ACV Traveling Gallery Pilot

Imagine ACV Juried Artisans assembling their craft at strategic locations around the state to exhibit and sell to a public who may not have heard of us and is hungry for quality work? This would not be your typical craft show, but an ACV official "traveling gallery".....a show that carries the ACV seal of quality and highlights Virginia artisans while reaching out into new communities. Interested?

ACV has been offered the opportunity to host a first/pilot event of this type in Heathsville, VA in August at a well attended monthly farmer's market at Rices Hotel/Hughlett's Tavern we would have exclusive use of a new building with about 2000 square feet of very nice INDOOR AND AIR CONDITIONED floor space. The location is on the Northern Neck, also known as the "Rivah" by the many, many people from places like Northern Virginia and Richmond who have retired here, own second homes or vacation here. It's the perfect place to show fine craft to a discriminating audience. As the board goes about the process of considering adding such a program in the current fiscal condition, a few things come to mind regarding the guidelines. First of all, there are currently no funds to develop this program so it must be a volunteer effort. We envision it would be ACV member organized, and as such have the full consent of the ACV board; use of branded marketing materials and posts in all ACV communications and leveraged marketing when possible. There would be nominal booth fees for juried ACV member artisans (suggested \$25) because the rental fee required for use of exhibit space and expenses such as specific marketing would have to be covered. Set-up and insurance would be the responsibility of each showing artisan. ACV would request a commission contribution (suggested 10% after booth fee has been satisfied) from each artisan's total sales during the event (in other words no commission to ACV until after the booth fee is guaranteed through the first sales). The 10% would go into ACV's operational budget in support for the organizational mission.

This is not only a great exposure and sales opportunity for our juried artisan members to reach new markets; an event like this offers outreach potential for cultivating new members from around the state. A simple

screening process that might be used for non-juried members and for inviting local non-member artisans to show, like we offered at last year's Craft Conference's Craft Fair in Roanoke, is being discussed. Those whose work passes the screening would not have ACV jury designation, though. Non-members might pay a higher booth fee, and a portion could electively go toward membership and a portion toward the overhead of the event. There are many unidentified yet quality artisans across the state who might welcome the opportunity to get to know our fine juried artisans and become a part of ACV's efforts to strengthen the craft industry in Virginia.

An ACV "traveling gallery" would provide our artisans with regional sales exposure, accessibility and networking opportunities in new regions, expose quality Virginia craft to new patrons, and firmly establish ACV state-wide. It is a volunteer model we feel could be highly successful with member support.

One other sweetener for this pilot show; The director of "The Tavern" is so excited that she asked if we could also have a Friday night reception --- she thinks that volunteers in the community will step up to provide free lodging to artisans who need it, which would be most of us. How cool is that? A free night on the Northern Neck and a nice show to sell your craft under the ACV banner of quality! If you are interested please reply to Andy Pitts, board trustee, our Pilot-Volunteer Organizer and resident of Heathsville by simply hitting reply to this email.

Awards and Celebrations

- Laurie Duxbury had work published in the October 2008 Complex Weavers Journal and on their website. It is a photo of a piece that was in their 2008 Complex Weavers Exhibit, "Weaving in the Computer Age" and can be found at their website, www.complex-weavers.org/jx88.htm.
- A newly released book, *Plaited Basketry with Birch Bark*, by Vladimir Yarish, Flo Hoppe, and Jim Widess, a Sterling publication, includes two pages of woven vessels by Judith Saunders. One page features three pieces plaited with hand-painted watercolor paper ranging in size from eight inches in height to seventeen inches. The second page features all plaited copper selections from 2 inch miniatures to pieces ten inches tall. Judith's work has been accepted in three



National Basketry Organization (NBO) Exhibitions in North Carolina, Ohio and Tennessee. Her work has appeared in juried shows in Ohio, Virginia, and Rhode Island as well. One of Judith's baskets is seen in the photo to right.



- Andrew Pitts was awarded an Honorable Mention in the Custom Woodworking Business 2009 Design Portfolio Awards competition for a Custom Cabinet in the Residential Furniture, Freestanding category. The piece was featured in the December 2008 issue of Custom Woodworking Business

Magazine and on the Custom Woodworking Business Magazine website, www.iswonline.com. Pitts calls this piece “A Special Cabinet” because it is a quite amazing combination of needs and design. His clients had exacting requirements for a piece that would house a flat screen television on a lift, a satellite TV receiver, a showcase for an extensive snuff bottle collection, and also contain hidden compartments for jewelry (earrings and necklaces). The wood used in the cabinet is all local hardwood that Pitts milled himself with his WoodMizer sawmill and dried in his solar drying kiln. On his website you can read a pictorial essay of how he made this piece in his “Work in Progress” feature.

- If you find yourself in Brooklyn between now and April 4th, please check out The Artist's Book: Exploring Text, Image and the Life of the Page at the Brooklyn Central Library. Philadelphia artists Katie Murken, Katie Baldwin, and our own Lindsey Mears share artist's books, prints and assemblages. for more info, go to: <http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/events/exhibitions/2009/artistsbook.jsp>



Where There is a Will, There Will Be a Way: ACV moves Bert Smith Exhibit to the Waynesboro Heritage Museum

On Saturday, March 7th the Waynesboro Heritage Museum hosted ACV's opening reception of Bert Smith's woodturning exhibition titled Shenandoah Valley Vessels. The event was well attended with 60+ guests honoring Bert and his fine works. If you were unable to attend, we hope that you will join us at the Virginia Shop, located in the Barracks Road Shopping Center in Charlottesville, for their celebration reception of Bert's work from 5:30 – 7:30

on Friday, March 13th. Bert's work will be on display and for sale in both exhibition locations for the entire month of March.

Bert Smith's exhibition is sponsored by Dubose Eggleston, a supporter of the arts & education in Waynesboro; The Virginia Shop, an ACV retail partner and purveyor of fine Virginia Crafts and Art of Distinction; the Virginia Commission for the Arts; and the National Endowment for the Arts.

We, the board, are grateful for the contributions and support Bert has made to ACV throughout the years. In Bert's own words, here are excerpts from the brochure he wrote specially on this occasion:

"The picture on the front of this brochure is actually one of the pieces that got me through the jury process nearly ten years ago at the Artisans Center. What I remember most about that process was when one of the jurors looked at this piece and said "you have potential..." I accepted those words as a challenge to improve upon my work in the shop as well as promoting woodturning through teaching ... I consider myself fortunate to have had the gallery right here in my hometown. I've had tourists visit me in my shop who have seen and purchased my work there. Because of the ACV, my work has found a home in many different states as well as abroad. I consider everyone at the gallery as a friend, and sincerely hope that the recent gallery closing is merely temporary, and that the Artisans Center of Virginia comes back bigger and better than ever! They have "potential"! In an effort to show my gratitude and support for everything that the ACV has done to further my craft, all commissions I receive from both shows will be donated to the ACV!"

Sidewalk Art Show

The Taubman Museum of Art is accepting artists' registrations for the 2009 Sidewalk Art Show to be held on Saturday and Sunday, May 30 & 31, in downtown Roanoke. Please note there is a new Fine Crafts category this year. The outdoor show is the 51st Sidewalk Art Show (SAS), but it is the first SAS for the Taubman Museum of Art and as such is a very special year for the show. The artists' Awards Reception will be held in the beautiful Atrium at the museum and a special "pass" will be given to each participating artist to visit the museum over the weekend of the show. For more information and the prospectus, visit the museum website at <http://taubmanmuseum.org/programs/sidewalkartshow.html>.

Call for entries; Reflecting Women's Wellness 2009

When and where: April 4 - 25 at the Atrium of the James Center, 1051 East Cary Street, Richmond. Presented by WOMEN'S HEALTH VIRGINIA, a non-profit organization enhancing the health and well being of Virginia women and girls. This juried show will feature art by women or about women or girls, as a demonstration of the importance of art to women's well being, for the artist and the observer. Although the show is for 2-D media, wall hung 3-D work is eligible. For forms and details, see www.womenshealthvirginia.org at the tab "WHV Events".

Congratulations to our Newest Juried Artisans and Master Artisans!

<u>Juried Artisans</u>	<u>Master Artisans</u>
Brenda Fairweather - baskets - Harrisonburg Lana Williams - Ceramics - Monroe Brian Rayner- wood - furniture - Charlottesville Jayme Driver - jewelry - Harrisonburg	Elizabeth Ryland Mears John Jessiman Chuck Brome Lynne Sward

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Save The Date!

Artisans Center of Virginia Fundraising Gala “Artisans Night: Jazz Under the Stars” the evening of Saturday, June 6, 2009 at the Frank Ix Building in Charlottesville, Virginia. Sponsored by the Charlottesville Jazz Society, Cirrus Vodka, The Hook, the Ix Project and local Charlottesville restaurants and businesses this will be a “not to miss” event so mark you calendar today!

Volunteers are needed for all kinds of fun jobs. Local glass artisan Charles Hall has volunteered to design special artisan lighting and we want to create a totally classy artisan-jazz environment, so if you'd like to contribute, now's the time to do so. We also are looking for volunteers who can help with various hospitality tasks the night-of in addition to donations of artisan-made items for the Silent Auction. Please contact Janice Arone, ACV Development Committee chair at barnswallow@embarqmail.com if you can lend a hand or would like to donate a silent auction item .

Proceeds from Gala support ACV's ongoing mission, including the campaign to build the first Artisan Studio School which will include a gallery, education space and working artisan studios. The future of craft in Virginia is in the hands of the new artists who will have the chance to be taught the skills in making craft that our seasoned artisans have cultivated over the years. Centrally located, this school will serve the entire state. The studio school is not just for young people – it will serve all ages and will also provide a venue in which to hold professional advancement workshops on a variety of business and craft topics.

Help Wanted: Opportunities to Build ACV

- Are you committed to improving communications in our organization? Do you want others to "get the word" about what's happening in ACV? Here's your chance to walk the walk. The position of Editor of the Virginia Artisan is going to open after the Summer 2009 edition. Now is the time to step up to this important job and learn the ropes while watching/helping produce the Summer issue. Don't just complain about lack of communication from the top -- do something about it and help your fellow members. For more information, contact Andy Pitts at Editor@ArtisansCenterofVirginia.org.

Editor, *The Virginia Artisan* Newsletter
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Create Craft – Create Community