

# Arts & Entertainment

## ARTISTS EXCEL IN EVERY MEDIUM; TOMCZYK EARNS TOP HONOR SP-F Assoc. Presents Unparalleled Annual Exhibition of Members' Art

By MICHELLE HELEN Le POIDEVIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

**SCOTCH PLAINS** – Every nook and niche of the Scotch Plains Public Library's basement gallery is filled with extraordinary artwork produced by members of the Scotch Plains & Fanwood Arts Association.

This year's members' exhibition was entirely a joy to behold and one can only imagine what wonders this association will cook up next year.

Grace MacDonald's oil painting, "Reverence," is the first piece to seize the eye of viewers descending the library's staircase. This painting, which was also exhibited at the Westfield Art Association's recent members' show, contains a stunning horizon crafted from a palette with dazzling hues of orange, purple, yellow and magenta.

Oil painting powerhouse Arlene Melchior has a knack for creating exceptional portraits, a talent she continued to demonstrate with this year's entries, "Mirielle," a very feminine,

impressive ink and acrylic, "Catalpa Flowers." Bravo to Ms. McConnell.

Watercolorist Betsy Ruff presented the most delightful and quaint bouquets in a trio of paintings, "Hydrangea Basket," "Spring in the Air" and "Blooming Peonies." The latter piece



Michelle Helen Le Poidevin for The Leader/The Times  
**PERFECTION...Pictured, clockwise, are: Ken Malpas' oil, "Mom," Phil Kass' watercolor, "Venetian Bridge," Steve Tomczyk's alkyd on wood panel, "Winter Morning," and Arlene Melchior's oil, "Montana Rick."**

included Ms. Ruff's interpretation of delicate lace that could almost be lifted off of the canvas.

Hung at opposite ends of the gallery, "Venetian Bridge" and "Irish River Scene" by watercolorist Phil Kass were refreshing renditions of architecture and landscape. The first piece commanded the most attention – proof that Mr. Kass is this association's King of Watercolors.

Paula Pearl dabbled in pastel and watercolor, with a truly commendable piece, "Stray Cat." Staring through the

The oil, "Mom," spotlighted a figure focusing off-canvas, seemingly deep in her thoughts, while the pastel, "Emily" smiled at viewers straight-on, inviting them into a more carefree world.

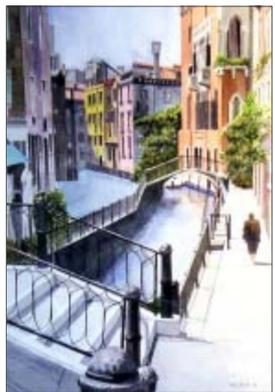
Only 11 years old, Roman Gerus offered "Two Worlds Collide," a mixed median piece that oozed a playful evolution of color.

In the same genre, Marie Gerus presented a trio of delightful abstracts – especially "Spontaneous No. 7," which was also admired by Mr. Hulsen.

Chris Scott's watercolor still-life, "Repast" was notable because the artist painted with hues that complimented each other so marvelously that you couldn't take your eyes off of the piece.

Photographer Pete Hovanec's "Lake Michigan Surprise" was praiseworthy because the artist used a one-two punch of perspective and composition to illustrate such a superb subject matter. "Oriental Poppy" was also laudable and lively.

Mary Hovanec deserves kudos for



her watercolor, "Flower Arrangement," and accolades must be given to Rachel Westernik for her mixed median piece, "Mirror Image" and Rita Hahn for her thoughtful duo of photographs, "Stars & Stripes" and "Gazania."

Joan Westernik crafted another remarkable stained glass mirror. The piece, "Calla Lily," radiated rainbows from pieces of iridescent glass and the flowers' stems were statuesque with their pieces of striped green glass.

A watercolor and ink piece, "French Scene" by Pam Yeager, with its red awning and matching red frame, possessed a vintage feel, that truly made it one of the exhibitions most distinctive entries.

Finally, Steve Tomczyk earned the "Best in Show" distinction from Mr. Hulsen and The Leader/Times agreed that this alkyd on wood panel piece warranted the top recognition. Phenomenal in composition and detail, Mr. Tomczyk's landscape, blanketed

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## Botanical Artist Kathleen Donnelly Takes Time to Stop, Smell Flowers

By KERRIANNE SPELLMAN CORT  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

**WESTFIELD** — Painter Kathleen Donnelly, a Union resident, has been a member of the Westfield Art Association for eight years.

She cheerfully describes herself as an emerging, enthusiastic botanical artist and says that painting flowers is the reason for her happiness. All things of nature inspire the artist and she often spends hours walking through arboretums and gardens, gathering ideas for her next work of art.

Her vibrant and colorful watercolors are becoming increasingly popular. This past September, she was invited to show her work at The Frelinghuysen



ON SET... Westfield High School freshman, Allie Kehler, center, poses with costars Zeld Williams (the daughter of actor Robin Williams), left, and Dana Fields, right, while taking a break from filming House of D. The motion picture will be out in theaters tomorrow, Friday, April 29.

## Allie Kehler Relishes Role in House of D

By MICHELLE HELEN Le POIDEVIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

**WESTFIELD** – Though she calls actor David Duchovny "Dave," Westfield High School (WHS) freshman, model and actress Allie Kehler, is one of the most grounded teens around.

An average teenager with her cell phone in the pocket of her denim jacket, the daughter of Sue Kehler and Glen Kehler, explained that it "hasn't hit her yet" that she has a starring role in *The House of D* opposite Robin Williams, his daughter, Zeld Williams, Mr. Duchovny and Téa Leoni.

In *House of D*, Tom Warsaw, played by Mr. Duchovny, is an American artist living in Paris who begins a path to self-discovery and reconciliation by returning home to family and friends.

In the fall of 2003, the movie was filmed in Manhattan and Brooklyn when Allie was an eighth grader at Roosevelt Intermediate School (RIS).

Her agent, at the time, had alerted her about the *House of D* opportunity and Allie auditioned in New York along with hundreds of people. About one month later, she found out that she would play the best friend of Melissa, Zeld's character, in a series of flashbacks (circa the 70s) experienced by Mr. Duchovny's character.

Compared to the small roles as an "extra" on NBC's "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" and "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," and HBO's "Sex in the City," this role in *House of D* may represent a rise to the top.

It was only about two years ago, shared Mrs. Kehler, that Allie mailed out her headshots to about 50 people, getting an agent right away. The youngster, who gave up the pursuit of acting classes last year to play soccer, has also been involved in print photography and modeling.

Initially, Allie told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, she didn't want to be in the movie, thinking that the role was not as big as it was. Also, at the time, she wanted to pursue print work.

A week before filming *House of D*, Allie got fit for her wardrobe, which included a Catholic school uniform

and an outfit with "striped leggings, a dress like a smock and shoes like a grandmother's shoes," which she wore during a scene at a dance, which was part of the flashbacks.

She joked that the 70s-inspired clothing was most likely not going to be replicated in her own wardrobe.

Often, filming would begin at 7 in the morning and continue until 4 p.m., Mrs. Kehler told *The Leader/Times*.

"I think I slept for 13 hours," Allie joked, adding later that she was able to arrange for and complete her homework assignments while on the set.

When asked how her classmates responded to her fame, Allie said the reactions have been somewhat sporadic. In the beginning, she was asked about her experience and then it died down until the movie premiered at the Third Annual Tribeca Film Festival. Queries died down again until the *House of D* trailer, during which she is featured, was released.

She was asked the usual questions like what it was like working with the celebrities and how much money she made, explained Mrs. Kehler.

Allie described Robin Williams' daughter, Zeld, as "just a regular girl who wanted to have fun," who blended in. She noted that Mr. Duchovny "didn't seem like a famous person. He was very funny."

The daughter of Glen Kehler, who was inducted into the Westfield Athletic Hall of Fame for football and track, and Rutgers University Hall of Fame for football, Allie said she is currently thinking about getting a new agent and perhaps some new headshots. While she seeks more prominent roles, she is "just testing the waters" at this point.

Drama classes, she noted, did not fit into her schedule at Westfield High School.

Besides soccer, Allie has been a member of the Franklin Elementary and RIS Student Councils, and currently serves on the WHS Student Council. She enjoys going to sporting events and being with her friends.

Lions Gate Entertainment's *Los*

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Michelle Helen Le Poidevin for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
**FANTASTIC FLORAL...Kathleen Donnelly of Union, a Westfield Art Association member, shared this botanical watercolor with The Westfield Leader and The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times on Monday afternoon.**

Arboretum in Morristown. The one-woman show featured 24 of the artists' watercolors.

Currently, Ms. Donnelly's "Botanical Daffodil" is on display at the Reeves-Reed Arboretum in Summit. Located at 165 Hobart Avenue, this show will run until Friday, May 13.

Prior to painting botanicals, Ms. Donnelly enjoyed Impressionistic works, but admitted that flowers, holly, acorns and leaves soon became her passion.

She began her career under the tutelage of Emmanuel Solomon at Union High School. She started working with graphite and pencil and continues to study to this day.

For three years, she studied watercolor with David Kwo at the Summit Art Center, now the New Jersey Center for Visual Arts (NJCV), and then studied for two years with William Senior at The Summit Arts Center. Next, she studied privately for three years with Impressionist floral artist Muriel Rappaport before studying

Chinese brush painting privately for one year with Shirley Pu Wills.

For the past two years, she has been under the tutelage of Sandra Frank, who inspired the artist to paint flowers in glass vases, and she has been studying botanical watercolors for the past 2 1/2 years with Mindy Lighthipe.

Ms. Donnelly credits many people for her success, particularly Ms. Lighthipe, the owner of Studio 16 in Warren and Coordinator of the New York Botanical Arts Certification Program. She has taught Ms. Donnelly a tremendous amount.

In addition to watercolors, Ms. Donnelly loves to create 5-inch by 7-inch botanical note cards. She initially gave these miniature works of art as gifts to friends, but is discovering a potentially lucrative business on the side.

Ms. Donnelly admitted that she has to restrain herself when visiting a greenhouse or nursery so that she doesn't buy out the entire stock.

"I limit myself to only what I can

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## Azzara's Encaustics Bedazzle

By MICHELLE HELEN Le POIDEVIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

**WESTFIELD** – One of the state's foremost authorities on the ancient art of encaustic painting, Francesca Azzara, is currently exhibiting a dozen of her pieces at the Westfield Art Gallery, housed inside of the New Jersey Workshop for the Arts (NJWA), 150-152 East Broad Street in town.

Mrs. Azzara's "day job" as a real estate agent at Burgdorf Realtors in Westfield has



"House of Windows" by Francesca Azzara

All photos by Michelle Helen Le Poidevin for The Leader/Times

served as a springboard for some of the images in the exhibition, specifically those featuring vibrant, abstract houses – her newest collection.

Although they contain basic shapes, Mrs. Azzara told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, they are also very layered.

"They represent for me the difference



"When It's Cold" by Francesca Azzara

between perception and reality," she explained, adding that, as a real estate agent, she knows purchasing a house can be a "very emotional transaction." When looking at a house, the buyers only really see a structure at first, which eventually turns into a home with various emotions and



"Unravel It" by Francesca Azzara

experiences attached to it. "I want people who view those pieces to travel into them and look through the layers to read into the image as a buyer would," Mrs. Azzara said.

The first encaustic displayed in her exquisitely textured house series, "My House, Your House" (\$350), features bold traces of gold and copper leaf inside the piece's layers, filled with hues of red, green, blue and purple.

The other encaustic pieces in that series, "House of Cards" (\$400), "House of Windows" (\$450), and "Pink House" (\$400), also glitter with metallic highlights and include textures of mesh and lace. The fifth piece, "House of the Horse" (\$400), draws inquisitive eyes with a layer of Chinese lettering adorning the roof.

Mrs. Azzara told *The Leader/Times* that encaustic is such a pleasantly versatile medium, allowing her to press materials like lace into the wax, incorporate collage and paint various washes to achieve dynamic textures. Next, she will often apply an oil stick over the images. She also likes to add copper leaf, gold leaf and rub metallic dust into the wax for bedazzling impressions.

Three older, black and white abstract encaustic pieces – "Captive," "Continuum," and "Only Momentary" – are also spotlighted in the exhibit, all including primarily white backgrounds with black spirals (one has a splash of red) and thread-like black strands extending from the circles. Mesh textures are often used.

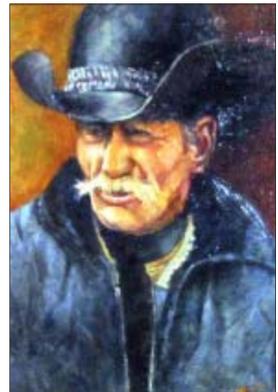
Another abstract, "Distant Memory," moves away from the black and white theme and introduces blues, yellows, greens and gold. The spiral theme remains – this time in blue and white – with the black strands playfully mingling with the main circle.

The final four pieces in Mrs. Azzara's display stem from her discovery of an antique children's book circa the 1800s about water and the life of a raindrop. The water's metamorphosis became the basis for the "dress group" or series exhibited at the NJWA.

Some of the pieces in this series, however, could not be hung there because they featured nudes and she knew that would not be appropriate for a facility where children were coming in for their music lessons.

Yet, those remaining four pieces (two include women which the artist says "connects her to her femininity") are

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soft portrayal, and "Montana Rick," a depiction of a rugged, haggard cowboy. The artist stepped out of her element, so to speak, by offering a delicate floral of blush and cream roses, which were simply elegant and framed regally.

Ruth Obeid's watercolor, "Freesia," filled the large canvas beautifully, with blossoms outlined with extraordinary detail and care.

One of the most unique entries, "Llama," a sculpture of wool and wire by Marjorie McConnell, was a fluffy animal with attitude perched on a stand beneath a cluster of paintings.

The piece gained the admiration of the show's judge, Joe Hulsen, who, when speaking with *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* on Monday morning, praised the piece for its originality.

Proving to be the most versatile artist in this year's show, Ms. McConnell also exhibited "Paulownia Flowers," a tall, wood relief sculpture, with exquisite detail and composition, and an equally



glass of this eye-catching portrait, the animal was so lifelike he might be ready to pounce!

Whether painted in oil or textured with pastels, portraits by Ken Malpas have always had a way of turning heads.

### Poet Renee Ashley Will Attend May 5 Reading

**FANWOOD** – The Fanwood Arts Council will sponsor a free poetry reading featuring award-winning author Renee Ashley on Thursday, May 5, at 8 p.m. in the Patricia Kuran Arts Center on Watson Road, next to Fanwood Borough Hall.

Ms. Ashley is the author of three volumes of poetry, the first of which, "Sali" (University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) won the Brittingham Prize in Poetry. She also received creative writing fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

The poet is a member of the creative writing faculty at Fairleigh Dickinson University and she is assistant poetry coordinator for the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation.

The featured reading by Ms. Ashley will be followed by an open reading. A sign-up list will be circulated before the featured reading at 8 p.m. Local poets are welcome to read one of their poems during the open session.

For directions to the Kuran Arts Center or more information, please call (908) 889-7223 or (908) 889-5298.

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