

# ARTS & LIFESTYLES

TIMES BEACON RECORD NEWS MEDIA

MARCH 14, 2019

*In the Garden  
of Eden exhibit  
opens at Mills  
Pond Gallery • B5*

'Matinee' by AM DeBrincat

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## COVER STORY

# Mills Pond Gallery reflects on light and darkness with *In the Garden of Eden*

BY MELISSA ARNOLD

In the coming weeks, Mother Nature will show us both sides of her personality as the cold darkness of winter melts into colorful spring. It's a time of opposites, with life and death at the center of it all.

The Smithtown Township Arts Council's Mills Pond Gallery in St. James is reflecting on these themes with its newest fine art exhibition, *In the Garden of Eden: Artist Reflections*, on display now through April 14.

"Each artist I selected helped tell a story for me — the origin of choice, good and evil, light and darkness, the origin of creation," said guest curator Melissa Masci, who developed the concept for the exhibit. "The premise of this show is that there's balance to every aspect of life, in the experiences we have and the decisions we make that define us. There's a duality at play — you can create something incredibly light and beautiful from the darkest experiences."

It is the first time that STAC director Allison Cruz has invited a guest curator to the gallery, and while she admits it wasn't easy to hand over the reins, she knew Masci's vision had to be shared.

Masci, a Seaford resident, is a graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan. Her career has led her from designing women's apparel and store window displays to teaching art classes for children. Cruz invited her to teach at the St. James gallery, and they've built a fierce friendship since.

"Melissa visited the gallery just by chance about seven years ago, and we struck up a conversation," Cruz recalled in a recent interview. "She fell in love with the space — the light and the spirit of it. And she's such a genuine and creative person."

The unique exhibit, which fills four gallery rooms and the center hall gallery on the first floor of the



Above, 'Ode to Giuseppe Sanmartino,' mixed media on wood panel, by Nicholas Frizalone; on the cover, 'Matinee' by AM DeBrincat, oil and acrylic paint and transfer print on canvas. Images courtesy of Mills Pond Gallery

historic 1838 Greek Revival mansion, will feature the works of eight artists using a variety of mediums and styles, including oil, acrylic, mixed media and sculpture.

All of the artists are contemporary, and the majority are local to Long Island. Masci aimed to choose artists from a mix of backgrounds and experiences to expose visitors to something new, she said.

Brooklyn-based painter AM DeBrincat creates layered works on canvas, blending painting, digital photography and even printmaking for a unique style. She uses images pulled from online searches and Xerox transferring for her pieces, which explore how we create a sense of self in the digital age. "I have always felt compelled to make art, ever since I was young. I'm not sure why, but it's always been such a strong impulse and brought me joy, so I don't over analyze it — I just go with it," she said.

Nicholas Frizalone of Lake Grove attended Stony Brook University and Long Island University before becoming an art educator and creator. He paints, draws and creates prints that explore the implication of language in art. "Through the use of painting, drawing, and printmaking, I wish to investigate the implications of language in art, and communicate in a way words will never be able to accomplish," he said.

Jennifer Hannaford is more than just an artist — the Port Jefferson resident is also a forensic scientist. To get in touch with her creative spirit, Hannaford began to create artistic mug shots using her fingerprints. Working primarily in oils, she enjoys exploring themes that include life, ascension and balance.

Ashley Johnson of Buffalo works with ceramics, collage and photography but expresses her creativity most through stippled ink drawings and large-scale ink

paintings. "Creating art is a therapeutic way for me to work through my emotions ... to dig deep and explore my trauma, joy, confusion, anger, love, and anything else I need to release," she said.

Smithtown artist Yvonne Katz believes art is the "elixir that allows us to fluidly slip and break the threshold of all boundaries." She loves working with oil and bronze because there is a maneuverable interaction with these mediums, as if the materials collaborate in the process of realizing the results.

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— MELISSA MASCI

Neta Leigh is a surreal-impressionist photographer from Locust Valley. Inspired by the sights and locales that surround her daily life, Leigh is most drawn to photograph in natural light during times of fog, clouds, snow or rain. She also enjoys photographing fruit and flowers in her dining room before and after destruction.

Peter Bragino of Copiague is a multidiscipline, mixed-media artist, designer, treasure hunter and soul searcher. "In the same way we build layers in life to become who we are as human beings I allow my creations to take on the same life, the same layering, the same history. This process naturally led me to a mixed-media workflow where any medium is a viable medium to complete the formation of the life that the creation would like to take," he said. Bragino will be collaborating with artist Kevin Corcoran for this exhibit.

"I'm always looking for something unique to bring into the gallery — not just landscapes or realism or abstracts all the time," said Cruz. In regards to the exhibit, "I had only seen a few of the pieces initially. But the themes in it are so evident, strong and beautiful. It's unlike anything else in this area, and I think people will really enjoy the experience."

The community is invited to an opening reception on March 16 at 5:30 p.m.

*The Mills Pond Gallery is located at 660 Route 25A, St. James. Hours are Wednesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. Admission is free. Visit [www.millspondgallery.org](http://www.millspondgallery.org) or call 631-862-6575 for more information.*



'Florence Sun and Shadows,' oil on linen, by Tim McGuire will be on view at The Atelier at Flowerfield through May 2. Image courtesy of The Atelier

## The Atelier Invitational opens in St. James

The Atelier at Flowerfield, 2 Flowerfield, Suite 15 in St. James recently unveiled its latest exhibit titled *The Atelier Invitational: A Juried Show of Guest Artists at Atelier Hall*. The show will be on view through May 2.

Enjoy the eclectic spirit of Long Island artists converging in one 2,000-square-foot gallery, bringing the rhythm of the shoreline, the character of loved ones, and the expression of a wide variety of genres to this show.

Featured artists include Rose Ann Albanese, Ross Barbera, Diane Bares, Nancy Bass, Mary Benedetto, Eleanor Berger, Robert Berson, Pam Best, Marlene Bezich, Al Candia, Kenneth Cerreta, Christine D'Addario, Kattie Davenport, Anthony Davis, Donna Deedy, Julie Doczi, Karen Farrell, Steve Forster, Neda Javanshir, Julia Jenkins, Larry Johnston, Edward Joseph, Patricia Lind-Gonzalez, Smadar Maduel, John Mansueto, Jane McGraw-Teubner, Timothy McGuire, Eleanor Meier, Fred Mendelsohn, Karen Meneghin, Matthew B. Moore, Rick Mundy, David Peikon, Lissette Resnick, Dave Rogers, Irene Ruddock, Oscar Santiago, Lisa Springer, Judy Stone, Angela Stratton, Susan Tango, Victor Vaccaro, Marjorie VandeStouwe and Laura Westlake.

The gallery is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free. For further information, please call 631-250-9009.