

Countryside Attracts Artists

By KIMBRA SHOOP

BELLEVILLE - It's Giverny revisited in rural Central Pennsylvania. Much like Impressionist painter Claude Monet's famed homestead in the French countryside, Audrey Gay Rodgers' Hameau Farm has become a refuge for the creative soul.

Twice each year, the farmstead invites artists from across Pennsylvania and beyond to commune with nature in the picturesque Big Valley. Centre County landscape artist Susan Nicholas Gephart, of Bellefonte, leads the spring and fall workshops in "Plein Air," or outdoor, painting with fellow artist and instructor James Farrah.



An award-winning painter and bachelor of fine arts graduate of Penn State University, Gephart shares her talent for capturing the nuances of a landscape in pastels and oils, while working with the elements dealt by nature. Farrah, who also holds a bachelor of fine arts from Penn State and teaches workshops, private classes, and at the Chandler-Gilbert Community College in Arizona, offers "Fast Painting," technical background, and his unique experiences as a product demonstrator for Daler-Rowney, Strathmore, Robert Simmons, and Graham Paints.



The weekend and weeklong workshops, offer day options, which are open to artists of all skill levels, provide on-location painting opportunities throughout the rolling hills, valleys, and Amish farmland of Big Valley. Whether working on a view from the spacious farm studio or onsite at Brookmere Vineyards, Plum Bottom Farm Lane, Jack's Mountain, or beside the Kishacoquillas Creek, budding painters and established professionals alike bathe their muse in the variations of light, color, and mood, as well as the relaxed atmosphere. The artists, however, find inspiration from more than just the surrounding landscape, Gephart said. In addition to learning new techniques, participants glean marketing advice and tips of the trade from working side-by-side with established painters.

"Hameau Farm is a safe place for the artist, whether you are picking up a paint brush for the first time or a seasoned professional." Gephart said. "We come for the camaraderie, for the encouragement, for the opportunity to work side-by-side. That positive energy is what keeps artists coming back."



Gourmet meals, served in the comfort of the farmhouse, wrap up a long day in the field, allowing the artists to get to know each other better over conversation that often lingers well into the evening. The meals, along with lodging in the farm's rustic cabins, are included in the price of the workshop. Families, spouses, and individuals, can be accommodated, as well.

A special art exhibit, "A la carte and Art," is held in the barn studio on Friday evening, at the conclusion of the weekday portion of the May workshop. The reception showcases paintings created by past and present participants throughout the week. The event is free and open to the public, but reservations are required.



Enrollment in the Hameau Farm Art Workshops is limited in an effort to encourage a special sense of community, while flexible scheduling – including day options – allow the busy artist to find the arrangement that meets their needs. Registration and information for the May 2007 workshop is required and can be done by contacting Susan Nicholas Gephart at (814) 355-0277 or by email at snicholasart@aol.com.

For information on attending "A la carte and Art" on Friday, May 18, contact Audrey Gay Rodgers at (717) 667-3731 or www.hameaufarm.com and look under Artist Workshops.