

Who Are We? Profile of a
Del Ray Artisans Member

Getting The Big Picture

"This is the start of something big, really big." This phrase didn't exactly spring to mind when Del Ray Artisans member **Steve Crossett** first met with restaurateur **Ralph Capabianco**, but BIG is what has indeed happened.

An Oklahoma native, Steve has a degree in painting from the University of Oklahoma. At that time there was not the support for the school of realism as there is today, but he found a way to exhibit his paintings at local restaurants in Norman, Ok. Today though a systems programmer by day, he still showcases his artistic talent at local restaurants, but on a much grander scale.

About 7 years ago, Steve decided to see if once again—only this time in Alexandria—he could find a restaurant venue where he could exhibit his art work. With a portfolio full of drawings and paintings of jazz musicians and vintage trucks, he went to Old Town Alexandria's King Street Blues to talk to the management. Owner **Ralph Capabianco** was so impressed that he bought about a dozen of Steve's pieces on the spot, and over the years has become Steve's biggest patron, commissioning him to create art for his many area restaurants.

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And a Wonderful Time Was Had by All

The day finally came and we went to the social event of the season as far as Del Ray Artisans members are concerned. The 2001 OffBeat Auction was a great success! On the evening of December 2nd, as attendees filled the ballroom of the Embassy Suites Old Town and the music of The Hula Monsters filled the air, the fun began.

An early count estimates that more than 350 people attended, and 63 pieces of furniture and 71 silent auction

pieces of art were sold. The sheer volume of auction items kept Auctioneers Sheriff **Jim Dunning** and Radio Del Ray's **Randy Allen** busy until 10:30 pm.

One of the memorable highlights of the evening was the bidding war for illustrator **Bryan Leister's** trompe l'oeil painted side table, "Tilting Still-Life." After a lot of bids were volleyed across the room, the final selling price was \$305 and the winning bidder was very excited about her new acquisition. ■

Del Ray Artisans Celebrate 10 Year Anniversary

Ten years have passed since **Peter and Lauren Smirniotopoulos** and a small group of Del Ray neighbors decided to create an "artisans' cooperative." Their vision was to create a Cooperative Workshop and Studios that would promote the creation of functional art made by woodworkers, metalsmiths, fiber and glass artists, and those working in mixed media. They hoped to support amateur and professional artisans by providing educational opportunities, exhibiting their work and ultimately by providing gallery, workshop and studio space.

In doing research for DRA's 10th Anniversary Exhibit its curators have been fascinated by the foresight shown in the early documents of the organization. From its beginnings the Artisans saw themselves as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization. They wanted to create a destination, a sense of place along Mt. Vernon Avenue. They proved to be very successful in that. Over a 10 year period the Artisans moved into vacant storefront spaces at below market rent. They dry-walled and painted, and they cleaned! How they cleaned! As a result, these spaces became more desirable and were leased by businesses that are now well known to local residents. In 1992 there were no sidewalk cafes on the Avenue, but the Artisans opening receptions brought crowds that spilled out the doors of six different sites along Mt. Vernon Avenue. We are grateful to have found a more sta-

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Steve's first commission for one of Ralph's restaurants was staggering because of the deadline and the enormous number of pieces needed. "Because I only had 2 weeks to create 10 large (4' x 4') paintings, I couldn't do them as traditional paintings," explained Steve. "So instead, I made finely detailed drawings using a charcoal pencil on gray paper and then applied a thinned acrylic paint wash on top. I could work rapidly and get nice, rich black tones." Varying between pencil to charcoal sticks the size of his thumb, the success of this technique has allowed Steve to achieve very polished work that keeps his clients coming back for more. He recently completed a youthful portrait of the founder of the Birchmere. Again it is the large 4' x 4' format, and depicts him at the age of 17 alongside legendary James Dean.

Not everything Steve does though is so huge or so public. He sometimes "knits faces," as his wife Rita quips. Taking a single 5-foot length of florist wire, he fashions continuous-line portrait "sketches." Seemingly suspended in midair by being sandwiched between 2 sheets of plexi, these minimalist portraits are telling of Steve's sense of "realism with a touch of humor." On occasion, Steve mounts a shadow box behind the wire drawing and creates a collage to further capture the essence of his subject. (Unfortunately for most of us, only a few special acquaintances have merited a "knitting" sitting.)

Steve has been a member of the Del Ray Artisans since nearly its beginnings in 1992. In addition to exhibiting his art over the years, he has been a valuable volunteer: serving as a judge for the Student Art Show, creating spectacular decorations for the DRA Halloween party, and collaborating with his cousin, Radio DelRay's Randy Allen, to create and maintain our website.

So, next time you are thinking of dining out, you should check out Steve's work at Stella's, Gaffney's,

Kingstowne's King Street Blues, or in the Majestic Bar of Evening Star. And of course, there's "Big Rita," the very robust version of his wife which presides in the entrance foyer of Calvert Grille. It represents bounty—every artist's big hope. ■

Classified

Help Needed

Art Teacher for mentally handicapped adults in search of someone to fire a small batch of low fire pieces, bisque fire & glaze fire. Class recently handbuilt vessels after lining up a ceramic artist to fire them, but that fell through. Will pay. Contact Tynan at (703) 519-3682.

Call for Entries

"Del Ray Artisans Retrospect: The 10th Anniversary of the Del Ray Artisans."

Submission Dropoff Dates:

December 29, Friday at 7:00 - 9:00pm

December 30, Saturday at Noon - 4:00pm

January 4, Friday at 7:00 - 9:00pm

January 5, Saturday at 10:00 - 4:00pm

Opening Reception: January 11, 2002; Exhibition: January 11-27, 2002.

Now is your chance to retrospect! The Del Ray Artisans have been in existence since 1992. An all-member show is scheduled for January 11 - 27, 2002. All members may enter. If you have a favorite piece from a past show and would like to exhibit it again, now is your time! Space is limited so, first come first served. If you are a new member and have not exhibited, then this is your chance to exhibit in the 10th Year Anniversary of the Del Ray Artisans. Deborah and/or Mart will be at the gallery to collect your pieces. For members that have been in a number of Del Ray Artisans exhibits shows, we are looking to represent at least one show a year. Drop off your art works, limit of two please Enter artwork from past member shows along with new/unseen artwork.

Entry Form for "Del Ray Artisans Retrospect" Exhibit

Artist Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

DRA Member Yes No

Please list your work below:

Title: _____

Medium: _____ Price: _____

Title: _____

Medium: _____ Price: _____

For the Home

Del Ray Artisans & Springwater Fiber Workshop 2002 Show

Plan now to enter Del Ray Artisan's next annual show For the Home to be held March 9-24, 2002; the opening reception will be Friday, March 8, 2002 at the DRA Gallery Space in Alexandria, VA. The For the Home show emphasis will be on the decorative arts—items in almost any craft media as long as they are meant for furnishing or decorating the home. This would include fiber, clay, wood, glass, metal, mixed media, etc. Scour the home decorating magazines to get ideas for wonderful things that you can make.

Work will not be juried for entry but will be judged for cash awards along with Handweavers Guild of America and Complex Weavers awards. The show will be judged by the esteemed Ginny Friend of Waterford, VA. She is a weaver, an extensive collector and wonderful supporter of craft and fiber arts.

Once again, the show will be in collaboration with Springwater Fiber Workshop, and held in our DRA gallery. Receiving of entries will be Saturday, March 2 from 11-4 at the Del Ray Artisans Gallery, Nicolas A. Colasanto Center: 2704 Mt. Vernon Avenue in Alexandria, VA.

The show is open only to members of Del Ray Artisans and Springwater Fiber Workshop—another good reason to join. We are looking for volunteers to help with the show. For more information—or if you want to volunteer—contact **Debbie Mezzetta** at 703-560-3734 or at mezzetta@aol.com. ■

Please submit your articles for the December newsletter by 5:00pm December 20th to Linda Silk, at LMSilk@aol.com

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ble home at the Colasanto Center which the City of Alexandria generously provides.

The Del Ray Artisans 10th Anniversary Exhibit is an all-member show that will highlight the work of current members and invite artisans who have a history with the group to display work from a past exhibit alongside newly created work. Portions of the very first exhibit "The Town of Potomac" will be shown as well as video tapes, photo collages and an installation highlighting the times when the Artisans were a "gallery without walls."

"We are hoping to have dozens of artists take part as we celebrate the past, present and future of the Del Ray Artisans," says co-curator **Mart Larson**. Bring in your artwork (2 pieces max. will be accepted) on the drop off dates

listed below.

Dec. 29, Friday at 7:00 to 9:00pm
Dec. 30, Saturday at 12:00 to 4:00pm
Jan. 4, Friday at 7:00 to 9:00pm
Jan. 5, Saturday at 10:00 to 4:00pm

Also, we are inviting past and present members to be part of creating the collages, and building an installation for the show's opening. Call **Mart Larson** at 703-836-0413 or email mmlars@aol.com for set up info, or **Deborah Susan Peterson** at 703-299-9422 or email dpeterson@hiaa.org. ■

Welcome New Members!

Sandra Sanchez
Rosalle Savini
Trish Hogan
Bob Gilbert
Annmarie Pittman

Adopt A Park

Can you help clean up the grounds around the Gallery?
Contact Marlin Lord at 703.683.1112

Become a Member, Join Del Ray Artisans

(or Renew your membership)

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone(s): _____

E-mail: _____

I am an artist (medium): _____

I am a supporter of the arts

Is this a membership renewal Yes No

I am interested in volunteering. Yes No

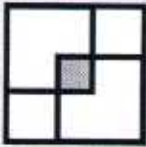
Membership Categories for One (1) Year:

Individual: \$35 Household: \$50 Corporate: \$100

Student/Senior/Disadvantaged: \$10

Please make check payable to *Del Ray Artisans*.

Mail check and membership form to *Del Ray Artisans*, Attn: Membership, 2210 Mount Vernon Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22301



Del Ray Artisans
 Mail: 2210 Mount Vernon Avenue
 Alexandria, Virginia 22301
 703.838.4827
 www.radiodelray.com/artisans

Thanks to the Alexandria Commission for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the City of Alexandria

Next General Member Meeting

Tuesday, December 11, 7PM
 at DRA Gallery Space
 Nicholas A. Colasanto Center
 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue

**DRA Meetings are held on the
 2nd Tuesday of every month.**

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The Well Crafted Word newsletter is published monthly by the Del Ray Artisans. Newsletter Staff: Mart Larson, Liz Martinez, Linda Silk. Contributing writers: Debbie Mezzetta, and Deborah Peterson

Arts Resource Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public membership organization formed to create and support community-based arts organizations and promote the arts as a resource for community development. **Del Ray Artisans** is a community arts group featuring two- and three-dimensional works of decorative and functional art and fine crafts through exhibits, lectures, and instructional classes in the community. **Del Ray Artisans** is funded, managed, and operated by **Arts Resource Foundation**.

DRA Calendar

2002

- January **Del Ray Artisans 10th Anniversary Retrospect Exhibit, January 11-27**, curators Mart Larson & Deborah Peterson

Opening Reception, Friday, January 11, 7-10 pm. Donations of food for reception gratefully accepted.
- February **Celebrate Alexandria! February 8-24**, curators Leslie Wilder & Jane DeWeerd
- March **From the Home—A Collaboration with Springwater Fiber Workshop, March 8-24**, Springwater curator Ann Liddle; DRA co-curator Debbie Mezzetta
- April **Spring All Member Show, April 5-21**, ISO curator
- May **Student Art Show, May 10-26**, curator Linda Silk
- June *Calendar Open*
- July **Art Camp, July 29-August 2**, coordinators Liz Martinez & Barbara Robinson ISO a volunteer with grant writing experience
- August *Calendar Open*
- September **Fall All Member Show, September 13-29**, ISO curator
- October **Reincarnations: making refound objects into Art, October 11-27**, curators Marie Niernberger & Liz Martinez
- November **Seasons, November 8-24**, curators Sue Kulesher & Vivienne Lukacs
- December **Holiday Show and Sale, December 7**

Many thanks to Royce Flowers for the lovely contributions to our opening receptions and to Randy Allen and Radio Del Ray for hosting our Web pages.