

HEAD FOR THE BORDER

WESTPORT, MASS. & TIVERTON, RI

Just south and southeast of the old Massachusetts industrial mill city of Fall River are the border towns of Tiverton, Rhode Island and Westport, in the Bay State. The two have much in common beyond a shared town line as visual pastoral paradises, with more than a few working farms, that give way to stunning views of rivers, estuaries and the ocean. They also share a combined cultural community of excellent galleries, working studios, musical venues and fine restaurants that would delight any visiting connoisseur of the arts.

A good place to start is at Sandywoods Farm, off of Bulgarmarsh Road in Tiverton. It is a unique "intentional community" of homeowners and renters, devoted to promoting and supporting the arts, sustainable agriculture, affordable housing and land stewardship. The Farms are the home of the Sandywoods Center for the Arts (43 Muse Way), offering affordable "BYOB-and-picnic" concerts every weekend throughout the summer. The eclectic musical offerings range from classical to hip-hop, Celtic and zydeco.

The Van Vessem Gallery (63 Muse Way) is a progressive contemporary art gallery opened by Dutch-born painter Marika Van Vessem in April 2013. Until July 20, a series of enthralling ink jet prints done on reclaimed aluminum newspaper printing plates and paintings by collaborators David Barnes and Dan McManus will be displayed. August will feature an exhibition by the husband-

and-wife artist team of Dan Powell and Cynthia Farnell; September sees an installation by Brooke Mullis Doherty.

Up the road a bit, at the historic Tiverton village center of Four Corners, are several galleries and shops to explore. The artist-operated Sakonnet Collective Gallery (3842 Main Road) regularly features the work of the creators who have studio space there: collagist Douglas Stearns, furniture maker Stephen Kinnane and painter Padriac Manning, as well as guest artists.

Within a few steps, at 3848 Main Road, is Gallery 4. It is a shared space divided into two distinct galleries. Metalsmith and wire sculptor Susan Freda and her husband Arn Krebs run one side. Both make exquisite wedding bands, engagement rings and other fine jewelry. Krebs is a master craftsman in the art of mokume gane, a mixed-metal laminating process treasured for its unique markings, originally developed in 17th-century Japan for making katanas, a type of sword. It is

David Barnes, *Boots*, 2013, oil on canvas, 30" x 40", at Van Vessem Gallery, Tiverton.



Ray Generoux, *Episodic 2*, (Statue of Liberty on fish), part of The Art Drive auction in Westport and Dartmouth.

now used primarily for decorative objects. Krebs's mokume gane jewelry is distinctive with its handsome markings. Freda's delicate wire sculptures made of steel, aluminum, copper and other metals line the gallery in the form of reimagined dresses, blouses and gowns.

The other half of Gallery 4 is known as Silk Road Traders, run by Elaine Hill and Alix Campbell. Importers of Turkish goods, including ceramics, textiles, silk scarves, carpets and furniture, they also regularly open their walls to local artists.

But where to eat in Tiverton? The Four Corners Grille is a good choice. It is an unpretentious and comfortable place with an array of sandwiches, salads and seafood. Recommendations must include the clam roll and the Lisbon Angus Burger topped with a chourico patty and served on a bolo, the Portuguese version of the English muffin.

Or skip lunch and just have dessert. Gray's Ice Cream is a Rhode Island roadside culinary institution. All of their products are made on-site. The ice creams are rich and decadent and well beyond the usual chocolate and vanilla are old-fashioned flavors like grape nut, rum raisin and ginger. For a dollar more, upgrade to a waffle cone.

A GRAND TOUR

Westport plays a major role in two large art-centric events in the coastal communities. Coming first (and last) is the South Coast Artists 11th Annual Open Studio Tour. On the weekends of July 19-20 and August 16-17, over 50 artists from Westport and Tiverton, as well as neighboring Dartmouth, Mass. and Little Compton, RI, will open their studios to visitors. The Tiverton artists include painter Brenda Wrigley Scott, monoprint artist Ginger Lacy and photographer Dave Chapman. The Westport exhibitors include painter Heather Bentz, textile artist Charlotte Hamlin and furniture maker Jeffrey LaValley. (For more details, see our accompanying story.)

In a similar vein, over three-dozen artists from Westport and Dartmouth will open their studios for the art-loving public on August 9 and 10. Among the exhibitors will be landscape painter Stephen Remick, painter Susan Strauss, and assemblage artist Maddy Bragar. In addition, many –



Susan Freda, *Auri Lucida*, woven wire sculptural dress, at Gallery 4, Tiverton.

if not all – of the artists will be displaying their inventive depictions of the winter flounder, a local fish species.

While there are other art venues in the town, the crown jewel of Westport's galleries – and perhaps the entire vaguely defined South Coast – is the Dedee Shattuck Gallery at 865 Main Road. The stunning gallery, designed by Saltonstall Architects and nestled in a sculpture garden, opened in June 2011. Gallerist-owner Dedee Shattuck and her lead curator Isabel Mattia have keen eyes and sensibilities: the gallery has exhibited works by Elin Noble, Roger Kizik, Sig Haines and dozens of other notables. The July show, "The Contemporary Figure," will feature John Borowicz, Walter Horak, Sergei Isupov, Anne Leone and Dan Ludwig. August brings the oil painters Bryan McFarlane and Jaime Young.

And how to end the trip after the Shattuck? Travel down Route 88 toward beautiful Horseneck Beach, and after you cross the bridge exit for the Back Eddy. Sit at the raw bar on the dock and gulp some oysters or littlenecks. Have a good draft or an ice-cold pinot grigio. Talk about the art you saw.

Don Wilkinson