

## **Late Virginia Lynch's discerning eye on display in must-see exhibit in Tiverton**

By Channing Gray

Special to The Journal

Posted Aug 23, 2017 at 9:30 PM

Her gallery managed for two decades to set the bar when it came to art around Rhode Island.

As art galleries sprung up overnight and withered just as quickly during the 1980s and 1990s, the venerable Virginia Lynch Gallery managed for two decades to set the bar when it came to art around here.

A tough-as-nails Texan with a discerning eye, Lynch filled her modest space in Tiverton's quaint Four Corners section with the work of artists who were more likely to be found in New York than rural Rhode Island.

But failing health made it impossible for Lynch to climb the stairs to her space over high-end Provender grocery market. The gallery closed in 2003; Lynch died four years later at 92.

Now, neighboring Gallery 4 has put together what curator Chas Hickey is calling a "snapshot" of Lynch's contribution to the local art scene, with about 100 paintings, drawings and sculptures by 19 members of Lynch's stable.

The show is up through the end of October, and it's a must-see collection, especially for lovers of more traditional art.

There is, for example, an entire wall of Anthony Russo's dark, surrealist canvases, an early Dean Richardson, and exacting still lifes of oil lamps and pepper mills from the late Thomas Sgouros, created before his sight failed and he turned to those dreamy "remembered" landscapes that became so popular.

Three imposing images by Gayle Wells Mandle, including a stunning 4-foot-square canvas covered with streaks of cream and fragments of handwritten letters, are among the winners.

Visitors are greeted by an early, very loose Richardson of two bathers sprawled on a beach that's so very different from his tighter studies of baseball players and fish that Richardson, once a star of the Rhode Island School of Design painting department, is best known for.

Lynch had begun showing some of these artists even before she opened her second-floor gallery, painters such as Miriam Scott, lover of poppies, and Molly Luce, who along with her decorative oils of red-winged blackbirds, is also represented by a curious canvas called “Things My Father Taught Me,” with marauding Indians sharing the space with pyramids and an army of winged men descending from the heavens pulling a red-topped surrey.

Again, the bulk of the offerings are pretty traditional, representational pieces such as Bryson Burroughs’ neo-classical tip of the hat to Venus and Adonis, but with a somewhat contemporary vibe. And you can’t help but admire Hazard Durfee’s sprawling garden of sun-splashed zinnias.

Gayle Mandle is perhaps the strongest of the abstract painters. These are bold, muscular pieces with tattered edges that aren’t afraid to leave a few loose ends.

But Harry Nadler’s cool, fill-in-the-squares approach has not held up well. And while Mark Wholey’s foray into the world of primary colors and simple shapes puts out more wattage than Nadler, they’re about as exciting as wallpaper.

There’s just one photographer among the lot, but that’s Denny Moers, whose heavily manipulated images of trees and dilapidated buildings are more akin to prints than photos, with the subtlest mix of rusts and blues.

Too bad there was not money enough to ship and insure Dale Chihuly’s stunning, but super-fragile glass sculptures that resemble sea forms and flowers.

On the other hand, there’s lots of impressive, if conventional, work to choose from, including Gretchen Dow Simpson’s angular views of stairs and Joseph Alexander’s bicycle rider relaxing on a bench among an exploding background of greenery.

“Lynch Revisited” is up through Oct. 29 at Gallery 4, 3848 Main Rd., Tiverton. Call (401) 816-0999, or visit [gallery4tiverton.com](http://gallery4tiverton.com).