

Jen Luck Hale



Sometimes, in order to move forward, you have to look backward; Jen Luck's "Paper Mosaic" exhibit this October at the Shelburne Arts Coop is inspired by work she did at the beginning of her artistic journey as a paper cutter. Some three years or so ago when I interviewed Jen at her Shelburne home she pulled out all her old paper cuts, and that got her thinking: "I started a lot of little ones again, a new series. And there are some I like a lot from the past, but I am more successful at things now, and my newer ones are more intricate." The small squares of origami paper are folded and cut into intricate designs, many geometric, but others with houses, suns, landscapes, animals, insects, flowers, you name it! For her new exhibit, Jen hopes to have two hundred of these paper cuts mounted on colorful mini canvases that she has made into magnets that will be displayed on magnetic chalkboards in grouping of one and two dozen. She hopes art seekers will move around the canvases and ideally, find a clutch of designs they want to purchase as a group. There will even be a small magnetic chalkboard easel for

youngsters to arrange designs on as part of the show.



The older paper cut cache that Jen was inspired by for this show was created during a post-divorce period of her life. Interestingly, she found out later that her mother had also made a lot of paper cutouts after her divorce from Jen's father when Jen was 6 months old. Paper cutting may have been a post divorce urge, but it is something that has stayed in her life after remarriage and the birth of her daughter Emma, now a kindergartener. Her first forays into the craft resulted in geometrical snowflake-type designs. The first creatures to evolve under her scissors were frogs, salamanders, fish and flowers and it has advanced from there, but as she approaches realism she also likes to "back off a little: I want the art to *be* something, not just a depiction. There are usually themes that relate to something in my life," Jen explained. Jen does not draw the images on the back of the paper, but makes radial folds from the center and works her way in with the scissors. She may refine a design or an idea over the course of many sheets of paper, but drawing is not a big part of her idea formulation. It is hard to see, but if you pick one up, you may notice that the negative spaces are connected, a cut line that is invisible when the design is laid flat. This is how she works her way in .from the edge to the middle



Jen comes from an artistic background and studied painting and weaving when she was an art major in college. She is a trained landscape designer and drafts person. As a teenager, she wanted to be an architect, but someone made a discouraging remark about the math being too hard and she dropped the idea in favor of podiatry, though her second choice career never materialized. She worked for 13 years for an architectural firm in Amherst and has her hand in the design and drafting of the energy-efficient houses they build. She grew up in Greenfield and parts of Pelham and Leverett and considers herself lucky to have had “two normals” all her life: being part of each of her parent’s new families enriched her with five sets of grandparents and many half siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles. She had a great variety of experience within the separate realms of her parent’s lives, camping with her mom, and cross country truck journeys with her dad. Currently she is transitioning to self-employment. She is opening her own drafting business that will be based in the McCusker’s co-working space in Shelburne Falls. Part of this new move is the impetus to work with her daughter’s new school schedule and to be available for afternoon activities with Emma, who has started making her own art at home and at the Art Garden in Shelburne. Her business will help people visualize designs. “I can do things like drafting additions, or if people want to do modeling studies to see what that might look like, or layouts of their yard for master planning for their property. I also do design, but my principle reason is for drafting, for helping people work through ideas and stuff like that. I went to the Conway School of Landscape Design, and I’ve worked for an architect for 13 years, so I have a lot of those skills, but I am not necessarily offering those. I’d

.be happy to help design, but it's mainly a drafting service that I am offering," explained Jen



There will be two price points for less intricate, earlier cuts that are mounted on one type of canvas square, and newer, more elaborate designs mounted on a different style of canvas, at 20 and 30 dollars respectively. Jen anticipates offering bulk discounts as well but she hasn't worked out the details quite yet. With only a few weeks to go before her show, the artist was busy painting canvases and mounting the delicate cut paper designs anthem with Modge Podge, and then attaching magnetic strips to the back. It will be a stunning display along the 28 foot long wall of the Coop. Come see "Paper Mosaic- A big collection of small bits" during its run at the Coop from October 3 to October 27, and meet Jen at an opening reception on Saturday, October 6 from 3 to 6 p.m. The Coop is at 26 Bridge Street in Shelburne Falls, right next to the Hearty Eats restaurant