

A 'Hot' secret revealed: Plein Air paintings on display

By Matthew Whorf/ Correspondent

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"We seem to be a well-kept secret," said Akillian Gallery Director Ellen Moller.

The gallery, located on Massasoit Community College's Canton campus on Randolph Street, recently unveiled its latest exhibit, aptly titled "Hot August Days."

The paintings are done in Plein Air style. Plein Air, as noted in billings for this exhibit, describes the school or technique "for painting or drawing made directly from nature and infused with a feeling of the open air."

The various artists' works are on exhibition through Aug. 30 at the Akillian Gallery, located within the administration wing of the building.

These hot August days might also be an ideal time for the Akillian Gallery itself to begin a more concerted effort for a higher profile within the local community and media, according to Moller.

"We want to begin to step up visibility for the Gallery and the kinds of exhibitions and artworks we've been showing here," said Moller, a Randolph resident who has directed the gallery since January.

"Hot August Days" contains a modest but impressive display of 16 oil and watercolor paintings by five New England area artists from the South

Shore, Cambridge, Brockton and Rhode Island.

The paintings range in subject from rural and oceanside scenes to landscapes and still lifes. But all convey a common theme portraying the lazy languor of late summer days reflected in the show's title.

The artists' styles are varied also. Most in diverse methods favor the traditions of representational painting - an individualized but realistic interpretation of a picture or scene, as shown in pieces by Eli Cedrone of Stoughton, William E. Beyer of Brockton, Marjorie Osborne Whorf of Hingham and Kelley Casey MacDonald of Rhode Island. The one exception is Madeline Neri LaFarge of Cambridge, who depicts sailboats afloat in various angles in wavy, abstract form.

The Akillian Gallery is dedicated and named in the memory of James Akillian, who spent over 20 years as assistant dean and business manager at the Canton campus of Massasoit Community College. Akillian was killed in a car accident in 2001.

Throughout the year, the Gallery, described by Moller as a visually welcoming space, hosts art exhibits, lectures, and meetings. The exhibitions include student and faculty works, as well as local and regional artists.

Moller added that the Akillian is becoming a great community resource and is available to local community organizations on a limited basis.

The gallery director is also a chairwoman of the Board of Trustees at The Milton Art Museum, whose collection is housed in residence in the

lobby of the Administration Wing building. The downstairs collection includes a remarkable assemblage of American, French and Oriental paintings, etchings and sculpture, formally displayed at the Cunningham School in Milton.

Moller describes her role as gallery director as being the person in common between the Milton Art Museum and Massasoit College, although as director she's employed strictly by Massasoit and the gallery is not affiliated with the Milton Museum.

"We would like to schedule exhibits, and work with faculty, students and outside artists to make use of the gallery space," Moller said. "I find that working with both the Museum and the College, we're a perfect match in terms of a location in a learning facility, and for them to have us as a resource for their arts program."

The director recalled that the Gallery was originally designed and proposed by the Architectural Department at Massasoit as a hands-on project for students in the department's curriculum. Room 207, as the gallery space was only known then, became popular as a place for architectural students to 'hang out.'

The Art Department at Massasoit the proposed about displaying some artworks in the room, to which the Architectural Department gladly complied.

Staff members at the college have also held meetings in the gallery space room.

"We're hoping to keep getting more involved with the arts community in the local area, bringing in more artists and varieties of shows," Moller said.