

Ryerson Woods holiday market looks to combine art and nature



Artist Cheryl Steiger of Highland Park holds one of her paintings of a bird on a pressed leaf she will display during a nature-themed holiday art market at the Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods Dec. 7-8. (Steve Sadin/Pioneer Press)

Steve Sadin Pioneer Press

Maggie Warren first displayed her art at the Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods as a Walden Elementary School third-grader in 2003.

Since then, she has combined her art with her work as an environmental scientist. She is now getting ready to participate in her second show at Brushwood — this time as an adult.

Warren will join 31 other artists at Brushwood's second annual nature-themed holiday art market from 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 8, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 9, at the center, 21850 N. Riverwoods Road.

The show features art with a nature focus, but not necessarily holiday themed, according to Julia Kemerer, Brushwood's director of art and administration.

She said a variety of media will be represented including photography, painting, prints, drawing, jewelry, fabric art and more.

"This is a good way to show our artists and let people do a little holiday shopping while they're here," Kemerer said.

When Warren was in elementary school, she drew a butterfly that made the cut for a Brushwood show. In the years since she has pursued her passion for both art and science. A science major in college, she said half her courses were in biology and the other half art.

"I do scientific illustrations," Warren said. "As a scientist we do high detail observation. I love drawing local wildlife. You can learn a lot about them like the foods they eat. I appreciate them more after I draw them."

Warren said she will be bringing pen and ink drawings of birds from her backyard including goldfinches and great blue herons.

"Art inspires conservation," Warren said. "I use art as a community service to inspire conservation."

Also bringing images of birds to the show will be Cheryl Steiger of Highland Park. Steiger said she is showing a collection birds painted with acrylics on

pressed leaves. She said her son brought her a gift of pressed leaves from a trip to Italy and she was looking for a use.

“Some of the leaves are from Milan and some are local leaves,” Steiger said. “I use a small brush and mount it on paper. You have to be very careful because it’s not like any (other) surface. It gives a natural feel to the whole piece. They are very colorful and can last forever.”

Images of birds and plants are part of the theme of prints Anne Gilna of Lincolnshire intends to display at the market. She said some of the prints of local birds and plants will be on greeting cards.

Lynn Quinn of Buffalo Grove is bringing a collection of gourds to display at the show. She said some are as small as an inch and a half and others as large as 18 inches in diameter. She said gourds are grown and have many uses.

“They’ve been around and used by humans for thousands and thousands of years,” Quinn said. “They’ve been used for storage of food. The long ones with a large round end were cut and used as ladles.”

Some of the gourds will have a holiday appeal. Quinn said she has some decorated to be used as ornaments. Another item she will have for sale are bird houses.

“They are a very sustainable place for birds to live,” Quinn said.

There will be more to the weekend than art at Brushwood, according to Kemerer. She said there will be a demonstration by local artists from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday. At 4 p.m. chef Gale Gand, a Deerfield native who now lives in Riverwoods, will give a cooking demonstration.

Since the forest preserve is not usually open at night, Kemerer said an unique opportunity will be a hike at 6 p.m. on Saturday where participants can see the area after dark with a guide.

Activities Sunday include nature photography done by military veterans and holiday singing.

Steve Sadin is a freelance reporter.