



“There is no force so powerful as an idea whose time has come.” —Everett Dirksen



Happy Anniversary,

The logo for AVA 40 features the letters 'AVA' in a stylized, blocky font. The 'A' is black, the 'V' is red, and the second 'A' is yellow. To the right of 'AVA' is a large, light gray number '40'.

GALLERY CELEBRATES FOUR DECADES OF ART

It's often been said that "mighty oaks from little acorns grow." Lebanon, New Hampshire's vibrant art center, the AVA Gallery and Art Center (known simply as AVA), celebrates its 40th anniversary this year and is a perfect case in point.

The "Community Gallery," as it was originally called, was launched in the summer of 1973 in an unheated barn in Norwich, Vermont, the creative vision of Emmabelle Egbert, an artist in her 60s with five grown children and energy to burn. "Emmabelle wanted to start a gallery and didn't know how," recalls Hanover, New Hampshire-based artist and gallery co-founder Elizabeth (Lili) Mayor. "But she had quite sophisticated tastes in art and strong ideas, so she just jumped in." Egbert quickly attracted nearly two dozen artists eager to exhibit their work, and the Community Gallery was off and running.

Art on the Move

While the barn was fine for summer months, when temperatures began to drop it quickly became clear that warmer environs were required. Egbert and Mayor began searching for an appropriate display space in Hanover and soon struck a deal with the owner of Main Street-based Harris Business Machines, which allowed the artists to exhibit their works above the typewriters. When that business closed, the Community Gallery took over the space. The gallery's next move was to Allen Street in Hanover, behind the Dartmouth College Bookstore, where they remained until 1990 when the bookstore's expansion plans forced another move, this time to the neighboring town of Lebanon. The gallery was



Left: AVA's welcoming lobby, with banners by artist Roger Goldenberg suspended from the ceiling. Bottom from left: Hanover, New Hampshire based artist and gallery co-founder Elizabeth Mayor with AVA executive director Bente Torjusen. Exhibiting artist Dolly Miller talking with a visitor at The Way We Work—Work by Artists with Studios in the AVA Building. Judith Bastianelli and former H. W. Carter & Sons factory worker Thelma Follensbee at AVA's Denim Party on January 26, 2013. Vibraphonist playing at the Denim Party.



Near right grouping: Community members enjoying a variety of exhibitions. All of AVA's opening receptions are free and open to the public. Opposite grouping: Students in Susan Walp's Still Life Intensive class. Susan is shown at far right in black apron.



The Carter Building

Near right grouping: Vintage photos from the H. W. Carter & Sons factory. Opposite: ART STOP! participants at the Denim Party.





now known as the Alliance for the Visual Arts (AVA); the name was changed in 1976 after the artists decided that Community Gallery was too pedestrian. AVA rented space in the former H. W. Carter & Sons overall factory at 11 Bank Street, where it remains to this day.

The search for AVA's new home had been led by Mayor and the organization's director, Bente Torjusen, who joined the gallery in 1987. "As soon as Lili and I saw the Carter factory, we knew it was special," Torjusen recalls. "The building was rickety and the floors were covered with this hideous linoleum, but it was clear that underneath it all the space had good bones and incredible potential. It had high ceilings and plenty of natural light and just exuded this wonderful raw feeling that was conducive to making art."

Captivated by what they saw, Mayor and Torjusen enthusiastically reported back to



AVA offers a range of educational programming, including ART STOP!, a free after-school program for students in grades 5-8, funded by the Couch Family Foundation, and Dartmouth Art for Kids, a unique art program for children with chronic medical conditions, funded by the Brie Fund in memory of Brieanna Weinstein.

the Board of Directors, and AVA subsequently arranged to rent two spaces in the building, one for a gallery and one for the organization's increasingly popular educational programs, which had been offered on a relatively modest scale since 1976.

Initially classes were offered to anyone who was interested and were held in the Allen Street gallery alongside exhibitions, as no other space was available. Participants ran

the gamut, from professional artists looking to increase their skills to children seeking an outlet for their creative energy.

An Old Factory Is Repurposed

In the intervening years, AVA continued to expand its footprint as well as its role in the region's cultural community. Classes and workshops proved wildly popular and educational offerings steadily increased to include lectures, films, and summer camps. Artists, drawn in by the factory's soaring spaces and abundant natural light, sought to rent studio space in the building. Over the course of the next decade, the old factory,



which had once held other businesses as well as AVA, began taking on the persona of an art building. In 2003, AVA acquired the Carter building and realized a long-held dream of owning its own space. An extensive renovation led by renowned architect Stuart White of the Lebanon-based firm Banwell Architects transformed the old factory into a model of energy-efficient architecture, earning AVA the highly coveted Gold Level LEED-certification and opening up a whole new avenue of educational opportunities in sustainable architecture and green building. "We recycled an entire building," Torjusen asserts delightedly. "The process cost us a bit more upfront, but we quickly recouped the expenses incurred in retrofitting the building for enhanced energy efficiency

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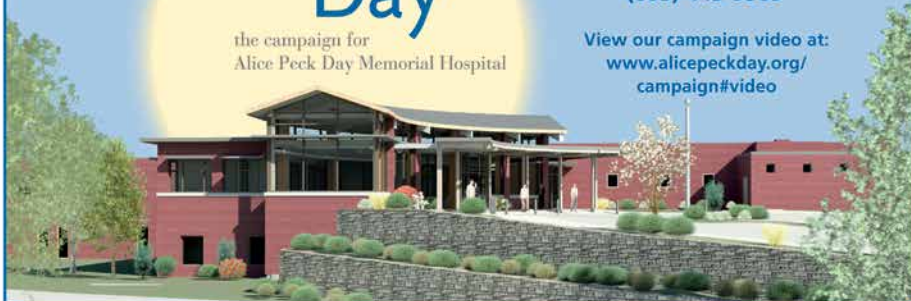
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Top left: Intern Kayla Gilbert and exhibition coordinator Margaret Jacobs hang a painting by Joseph Saginor, one of the 20 artists with private studios in the Carter-Kelsey building. Top right and above: AVA has more than 3,000 square feet of stunning exhibition space.

while maintaining the character of the old factory—the open spaces, the hardwood floors, the incredible light, the honesty of the setting. It's a wonderful backdrop for the art being shown as well as that being created. It doesn't get any better than that!"

"Hasten Slowly"

"AVA has become a very strong organization under Bente's leadership," Mayor observes. "She has, in many respects, brought us back



to our roots. When we began 40 years ago, it was as a community gallery, but the focus was more inward—as artists, we were ‘all about art,’ concentrating on our own work, holding critique sessions, that sort of thing. Today, the focus is different. The vision is outward, toward the broader community. Now, art is for everyone.” Torjusen echoes this sentiment, noting that while not everyone has the particular talent



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Your Face... Your Story... Your Way

Dogs are welcome at AVA, too! Toto, seen here with Betsy Peabody, is a regular.



required to become an artist, anyone can enjoy an art experience. The tremendous breadth of AVA's educational programs underscores this outlook and encompasses a wide demographic, from toddlers to senior citizens, and from adults with disabilities to children with chronic medical conditions.

"Ideas are never lacking," Torjusen notes, "but funding is always a challenge." Federal funding is becoming increasingly scarce, and state funding for the arts has decreased dramatically as well, Torjusen explains. Yet the director is not dissuaded from her goal of making the arts accessible to all. "Everything begins with the artists—they're the core of our mission," she asserts. "We have many opportunities, but the challenge is timing. My motto is 'hasten slowly.'" One cannot be static, Torjusen insists, but rather must always push forward, leveraging the talents of the board members, staff members, and artists

available at any given time. The key, however, is to grow at a reasonable rate, so that the organization is enhanced and strengthened while at the same time able to sustain itself. "You also need to be able to recognize those instances when taking a calculated risk can be beneficial," Torjusen says. AVA asks the community for considerable support, she admits, but the organization also gives a great deal back to residents of the Upper Valley through exhibitions and diverse educational initiatives including a scholarship program and numerous low-cost or free offerings. "Over the years we've seen evidence time and again that for many, many people a creative spark is lit at AVA, and those who enjoy our offerings take it from there. As we celebrate AVA's 40th anniversary, we will be presenting yet another year rich in creative expression and content," Torjusen concludes. "We'll have something for everyone!" 🌱

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2013 EXHIBITIONS

AVA's 2013 Silent Auction

(March 16-23)
Preview and Early-Bird Bidding:
Saturday, March 16 through Saturday, March 23, 11-5pm, and Thursday, March 21, 11am-7pm.
Silent Auction Party and Final Bids:
Saturday, March 23, 5:30-8pm.
Admission required.

AVA Beginnings:

Featuring Work by Founding and Longtime AVA Artists (April 5-May 3)
Opening Reception: Friday, April 5, 5-7pm

Drawn Together:

Drawing Invitational and Student Work from the class Drawn Together: 40 Hours-40 Years! (May 10-June 7)
Opening Reception: Friday, May 10, 5-7pm

AVA's 20th Annual Juried Summer Exhibition

(June 21-July 26)
Opening Reception: Friday, June 21, 5-7pm

Award Winners from Former Juried Summer Exhibitions

(August 2-30)
Opening Reception: Friday, August 2, 5-7pm

Celebrating AVA Founder Elizabeth Mayor

(September 6-October 4)
Opening Reception: TBD

AVA Selections

(October 11-November 15)
Opening Reception: Friday, October 11, 5-7pm

Annual Holiday Exhibition and Sale

(November 29-December 24)
Opening Reception: Friday, November 29, 5-7pm



Opening reception for *The Hale Street Gang: Portraits in Writing*, a multimedia exhibition featuring photos by Jack Rowell highlighting the positive relationship between memory and aging.

AVA Gallery and Art Center
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