

# West Main Artists Co-op

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loosely, so that the impression leaves more for the viewer's input. This is always the tension when I paint."

Professionally, Story taught elementary and junior high school. She began painting as a hobby about 11 years ago and has taken art instruction locally from Claire Miller Hopkins and Jim Carson. She has lived in Spartanburg for about 35 years. She has been a WMAC member for the past two years. Membership to WMAC is a juried process.

"Joining the Co-op and being able to display my work was a bucket list item for me, an irregular painter," the Georgia native said. "Being in this group with constant exposure to so many types and techniques of art is very tempting. However, as I come to this hobby late in life — I first picked up a brush when I was 60 — I want to improve my drawing and continue to study under painters whose style is similar. I have much left to learn," said Story.

"I am inspired by the beauty of nature, especially the play of light and shadow," she continued. "I am intrigued and challenged to duplicate color and to combine them in a pleasing representation of the real. That's why a large portion of my paintings are of landscapes."

West Main Artists Co-op is a nonprofit and all-volunteer arts agency located at on



Work by Carol Story

West Main Street in Spartanburg. It has three galleries, two retail shops, and studio space for about 50 artists. It is a grassroots arts agency that welcomes everyone, and it has a philosophical slant toward "Art by the people, for the people."

For more information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Co-op at 864/804-6501 or visit ([WestMainArtists.org](#)).

## West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, Features Works by Mary E. Carlisle

The West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, will present *Reminiscent Objects*, a collection of found and handmade cotton mill artifacts by Mary E. Carlisle, an Assistant Professor of Ceramics at Converse College, on view from Feb. 15 through Mar. 10, 2018. A reception will be held on Feb. 15, from 5:30-8:30pm.

The exhibit is insightful into the industrial era of the cotton mill and the impact it made on cultures around the world.

"Several years ago, I began collecting a group of objects from the textile industry. These materials included a large number of bobbins, spindles and shuttles of various types. As my collection grew, I began to see the marks and patterns of the individual craftsmen who created these tools as well as those who used them," Carlisle said.

"I was drawn to the patina of age from the touch of the worker's hand and the thread that was repeatedly wound and unwound around them," adds Carlisle. "As I began responding to these forms, I was also experimenting with alternative processes for working with clay. For example, turning clay on a wood lathe. Or soaking cotton yarn in slip and allowing the cotton to burn out, leaving only the shell of the form replicated in clay. I later began combining my clay objects, which looked industrial, with the collected objects from the textile industry. This exhibition is both a continuation of and expansion on the work created for my MFA thesis series 'Work = Worship,' which combined the use of found objects from textile mills with elements made in clay such as thread and gears. Some objects are exact replications and others my own interpretations."

Carlisle is a native of Greenville, SC, and holds a bachelor's degree in studio art from Converse College, a master's degree in studio art from Lesley University in Cambridge, MA, and another master's degree in arts administration from Drexel University in Philadelphia. Her studio work has been in ceramics. She has exhibited extensively since 1999, when she took first place in open media at the Spartanburg Sidewalk Art Show.

Exhibiting experience include Converse College; Milliken Gallery; The Fine Arts Center of Greenville County; City Hall in Columbia, SC; ArtFields in Lake City, SC; Cambridge; Boston; and Asheville, NC. In addition to her teaching at



Work by Mary E. Carlisle

Converse College, she has been an adjunct instructor arts management and course instructor at Columbia College. She currently lives in Greenville.

"I have driven past abandoned textile mills on a daily basis for much of my life and heard stories passed down from family who worked in the mills. I think so many of us who live in textile towns drive by these spaces, and now even live and work in them as they are repurposed, but are removed from the original function," Carlisle said. "Industrial objects once served a very specific function, yet now they are devoid of utility, just as the spindles I use in my work are empty of the thread they used to carry. I have placed these objects in relation to one another to provoke the viewer to think about tensions between material, process, meanings, context, history, and method. I also want viewers to see these objects not only as relics of industry but as objects that were handcrafted. They were just as functional to industry as utilitarian ceramic object would be in the household."

"Over the years, Carlisle has collected hundreds of textile objects, such as spindles, shuttles, and bobbins, some given to by friends, other purchased at antique stores in the Carolinas or online. "While the configuration of my work installed in a space often echoes the machines of industry, the composition also creates a contemplative space, as the handmade softens the industrial," she explained. "Relics, and imagined, are gathered and displayed. I seek to evoke a sense of ritual — a ritual that comes from work. The ritual comes partly from my own serial act of making, which is similar to the repetitive acts of the mill hand who tended their posts as rhythmically as one would say the rosary. One could get lost in their work — in this repetitive act that required concentration

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without distraction.

"I hope that viewers will see something familiar in a new way. During the reception for my MFA thesis I was approached by a woman from India who had no connection to the university but came inside saying she had seen my work through the window facing Massachusetts Avenue. She, too, grew up in a former textile town and worked in mill. The objects reminded her of home. Exhibiting some of these works in New England also brought similar stories from natives of that area. During such a divisive time in our country, it is nice to realize that what constitutes 'home' — whether our own experience, the architecture we drive by daily, or the stories and objects passed down to us have some commonality regardless of where we are."

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## West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, Features Works by Claire Louka

The West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, will present *As It Lingers*, showing a collection of paintings that explore life's transient moments by Claire Louka, on view from Feb. 5 - 28, 2018. A reception will be held on Feb. 15, from 5-9pm.

Louka is an art teacher in Spartanburg's public school system. Much of her work is characterized by stylized and vivid people in settings that cause curious contemplation. "Some would describe me as an expressionist, some illustrative: I would call myself a narrative expressionist," she said. "I am an expressionist with illustrative line work, my figures are very distinctly mine and somewhat caricature-like. There is a lot of energy and movement in my use of color and brushwork, and my figures often depict expressions

of contemplation. They are observers and thinkers. I don't take myself too seriously though, I often include humorous elements in my work to lighten the mood of those deep thoughts."

Louka's two-dimensional works are primarily produced with acrylics, but she also uses mixed media, such as inks, graphite, pastels, and charcoal. In describing this exhibit, she said: "(My) expressive, narrative paintings focus on transient moments connected to the human condition. Even in the absence of human figures, a human presence is implied and emotion evoked. The exaggerated gestures and earnest expressions of the figures draw curiosity toward what must be on their mind. I communicate the lingering sentiments of these characters

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