



# Celebrating Life for One Night Only

September 30, 2011

by Pat Rogers

**DISPATCH - Sept 29, 2011 (Thursday; 11:35 p.m.)**

## **Greenport, NY**

If you blink, you'll miss it. Benton Nyce Gallery is presenting another one of their guerilla art shows on Saturday at Brecknock Hall. This time, it's not only art that's being celebrated.



"passage" by Arden Scott. Courtesy of the artist.

The exhibition, "חַי (chai, life)" is also a fundraiser for the Liberal-Conservative synagogue, Congregation Tifereth Israel in Greenport.

The exhibition is free. No tickets or reservations are needed. A portion of art sales will be donated to Congregation Tifereth Israel. Donations will be gladly accepted, said Jennifer Benton, who organized the show. The opening reception and entire exhibition takes place on Saturday from 7 to 9 p.m.

Departing from the gallery's typically MO of presenting shows in a vacant building, "חַי (chai, life)" takes place in historic Brecknock Hall. The 19th century stone building was the perfect setting to display sculpture and furniture that's made from natural materials and channels the energy of life and the spiritual, Benton said.

There are only three artists exhibiting in this carefully curated show. Sculptor Arden Scott, sculptor Robert Oxnam and fine furniture-maker David Nyce.



"Windswept" by Robert Oxnam. Courtesy of the artist.

Each were chosen for the way life is implied, honored and entwined with natural materials, Benton said.

"While the unique perspective of each artist marks their work, it is clear that all three have such great respect for the organic materials they choose," wrote Benton. "They use their trained hands

sparingly, never disturbing the powers of nature, but letting that cosmic energy, that life, which is called “חַי” in Hebrew, reveal its wonders to us.”

The sympatico continues in the way each artist allows the organic forms to inform the art. The natural material has a unique energy that become an integral part of the art, Benton said.

Celebrating life and its connection to something larger seemed a perfect match for an art show that aims to raise funds and awareness for the historic Greenport synagogue of Congregation Tifereth Israel, Benton said.

The subtext of the exhibition fundraiser is community. Congregation Tifereth Israel and the art community each weaves something essential into North Fork life, Benton said.

For the show, David Nyce made furniture from a Beech tree that grew next to the St. Agnes R.C. Church on Front Street in Greenport. Nyce “honors the tree’s history by allowing the bark, the ‘live edge’ of the material, to remain in the meticulously-finished pieces,” Benton said. An unexpected historic twist linked the tree to the synagogue through a former property owner where the tree formerly lived, said Benton.

Nyce’s furniture has sass with a bit of understated attitude.

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David Nyce furniture made  
from a Greenport beech  
tree. Courtesy Benton  
Nyce Gallery.

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Nyce’s philosophy of fine furniture means each piece is made by hand with the aim of creating “singular pieces of work through simple, honest means,” according to his website.

When not making furniture, Nyce can be found in Greenport Village. He’s been the village mayor since he was elected in 2007.

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David Nyce furniture made from a  
Greenport beech tree. Courtesy Benton Nyce  
Gallery.

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Robert Oxnam's driftwood sculptures take a page from Chinese scholar rocks, which are "believed to represent the linkage between individual creativity and 'qui' or cosmic energy," said Benton.



"Dream Catcher?" by Robert Oxnam.  
Courtesy of the artist.

Oxnam is a China scholar, author and a former president of the Asia Society (1981-1992). He was a Special Correspondence for the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour and hosted a nine-part special on China, according to Oxnam's website.

Turning his attention to art, Oxnam works collaboratively with the wood to coax a new life through art. His process begins by spotting driftwood pieces that have "an unusual spark of life within it," according to his Artist's Statement.



"Snowy Mountain" by Robert Oxnam.  
Courtesy of the artist.

Summing up his role, Oxnam offered: "I do not use tools to shape them to my own vision; rather I preserve the existing shapes and let the driftwood pieces speak for themselves."



"Winged Victory" by Robert Oxnam. Courtesy of the artist.



"Entrapped" by Robert Oxnam. Courtesy of artist.

Arden Scott fashions ethereal sculptures in the form of boats. Her work implies more than is physically supplied. Depths of spirituality are plumbed through fashioning what appears to be

skeletal remains of hearty boats that formerly cut through waters and surmounted storms; at least, for at time.



“beneath the brine” by Arden Scott. Courtesy of the artist.

Scott will exhibit one large sculpture filling an entire room of Brecknock Hall, said Benton. Etchings and drawings by Scott are also part of the exhibition.



“a calculus of possibilities” by Arden Scott. Courtesy of the artist.

Scott’s art has been exhibited at the New Museum and the 1973 Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial in Manhattan, The Brooklyn Museum, the Parrish Art Museum in Southampton, Guild Hall Museum in East Hampton and others. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and outdoor venues across the United States.



“what remains” by Arden Scott. Courtesy of the artist.

**BASIC FACTS:** “יָחַי (chai, life)” will be held on Saturday, Oct 1, 2011 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Brecknock Hall, One Brecknock Road, Greenport. Admission is free. The exhibition will only be open during the reception. The art show benefits Congregation Tifereth Israel of Greenport.

It is presented by the Benton Nyce Gallery. For information: [bnnyce@gmail.com](mailto:bnnyce@gmail.com)

Arden Scott: [www.ardenscott.com](http://www.ardenscott.com)

Robert Oxnam: [www.robertoxnam.com](http://www.robertoxnam.com)

David Nyce: [www.davidnycefurniture.com](http://www.davidnycefurniture.com)

Congregation Tifereth Israel: [www.pbirman.com/tifereth/](http://www.pbirman.com/tifereth/)

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