

# From Picket Fence to New York City Gallery

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by Pat Rogers

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## **SHELTER ISLAND, NY-**

Heartwarming tales aren't often found in the art world but outsider artist Harald Marinius Olson found himself in the middle of one several years ago. Now his Cinderella story is being shared in *Shelter Island: Art + Friendship + Discover*. The documentary screens tomorrow night during the 2012 Hamptons Take 2 Documentary Film Festival. The film is directed by Michael Canzoniero, an award-winning filmmaker who stumbled upon Olson while visiting relatives on Shelter Island, NY in 2010.

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The combination of destitute artist who lives to paint and the Jimmy Stewart-like kindness of the single father who made sure he could was too good of a story to pass up, said Canzoniero. Knowing the potential film would never draw big-money backers, Canzoniero grabbed his personal camera and started filming anyway, keeping the kindness going.

"There was something pure about Harald, as an artist," said Canzoniero. "All he talks about is painting...that's all that he cares for."

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What makes Olson's devotion unusual is the basics of life didn't strike him. Before fellow Shelter Islander Jimmy Olinkiewicz extended his hand, Olson was living in a shack without heat or hot water. Olson treasure hunted for paint where he could find it—most often in trash and among things people discarded, said Canzoniero.

Olinkiewicz set Olson up in a gas station he owned, transforming the space into an artist studio and ad hoc gallery where paintings began to pile. To help sell Olson's paintings, the works were often propped against a picket fence. Olinkiewicz is a single father to four children, one who is autistic. Feeling there might be a kinship there was part of the motivation for his initial kindness, said Canzoniero.



Harald Olson and Jimmy Olinkiewicz.

Hoping that he could bank some future kindness for his son in the Karmic balance was another reason for staying the course and become Olson's art patron, friend and informal guardian, said Canzoniero.

"Jimmy is the real hero in this story," he said.

While filming, an unexpected gift arrived. Abstract artist David Rankin took an interest in Olson's work. Rankin exhibits his abstract works internationally and has a studio on Shelter Island and New

York City. One touching moment was captured in front the camera when Rankin proclaimed Olson as “a brother of the brush,” said Canzoniero.

Rankin facilitated a SoHo gallery exhibition with money plunked down by Olinkiewicz and some neighbors to pay for expenses. In a fateful whisk, the colorful gas pumps that had become a Shelter Island icon were transported to the Andre Zarra Gallery for Olson’s solo exhibition “Pumps, Boxes and Glass Paintings.”



While in New York City, Olson visited his first major art museum with Olinkiewicz, said Canzoniero. Vasily Kandinsky’s (1866-1944) work was on view at the Guggenheim. Olson found an immediate connection between the historic artist’s work and his own, said Canzoniero.

In making *Shelter Island: Art + Friendship + Discover*, Canzoniero aimed to capture the essence of the people and the relationships that make up a moving story.

Revealing the life of a societal outsider and a naturally gifted but untrained artist was crucial in the filming process, said Canzoniero. Knowing the documentary wasn’t funded meant Canzoniero focused on the story’s trajectory, as it unexpectedly unfolded, and capturing what was essential without tangents.

“Filmmaking is filmmaking,” he said. “Documentaries are the best way to tell a story on a low budget. This was a story that needed to be told. ”

**BASIC FACTS:** *Shelter Island: Art + Friendship + Discover* will screen tomorrow at 8:15 p.m. at Hamptons Take 2 Documentary Film Festival at Bay Street Theatre in Sag Harbor, NY. The film won an award for Biography / Historical Documentary in Arclight’s 2nd Annual Documentary Film Festival.

**Michael Canzoniero** is an award-winning filmmaker. His first feature film “Wedding Bros” premiered at the 2008 SXSW Film Festival and was distributed by Universal/ScreenMedia in 2009. His films have screened at over 50 film festivals including Sundance, Tribeca, Toronto, Edinburgh and the Hamptons International Film Festival. He is a principal at Studio 13 in New York City.

*Shelter Island: Art + Friendship + Discover* was co-produced by Carl MacLaren and Shawn Bell. Cinematography was by Shawn Bell and editing by Ari Feldman. Original music and sound design were by composer Aaron Drake.

Info on the *Shelter Island: Art + Friendship + Discover* can be found at [shelterislandmovie.com](http://shelterislandmovie.com).

For a trailer, click [shelterislandmovie.com/trailer.html](http://shelterislandmovie.com/trailer.html)

**Harald Olson**'s art can be viewed at [haraldolson.com](http://haraldolson.com), courtesy of Canzoniero.

**Hamptons Take 2 Documentary Film Festival** takes place from Friday, Nov 30, through Sunday, Dec 2, 2012 at Bay Street Theatre, 2 Bay St, Sag Harbor, NY. For a film lineup and details, visit [ht2ff.com](http://ht2ff.com).

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