



Springs Invitational Art Stories Launches to Reveal the Artists Behind the Exhibited Art

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by Pat Rogers

The Springs Invitational at Ashawagh Hall is a beloved tradition for East Hampton artist community and The Hamptons at large. The Invitational's history stretches back to the days when [Jackson Pollock](#) was pouring paint in an area barn as one of growing number of "local" artists arriving to the area. Considering himself part of the community, Pollock participated in art shows at Ashawagh Hall and donated art for an annual August community gathering now known as the Fisherman's Fair...another East Hampton tradition.

An initiative of the Springs Improvement Society, the Springs Invitational has brought together artists working in East Hampton Town and beyond. Led by an invited curator whose identity is typically secreted until the last moment possible, this year's Invitational carries extra weight as it is the 50th anniversary. Opening annually during the first weekend of August, this year's edition will be held August 4 to 20, 2017.

To help celebrate the show, this year's curator, Teri Kennedy, has decided to bring things back to its core and invite only artists living and working within East Hampton Town versus the Hamptons or East End. Also for this year, Jackson Pollock receives a posthumous Proclamation from East Hampton Town making him an Honorary [Bonacker](#) with former curators invited to attend to make the ceremony special. To help mark the designation, a mini-show honoring Pollock will be installed inside the front foyer of Ashawagh Hall, organized by the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center located nearby. [A Bonacker is a descendent of East Hampton's original settlers who landed at Accabonac Harbor, located north of East Hampton Village and encompasses Springs, where Pollock's studio and Ashawagh Hall is located.]

Kennedy has arranged another unique twist for this year's Invitational: A series of vignettes told from the exhibiting artists point of view to deepen the experience of viewing the art chosen for the show. The series will publish at [Hamptons Art Hub](#) starting this week and continues through the exhibition's run.

The series, "Springs Invitational Art Stories 2017," shines a spotlight on art and artist practices of [Will Ryan](#), [Phyllis Hammond](#), Tracy Harris, [Setha Low](#), [Kat O'Neill](#), [Jerry Schwabe](#), [Phyllis Chillingworth](#), [Carl Scorza](#), [Janet Jennings](#), [Athos Zacharias](#), [Nicolas Tarr](#) and others.

In addition to presenting the story behind the art, some installments will explore unique dynamics shared among artists related to the art on view. Expect to discover an East Hampton en plein air

group; the give and take between a master painter and her students; and the ways a shared view influences (or doesn't) the respective art practices of two artists who work in studios sited on the same property.

As curator, Kennedy arranged and organized the series to add an extra dimension to the Invitational. The aim, she said, is to bring to the surface some of the relationships and qualities that make being part of today's artist colony a special one for artists. The series also allows Invitational visitors to discover something about the artist who made the work to add another layer of viewing the Invitational as a whole, she said.

"This is an important Invitational because it's the 50th anniversary," said Kennedy. "I want to give the show its due."

Like the curators before her, Kennedy has spent the last year preparing for the show and invited artists to partake. In recent years, each invited curator adds a wrinkle to the formula of invited artists who formerly exhibited with new artists. The Invitational is a benefit for the Springs Improvement Society, the non-profit caretaker of Ashawagh Hall.

At its heart, the Invitational celebrates the Artists of the Springs and the Hamptons and operates as an informal survey of the artists working here. In recent years, the Invitational has adopted a secondary aim of expanding its reach to involve new artists and present a pool of artists who may not be readily known. For instance, last year's curator Nicolas Tarr, expanded the geographic reach of invited artists to encompass the entirety of the East End and purposefully invited artists who wouldn't necessarily be known to an Ashawagh Hall audience. Artists were also requested to submit new or recent work to the show.

Kennedy narrowed the geographic lens but decided to conduct studio visits to discover art that may be less obvious by known artists and to discover works by artists who may not have an extensive exhibition history. An artist and poet herself, Kennedy is also intimately familiar with the nooks and crannies of Ashawagh Hall and sought work that would play to its unique attributes, she said. Her own art is not included in this year's Invitational.

"I think it's remarkable that amount of talent and great art that artists are making," she said. "It's not all about celebrities and monetary success or the kudos of art critics or for dealer representation. It's about artists who live and breathe creativity and truly imbue the spirit of the air here."

Even with the geographic constriction, making decisions of which artists to select has been a tough one. The 2017 Invitational features 110 artists with the youngest being 23 years old and the oldest artists in their 90s. To create an Invitational that presents a broad view of the artists today, Kennedy said she's include a wide range of mediums including fabric art and functional ceramics on a broader scale than previous editions.

A preview story on the Invitational will publish next week at Hamptons Art Hub. The first artist story in the "Springs Invitational Art Stories 2017" features Amagansett artist Will Ryan.



Springs Invitational Curator Teri Kennedy at Ashawagh Hall. Photo by Christine Newman. Courtesy Teri Kennedy.

BASIC FACTS: “Springs Invitational Art Stories 2017” will publish around 11 stories featuring artists presenting an inside view of the art selected for the Springs Invitational and reveal the way their artist process contributes to the work on view.

The Springs Invitational will be held August 4 to 20, 2017 at Ashawagh Hall. An Opening Reception will take place Friday, August 4 from 5 to 8 p.m. Jackson Pollock is awarded Honorary Bonacker Status on Friday, August 11 at 6 p.m. The Curator’s Tour of the Invitational takes place on Sunday, August 13 from 11 a.m. to noon. Ashawagh Hall is located at 780 Springs Fireplace Rd, East Hampton, NY 11937. www.ashawagh-hall.org.

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