

Nancy Virbila

Collage artist Nancy Virbila's work made a big impression in South County when she moved to Hope Valley, RI from New Jersey in 2016 and started showing her work at area art associations, most notably South County Art Association (SCAA) and Artists Cooperative Gallery of Westerly (ACGOW), where she was a juried member. Her joyous and often complex work, a mix of art and craft, quickly began winning awards and attracting collectors.

Nancy's primary inspiration has always been Nature. Her landscapes, representational but full of imagination, are mixed media pieces using vivid colors and earthy textures from widely sourced handmade and decorative papers on a prepared ground of acrylic paint, inks, watercolors, or pastels. She often described her work as "painting with paper," tearing and placing various paper pieces to form objects or shapes in the landscape. Her work is free but also detailed, and she carried that attention to detail into her framing. A professional framer for many years, Nancy framed all her own work, cutting her own mats and selecting frames that suited each piece. She particularly liked putting small pieces into large, often unequal-sided, mats; with this skill and inclination, she never had to work in a standard size, but was able to approach each piece more whimsically and let it take her where it went.

Nancy loved music, and her titles drew heavily on favorite song titles and lyrics. She kept a book with ideas for titles that reads like a record of popular music that she loved. A close look at some of her pieces reveals that she sometimes incorporated sheet music into her artwork.

An artist throughout her adult life, Nancy has a BFA in Art and Design from Centenary College in New Jersey. She has shown her work extensively in New Jersey, Rhode Island, North Carolina, Connecticut (where she is an elected artist of Mystic Museum of Art), and Massachusetts, in venues in

addition to SCAA and ACGOW including the Norman Rockwell Museum (MA), Franklin Square Art Center(NC), Wilmington Art Association (NC), Conanicut Art Association (RI), Wickford Art Association(RI), and numerous small galleries. Her award-winning work is published in two books on collage, *Collage Art: The Step-by-Step Guide and Showcase* by Jennifer Atkinson (Rockport Publishers) and *Collage Sourcebook: Exploring the Art and Techniques of Collage* by Jennifer Atkinson, Holly Harrison, and Paula Grasdal (Apple Press Ltd).

Nancy made many friends here in Rhode Island and for many years volunteered at the Jonnycake Center in Westerly in the Food Pantry. She loved South County Art Association, where she was in nearly every all-media show. In a 2017 article in local newspaper *The Independent*, she was asked if she had a favorite local art spot and answered:

“I would have to say South County Art Association in Kingston. I like the exhibits and the active group of artists and the many classes they offer. I have done a picture framing demonstration and a collage workshop with the group.”

In addition, Nancy was a generous volunteer at SCAA, helping to hang shows and volunteering as a gallery sitter at the holiday show. It is fitting that this retrospective show and sale is here at SCAA, a place she felt at home.