

NORTH COUNTY NEWS

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VanGlen: A New Gallery In Town

Photos and story by Abby Luby



Floor Sculpture by Wilfredo Morel

Opening a new art gallery in Peekskill is always a welcome event. A veteran host to artists since the early 1900's, Peekskill has embraced not only visual artists but popular performers - be it famous singer Paul Robison in the 1940's to today's Neville Brothers at the Paramount Theatre. Offering a new and different space to exhibit visual art in an art community is like offering a writer extra pages to complete that novel. It's both an encouraging statement for artists while reflecting an art-supporting community.

When the new VanGlen Gallery in Peekskill opened in June there was an enthusiastic welcome by artists and art aficionados. Gallery owner, John Payne, felt strongly enough about showing art that he turned over half his living space to exhibit art.

"I've furnished the whole space for the gallery," said Payne, gesturing to the open space with only about a dozen pieces, all clearly lit. "I don't want to show too many pieces at once because the art has to breathe."

Payne named the gallery VanGlen after his children Vanessa and Glenfield. The gallery is on the second floor right next door to Kathleen's Tea Room on Main Street.

Work by Wilfredo Morel

The opening show at VanGlen is "Musical Pieces," and features work by sculptor Wilfredo Morel. Morel's work can be found locally. His work includes a riverfront sculpture at China Pier in Peekskill made from recycled piping from the old Flieschman's Gin Plant, a life size bronze of William E. Shands, a centerpiece of a community housing project in Peekskill and "The Children's Sculpture" at the Blue Mountain Reservation.

Morel's two dimensional pieces at VanGlen are rough cut metal pieces shaped into musical instruments. Morel

cut the pieces from a large John Deere tractor door with a welding torch. Golden bronze is melted around the perimeter, softening the otherwise sharp edges. In "Congas," a residual green enamel from the tractor lingers on the two drum shapes joined by gold welds, transforming the metal into a lyrical, organic piece. "Man and Trumpet" – a piece using a human form, blends both musician and instrument into one solid union – Morel apparently understands the music experience either as a listener or a performer.

The "f-holes" in "Bass" appear with other openings which somehow seem natural and is a sign of how much applied intense heat turns unyielding metal into a malleable form allowing for creativity. Thick, black stubby legs in "Piano" are a caricature with green paint on the open piano top bearing scratches from the piece's former life as a tractor door.

In his artist statement Morel claims to be inspired by Picasso and the cubist movement in general. This is more obvious in his single, untitled floor piece of rusted metal detritus. The piece conveys an arching human form with an energetic base of pipes as a mass of limbs and clanking innards reaching up to a lone, angled clear square 'head.'

Three by artist Janet Barry

The exhibition includes interpretive works of Morel's sculpture by Peekskill Graphic Artist Janet Barry. Barry's three large digital images compliment Morel's sculpture, reflecting the frenzied, aural component that brings the instruments alive. The enlarged images were transferred to a translucent material, painted, etched and drawn over and projected on a light box. "Dreams" is a luminescent abstract of swirls and lines that are a take off of the basic line of the instrument forms.

John Payne: artist and connoisseur

Payne, who already has two shows planned for the fall, is no stranger to the either the local or international art scene. He is known as a fine arts photographer in New York City and Westchester. He moved up to Peekskill from New York City about seven years ago after spending most of his career as a producer and manager in the film, theatre, record and live concert industry. Recently Peekskill benefited from Payne's Theatre Management skills when he produced Peekskill Private I's, an interactive tour and street theatre event.

On tap for the VanGlen Gallery, Payne has booked new work by Roman Kriheli from September 23rd – October 28th, followed by a unique look at Haitian Art starting in November.

"I want this to be fun, but I also want to be selective," said Payne adding that he will be looking at work by new and emerging artists as well as established artists.

The exhibition will be on display until August 12

[VanGlen Gallery](#)

981 Main Street • Peekskill, NY 10566 • 930.7866

Gallery hours are Fridays 4:00 – 8:00pm; Saturdays and Sundays 1:00 – 5:00pm