

Continuing the relationship



Cherry Stone Gallery will honor the late Sally Nerber with an exhibit and gala to celebrate her life

By Haley Cote

Sally Nerber and Lizzie Upham never expected to make history when they opened the Cherry Stone Gallery in Wellfleet in 1971. Yet the partners in both business and life did just that, showcasing modernists like Jasper Johns, Nam June Paik, and Myron Stout, whose work had never before been exhibited on Cape Cod.

“Sally and Lizzie were trailblazers,” says Gallery Director Brenda Correia, of the late Upham and Nerber, who were both retired teachers when they opened the gallery. “The Cherry Stone Gallery is a phenomenon. What they did grew out of a much simpler place. They believed art can and should be accessible to everyone.”



Nerber passed away in December of 2014 at the age of 98 after a long illness. In conversations she had with Nerber before she died, Correia says the art lover wanted her life to be celebrated with a party—not a memorial. That wish is to come to fruition this summer with the gallery’s unveiling of the exhibit “Sally’s Party,” curated by Correia and “Sally in spirit,” which runs from July 19, through September 10. An opening reception will be held Tuesday, July 19, from 5 to 8 p.m. The public is invited. The exhibition will honor Nerber with artwork that represents her legacy and current works she would have championed.

“We’re keeping it all in the family,” says Correia, who has been with the gallery since 2001. Many of the artists whose work is to be exhibited—including Robert Motherwell, Jasper Johns, Berenice Abbott, James Lechay, and Gloria Nardin—have been featured over the years in the gallery. “I’m bringing together what represents Sally’s signature,” Correia says, “and that includes new work as well, like by sculptors Rebecca Welz and Pasquale Natale. Abstract yet whimsical, Welz, who is represented by the June Kelley Gallery of New York, uses varying gauge wire to draw three-dimensional references to the natural world. Natale uses wood and mixed media to create animated moving forms to convey a storyteller’s narrative. No doubt Sally would love their art knowing their work is bound to stimulate different perspectives and discussion.”

Different is exactly what the Cherry Stone Gallery brought to the Cape Cod art scene when it first opened in the 1970s; the offbeat, salon-like atmosphere first took shape in a modest storefront on Railroad Avenue in Wellfleet, and following a move in 1980, into a quaint space next to Nerber’s home on East Commercial Street in Wellfleet. In the early days, Upham, a ceramic sculptor who died in 1988, served as the gallery’s curator, while Nerber handled business and public relations.

As Correia puts it, things started to “break loose” in the art world on the Outer Cape during the 1970s and ‘80s. “The ‘Cherry Stone’ became the hub for showcasing contemporary and experimental work from the New York art world,” she explains. The gallery owners’ “focus on artists who dared to be different was of utmost importance, as they exhibited pop art, video art, photography, and abstract expressionism.”

“Sally and Lizzie put up shows that, oftentimes, people didn’t always understand,” Correia says, referencing pieces by Rauschenberg, Johns, and Paik. “But, because they gave validation and space to these artists out here on this bit of sand on the Outer Cape, they helped to generate a means of educating the public. They enabled a lot of people to have important exposure, both the artists themselves and the viewing audience.”

During this era, Correia says the excitement surrounding the gallery was palpable. “They had to hire a cop to close off the road every time they had an opening in the ‘70s,” Correia explains. These plein air-style openings in summer—on the lawn and in the garden—were always quite the affair. “All kinds of people came,” she says, “political activists, authors and writers; it attracted so many interesting people who connected through art. There became a place in the community for people to gather and openly discuss new ideas.”



James Lechay, “Bouquet #5”, oil/canvas, 19” x 16”



Eugene Atget, “Avenue des Gobelins”
1901 Gelatin silver print, 8.75” x 6.5”



Pasquale Natale, “untitled”,
Wood and mixed media, variable size

Forming long-lasting relationships—with well-known and local emerging artists alike—was integral to Nerber’s influence as a gallerist. “She had an innate ability to get people to talk about themselves, and by doing so she was able to learn about the kinds of things that make them think,” Correia says. Perhaps that’s how Nerber was able to secure on the gallery’s roster established artists such as Motherwell



Sally Nerber and Brenda Correia in 2010.

and Jack Tworok—with a simple phone call. “She had a natural talent to have people feel so close to her,” Correia says. “It was just her way.”

Nerber’s legacy lives on, Correia adds, through the gallery’s continuing efforts to establish new relationships with those in

the art community. This year, the gallery has the honor of collaborating with the distinguished June Kelly Gallery and the Howard Greenburg Gallery, both in New York City. “These relationships mirror what Sally and Lizzie had been doing over the years: establishing relationships and working collaboratively with gallerists and art enthusiasts to utilize the gallery as a venue for art discussion.”

June Kelly, director of the June Kelly Gallery, remains in awe of what Nerber was able to accomplish at the Cherry Stone Gallery. “I feel she was the Leo Castelli of the art world in Wellfleet,” Kelly says. Mr. Castelli was a revered New York gallerist who showcased avant-garde artists for decades. “Her vision to promote artists like Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg in Wellfleet, and awaken the community as to what was going on in New York, was inspiring. It was refreshing to go to Wellfleet and see something altogether different.”

Moving forward, Correia hopes to mirror Nerber’s path with the Cherry Stone Gallery. “My intentions are in keeping it viable and true to Sally’s legacy,” Correia says. “She and I were close collaborators; I understood her vision, and through Sally’s vision, my approach is to nurture time-honored relationships while forging new kinds of outreach with members of the art world.”

But there’s something to be addressed first, Correia says. “We’ll remember Sally in style, with a gala to celebrate and honor a long life well spent.”

Cherry Stone Gallery is at 70 East Commercial St., Wellfleet. For more information, call (508) 246-5486.

Haley Cote is the staff writer for Cape Cod Life Publications.



Berenice Abbott at Cherry Stone Gallery opening, 1970s.



Jim Lechay at Cherry Stone Gallery opening, late 1990s.



Robert Motherwell and Lizzie Upham early-to-mid 1980s.

SALLY’S PARTY

July 19 - September 13, 2016
opening: July 19th, 5-8p



“Rebecca Welz, “Swinging,” welded steel 24” X 27” X 9.6”

Featured Artists

Berenice Abbott
Eugene Atget
Jasper Johns
Robert Motherwell
James Lechay
Rebecca Welz
Pasquale Natale
Gloria Nardin
surprise guests TBA

painting
sculpture
prints
photography

CherryStoneGallery
70 East Commercial Street
Wellfleet, MA 02667
508 . 349 . 3026
www.cherrystonegallery.com

curators: Brenda Correia and “Sally Nerber-in-Spirit”

Daily 10 - 5 and by Appointment