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Cherry Stone modernists show spotlights family ties in Provincetown

This artistically rewarding and diverse show, at FAWC's Hudson D. Walker Gallery through July 5, is an opportunity to re-live Cherry Stone's magical aura during the decades when its plein air openings were highly anticipated summer events, and to glimpse what its future will hold.



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Brenda Correia (left) and Sally Nerber at the "Modernists at the Cherry Stone Gallery" exhibition, hanging now at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

By Susan Rand Brown

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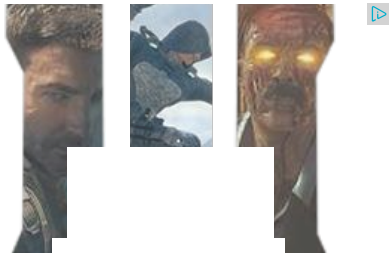
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It was an inspired moment when Margaret Murphy, executive director of Provincetown's Fine Arts Work Center, the nationally known incubator of several generations of influential painters and writers, invited Cherry Stone Gallery founder Sally Nerber and gallery partner Brenda Correia to curate "Modernists at the Cherry Stone Gallery," paying tribute to the Cherry Stone's out-sized reputation and history on the Outer Cape, which far exceeded its modest Wellfleet locations.

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"It is time to honor Sally Nerber," said the hardworking Murphy, who recently orchestrated events recognizing painter Anne Packard and poet Mary Oliver. At 95, Sally Nerber remains a powerful presence: her friendships with photographer Berenice Abbott and abstract expressionist Robert Motherwell — two of the many avant-garde artists drawn to her orbit as she and life partner Lizzie Upham, who died in 1988, expanded their Cherry Stone Gallery over four adventurous decades — are the stuff of legend. At FAWC this past weekend, the gracious, out-going Nerber greeted friends with unflagging energy.

Major artistic personalities link the Cherry Stone Gallery, as it existed in Wellfleet first on Railroad Avenue and then on East Commercial Street (regular gallery shows stopped after the 2006 summer season), to the founding history of FAWC.

Berenice Abbott, the first big name to associate with the Cherry Stone, exhibited at FAWC in 1979 in collaboration with the gallery. Motherwell and Jack Tworokov were founders of FAWC, and Motherwell, who had a studio at FAWC, served on its board of directors, as did Cherry Stone artist Louise Bourgeois. Sideo Fromboluti served on its visual arts committee. Robert Beauchamp studied with Hans Hofmann, who kept a studio there for many years. Director Murphy beamed as she explained that Lizzie Upham willed to FAWC the contents of her printmaking studio and a sizable gift; studio 1 is named in Upham's honor.

The artists represented in the show are also among many who became close to the Cherry Stone family over the years; this quality of relationships nurtured over time gives the gallery a "more direct pipeline" to the artists' families, as she and Nerber, who have been living and working together for 11 years, continue operations as private dealers, said Correia, whose own background includes painting and printmaking.

Beauchamp's figurative abstractions, lively, colorful portraits of himself and his brother, look especially contemporary, and Tworokov's geometric studies, especially a gem-like oil on vellum, offer another side of the expressionist work of this major Provincetown artist, who lived and painted in the town's West End for many decades. Other pieces giving this show a special spark include a wall of four photographs linking Berenice Abbott with Eugene Atget and Lisette Model, and two golden-toned oils by James Lechay of Wellfleet.

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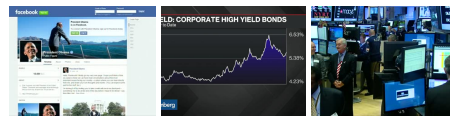
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As Nerber and Correia look to the future of Cherry Stone Fine Art, they continue to seek out new artists, including Ken Morgan, whose background as the child of circus performers

shines in minimalist images about memory and balance, and sculptor Joe Wheaton, whose metal work carries forward the expressionist tradition. Nerber and Correia agree that putting the exhibit together was like orchestrating a family reunion: the pair looks forward to more curating while continuing to build the gallery's Internet presence. On the subject of family, Nerber beamed as Correia announced their new relationship, as mother and daughter, formalized recently in Barnstable Family Court.

"Modernists at the Cherry Stone Gallery" continues through July 5. The Hudson D. Walker Gallery at the Fine Arts Work Center, 24 Pearl St., Provincetown, is open from 9 am-5 pm Monday-Friday, and weekends from 11 am-2 pm (closed Monday, July 4).