

Arts & Entertainment

Galleria West Presents Christopher KU Exhibit

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specialty Writer for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - Abstract artist and French native, Christopher KU, has collaborated with Galleria West proprietor, Gerardo Verdugo, to present an exhibit of his paintings for the next month. Mr. Verdugo noted that thus far, the exhibit has drawn the curious eyes of several Westfield High School students.

"When I paint, I couldn't care less if someone tells me if it is balanced or not," Mr. KU said of his paintings, "because I do it for

"I have a happy life, but I'm not a happy painter," he mused. "Whatever happens is going to translate into painting."

Last Friday, Mr. KU explained that paintings such as "Recurring Dream" and "Wall Street" come from dreams that have inspired him.

"Recurring Dream," a striking piece featuring multi-colored oil paints interrupted by an infant's plastic hands protruding from the painting, calls out for deep interpretation and analysis.

Mr. KU stated that he was moti-



An untitled original by Christopher KU at Galleria West in Westfield

myself."

Although he was not profoundly influenced by his school training to become an artist, Mr. KU told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* that he started his career as a writer first and then taught himself how to paint.

While living in San Francisco for the past five years, before moving to Brooklyn, Mr. KU discovered some of the rewards of being a painter when people would buy his artwork and admire it.

"I really like abstract," Mr. KU said when asked about his favorite genre. "It is an expression of feelings." He later noted during the interview, "I could paint a landscape, but it does not really identify with me."

So, what do his paintings say about him? Mr. KU reported that the experiences in his 36-year old life have greatly played a part in his motivation.

vated to paint "Wall Street" when a friend who works in the financial epicenter moved to New York state. Perhaps the most intriguing piece by Mr. KU, "Wall Street" spotlights mixed media - oil painting with portions of the *Wall Street Journal* as the backdrop. Thin embers of raw sienna make this piece delicate, yet profound.

American painter, Jackson Pollock, is one of Mr. KU's main inspirations.

When asked if, as a Frenchman, he notices a difference between artistic expression in Europe and America, he said, "There's a huge difference. Art in America is much more free than it is in Europe."

He paused and stated in a broken French, "There is an open mind in America that goes against everything that is said."

"Painting is a very selfish thing to do because you do it for yourself," the artist said.

State of the Art

Music

The Crossroads will welcome Delayed Green to the stage tonight, December 16; Everlounge on December 17; Swampadelica on December 18 with Robert Mararazzo and Juggling Suns on December 22. A Jazz Jam will be held on December 21. For more information, please call (908) 232-5666.

The Union County Arts Center will host the Vienna Choir Boys on December 17 as part of its 1999-2000 Headliner Series. For more information, please call (732) 499-8226.

Literature

The Town Book Store in Westfield will host a book signing event with Frank Finale, author of "To The Shore Once More," on December 18 from 1 to 3 p.m. Karen Plunkett-Powell, author of "Remembering Woolworths and The Nancy Drew Scrapbook," will attend a book signing on December 23 from 6 to 8 p.m. For more information, please call (908) 233-3535.

Dance

The New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark will host the St. Petersburg State Ballet on Ice in *The Nutcracker on Ice* on December 22 at 7:30 p.m. and December 23 at 7:30 p.m. in the Center's Prudential Hall. For more information, please call 1-888-GO-NJPAC.

Mixed Bag

Warninaco Ice Skating Center will hold a Skate with Santa on December 18 and 19 with candy canes and skating fun. For more information, please call (908) 298-7850.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City will feature its 18th century creche and spruce Christmas tree display through Monday, January 10. For more information, please call (212) 535-7710.

Theatre

The Bickford Theatre at the Morris Museum will present *Forever Plaid* through Thursday, December 23. For more information, please call the Museum at (973) 538-8069.

F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theater in Madison will present *A Child's Christmas in Wales* through December 23. For more information, please call the theater at (973) 408-5600.

Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn will present the New Jersey Ballet's Production of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* with the Paper Mill Orchestra through December 27. For more information, please call the Paper Mill Playhouse at (973) 376-4343.

Fanwood's Vicki Annese Gives Confident Jump Starts in KidstART

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specialty Writer for The Westfield Leader and The Times

FANWOOD - Building a child's self-esteem through creative expression in today's society may seem like a lost art, but it is Vicki Annese's life work in a program she developed for early elementary school children at Fanwood Memorial Library called KidstART.

"I wanted to promote mental health in children," stated Ms. Annese, a Fanwood resident and art therapist. "Children naturally house creativity and self-esteem," she told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*.

While looking for a special program that would teach her son, who was six years old at the time, how to build his esteem and sense of self through creativity, Ms. Annese decided to develop a program of her own. Thus, KidstART, which is supported in part by a 1999 HEART Grant from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, was born.

The extra-curricular program combines artistic expression and literature in order to build a solid self-esteem. Parents and siblings may join in the projects, both in and out of KidstART sessions.

Ms. Annese noted that nearly 40 children's books are selected to demonstrate themes that promote "individuality, self-esteem, family, friendship and feelings." The book list is given to parents. These themes are blended with appropriate art projects that support the book's message.

While art programs in schools may not be able to take the time to merge the idea of self-esteem with creativity, Ms. Annese said KidstART "teaches techniques" as well as individuality.

"My career focus has always been to help children grow through the use of art," Ms. Annese stated in her application for a 1999 Union County HEART Grant. "I try to show them (the children) what they can do. They can still do their own thing."

She continued, "My goal with KidstART is to offer an extracurricular art experience in our community where young children can participate, interact, fit in, and feel a sense of accomplishment."

For example, in one session, the children learned that it is okay to be their own person after reading "The Straight Line Wonder" by Mem Fox. After hearing the story, the children

of his projects. "I like them all very much because I was the one that made them. I really like making things."

Marie Mital revealed how much she enjoyed crafting her watercolor resist painting and star painting. "It is colorful. The oil pastel just shows up. I do different styles. I try my best," she said.

Finally, Robbie Colonna commented, "I like everything. I like to make stuff and I color really nice. I am an artist. I like me."

Ms. Annese closed out this year's KidstART program with a special Art Show to showcase the children's creation for family and friends.

In a program evaluation, Bobby



OPENING IMAGINATIONS...Vicki Annese, center, works with students on creative projects in the KidstART program at the Fanwood Memorial Library.

used pastels to draw their own special kind of line and then apply a watercolor wash over their line.

"One boy used only white pastels on white paper," Ms. Annese recalled, adding that the effect after the watercolor wash made the child's work very individual, thus driving home the point that being unique is being special.

In another project, using the children's book, "Tacky the Penguin" by Helen Lester, children learned to make their own penguin after gleaming the main idea that although "Tacky" was different, he was still important.

The KidstART program, which has been comprised of two groups of 10 children, has been open to Fanwood children, with other residents from Scotch Plains being able to apply if room was available.

In the future, Ms. Annese would like to keep one KidstART group in Fanwood and establish another KidstART in a community that is less privileged to such a creative outlet.

Comments from children in the KidstART program are prime examples of why Ms. Annese's sessions are so successful.

Jake Rabadeau said, "Tacky is funny. I also made igloos from cotton balls and cups." Jake's favorite book was "I Have a Friend" by Keiko Narahashi "because it was all about him." Jake also enjoyed "Those Can Do Pigs" by David McPhail because he likes pigs and "they could do anything."

Bobby Dyckman was proud of all

Dyckman's mother, Susan M. Dyckman commented that the show was "a wonderful way to showcase the children's work and to allow the whole family to share in their accomplishments."

Director of the Fanwood Library, Dan Weiss, commented, "I think Vicki does a fantastic job. To me, it (KidstART) has become the perfect program for children at the library because it combines the self-esteem issue and reading at an early age and creativity for children to explore their own opinions."

"The books seem to excite the kids and her program takes that one step further, making it fun and exciting," he concluded.

Ms. Annese, who holds a Master of Arts Degree in Art Therapy from Vermont College of Norwich University in Montpelier, Vt. and a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Art Therapy from Avila College in Kansas City, Mo., has also served as a Director of a children's program entitled, "Kids Coping Together," for the Mental Health Association of Union County.

She developed the "Kids Coping Together" program to help children deal with the stresses of living with divorced parents and bereavement. Ms. Annese has also worked as an Art Psychotherapist at the Ozanam Home for Boys in Kansas City, as well as other programs.

For more information on the KidstART program, please contact the Fanwood Memorial Library at (908) 322-6400.

Luminaria Sale

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Kiwanis Club will be distributing the luminaries at the Fanwood Municipal Garage (by RR station) from 9 AM to 3 PM on:

Sat, December 18th • 9am to 3pm
Special Sale Time on
December 24 - 1 to 3 p.m.

The luminaria kit costs 35¢ per unit. This includes the candle, bag and sand. (Please bring a container for the sand.)

NOTE: We encourage all to participate in the DECA's TOYS for TOTS and FOOD for the NEEDY. You can drop items off when you pick up your luminaries.



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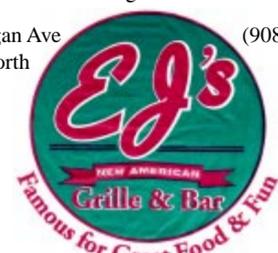
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