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Watercolor painting classes on Long Island

March 25, 2015 by STACEY ALTHERR / stacey.altherr@newsday.com



Painting in watercolor on the grounds of an old estate lends itself to a scene in "Downton Abbey," but avid artists need go no farther than Great River to feel like a lady or lord.

"Whether indoors at the carriage house or the old cow barn, or outdoors, it's the perfect setting," says Victoria Beckert, the artist teaching the classes at Bayard Cutting Arboretum.

Indeed, while the subject might be something other than a scene on the grounds, it is certainly inspirational to paint along the banks

of the Connetquot River. The passive-use park through which it flows was given to the state 63 years ago by the estate of the widow of William Bayard Cutting, Olivia Murray Cutting, and their daughter Olivia James in memory of their husband and father.

"We're trying to offer more programming that is along the line of this, and use the grounds and facility in a quiet and more complementary way," says Nelson Sterner, the arboretum's director. "And I think art is that. I think Ms. Cutting would approve."

WATERCOLORS

Painting will be done under the tutelage of Beckert, an artist who specializes in watercolors. They can be difficult to master, but the outcomes are both crisp and subdued.

"It's relaxing, and freeing," she says.

Beginners are welcome, as well as those who already paint but want to learn something new or be among other artists.

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"It's nice to learn something new," Beckert says. "A different technique, as well as help and direction."

Painters either go outside to paint a scene in view, or Beckert brings a black-and-white photo, and artists can do their own interpretation in watercolors. "We do it together, the same painting," she says.

Some paints and brushes will be on hand, but artists are encouraged to bring their own, if possible. Paper will be supplied.

A fine-arts major in college, Beckert put her paints aside, for the most part, while raising her family, she says. Later, she picked up her brushes again, and has been painting and teaching ever since, including classes at the Art League of Long Island.

LUNCH AND GROUNDS

After the painting session, join the art crowd for a lunch of sandwiches, salads and beverages at the Hidden Oak Cafe, included in the price of the day.

The painting class may inspire future brush strokes, so take a stroll on the 690-acre park grounds and revel in the quiet -- no picnicking or ball playing allowed.

Trails snake along the water's edge, and the expansive lawn is a wonderful place to read a book or just sit and contemplate the river. Tours of the mansion are \$10 extra.

Watercolor painting classes

WHEN | WHERE 10 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. April 4 and 18 (Carriage House), May 6 and 20 (Cow Barn) at [Bayard Cutting Arboretum](#), 440 Montauk Hwy., Great River

INFO 631-374-2099, [bayardcuttingarboretum.com](#)

COST \$55 (includes lunch)

OTHER WATERCOLOR CLASSES

[Art League of Long Island](#)

107 E. Deer Park Rd., Dix Hills

INFO 631-462-5400, [artleagueli.org](#)

The league has a smattering for all experience ranges, from beginners to experts, many sharing professional art teachers.

Beginner classes include:

"Fundamentals of Watercolor," which starts April 14 for three sessions (\$220), emphasizing developing a style.

For true beginners, "Watercolor Kindergarten for Adults II," five classes beginning April 17 (\$250).

A one-day, four-hour class May 2, "Watercolors for Beginners," teaches the basics of painting flowers, landscapes and abstracts, including basic watercolor techniques (\$80).

All classes require supplies.

East End Arts Council

141 E. Main St., Riverhead

INFO 631-369-2171, eastendarts.org

The nonprofit organization teaches many art classes, including watercolor.

"Magnificent Skies With Watercolor," taught by artist Elizabeth Nehls, will focus on the skies over Long Island, including using different techniques to capture sunrises and sunsets as well as the effect weather patterns have on clouds (\$72), 10 a.m.-2 p.m. April 25.

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