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Inside Art with Michael Rose - New Leadership and Exhibitions at South County Art Association

Thursday, July 14, 2022
Michael Rose, Art Contributor

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Jen Ferry PHOTO: South County Art Association

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The foundation for the local art scene is the strong collection of community-focused art centers dotted around Rhode Island. South County Art Association is one of these organizations, and has been mounting exhibitions and classes for residents in the south of the state for generations. Through July 16, the group is hosting an engaging exhibition titled *Diaspora* and recently Jen Ferry took on the important role of SCAA's executive director. New exhibitions and new leadership herald exciting times for this historic institution.

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The first exhibition on view during Jen Ferry's tenure as executive director is focused on the important topic of diaspora. This competitive juried show brings to light stories about movement of peoples and their shared experiences. It fills SCAA's galleries, situated in an historic domestic space a few steps from the front gates of the University of Rhode Island. On view through July 16, the exhibition features forty-eight thoughtfully selected artworks in a variety of media by artists working throughout the region.



PHOTO: South County Art Association

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When Ferry is asked what excites her most as she begins her new position, this show comes up quickly. She says, "I'm excited about our current *Diaspora* exhibit that has artwork that speaks to cultural identity. It's an important exhibit that promotes social awareness on a topic that is relevant and timely right now. On a lighter note, I'm excited about our *Evening Under the Trees* next month. It's an event that brings our community together for a party and opens our *Members Exhibit*."

The group's *Evening Under the Trees* event will take place on July 23 and will start off its 95th Annual Members Show, which will be on view July 23 - August 13. At nearly a century old, SCAA is a landmark in South County and has become the centerpiece for its own creative enclave.



PHOTO: South County Art Association

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Speaking of what makes SCAA a special place, Ferry focuses on people and culture, stating, "Community spirit starts internally in how we interact with the members and visitors. Every SCAA staff member is an artist and passionate about the arts. Our enthusiasm is palpable and it creates a welcoming atmosphere. That in turn extends out to everyone who comes to SCAA. It forms a connection with others that have the same interest in art. That makes for a special community."

A South County resident for over twenty years, Ferry has enjoyed a lengthy career in graphic design and earned her Master's in Arts Leadership and Cultural Management from the Colorado State University's LEAP Institute for the Arts. She also holds a Graduate



PHOTO: South County Art Association

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Certificate in Nonprofit Administration. An artist in her own right, she has exhibited widely, received awards for her personal work, and first joined SCAA as an artist member in 2013. More information on Ferry's work as a studio artist can be found at her website, www.jenferry.com.

Ferry is taking the reins from outgoing executive director Kathleen Carland, who has successfully led the organization since 2017. Her tenure included a renovation of the group's exhibition spaces and steering the non-profit through the pandemic. Carland will continue to provide support to SCAA, though, and will aid the group with her development expertise. Carland and Ferry were close colleagues and both share reputations for welcoming artists and visitors to SCAA, creating connections to the arts that echo beyond its home base in Kingston.

SCAA is already ensconced in the community, and as executive director, Ferry is aiming to deepen the group's ties. Speaking of her goals, she says, "As the new executive director, I will continue providing opportunities to learn, share and view art that SCAA has been doing for the past 95 years. In addition, I want to increase community outreach and educate the public on how art can enrich their lives and provide benefits that lead to wellbeing."



PHOTO: South County Art Association

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Some of Ferry's aspirations are apparent in SCAA's *Diaspora* exhibition. It draws on the talents of an array of artists, focuses on a topic of social and political resonance, and connects the organization with a broader community. It also serves as a point of connection, conversation, and education on issues of experience and identity. With this thought-provoking current exhibition, a promising new executive director, and more exciting shows and events around the corner, SCAA is poised for another century of contributions to the arts in Rhode Island. It will be fun to follow what comes next for this cultural and community center.

South County Art Association is located at 2587 Kingstown Road in Kingston, Rhode Island. Its *Diaspora* exhibition continues through July 16 and will be followed by its *Members Exhibit*, opening July 23. Current gallery hours are Wednesday through Sunday from 1-5 pm each day. Learn more and plan your visit at www.southcountyart.org.

Michael Rose is a multi-talented fine art professional based in Southern New England. Since 2014 he has served as the gallery manager at the historic Providence Art Club, one of the nation's oldest arts organizations. Through his current freelance work he advises collectors and artists, provides appraisal services, teaches, and completes curatorial projects. [LEARN MORE HERE](#)

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