

Norwalk artist Schiff to exhibit at Wilton Library

Stephanie Kim Sep. 4, 2016 Updated: Sep. 4, 2016 11:23 a.m. Comments



Mark Schiff, Norwalk artist, stands in front of his exhibit at the Wilton Library at 137 Old Ridgefield Road. The exhibit will be held from Sept. 9 to Oct. 7. Stephanie Kim / Hearst Connecticut Media

WILTON — When [Mark Schiff](#) isn't making dental mock-ups

at his office in Bridgeport, he's most likely painting an impression of a tree outside or taking note of a face, object or pattern that serves as an inspiration for his next piece.

The subject, medium and brush strokes of his artwork depend on the day, his emotions, and most importantly, his thoughts.

"My paintings convey the complexity, the randomness, the commotion, the confusion of the world — but also the beauty," Schiff said. "It's just what comes up in my mind. I take that seriously."

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Schiff hopes viewers will leave with this impression as they look through his exhibit, "Edge of Existence," at the [Wilton Library](#). The exhibit officially opens on Friday, Sept. 9, from 6-7:30 p.m., with a free public reception, and will run through Friday, Oct. 7. Most paintings will be available for purchase, with a portion of the proceeds donated to the library.

"I look forward to my friends, the community coming in and having an opportunity to see my work," Schiff said.

"Edge of Existence" features 47 watercolor, oil and acrylic

paintings that the Norwalk artist created in the last 20 years. Schiff started painting after he visited the home of watercolorist Barbara Nechis during a backroads bicycling trip in California in 1996..

"I was there for about an hour, and I saw her paintings. It blew me away," he said. "I said to myself, 'When I get home, I'm going to try this.'"

And so, in the last 20 years, Schiff has experimented with various mediums — from basic acrylics on canvas to watercolors on toilet paper. Sometimes, he involves nature in the process, leaving paintings outside in below-freezing temperatures. Other times, he'll let paintings dry in room temperature or use a blow dryer to quicken the process.

More recently, he's experimented with encaustic art, which involves heating wax paint onto wood or other materials. But his specialty still lies in watercolor and acrylic pigments, with nature as the subject usually painted in an assortment of blue and green hues with hard, defined edges and soft, flowing lines.

Yet, regardless of the medium or technique, one element is constant in all of his artwork: the goal of taking his art and viewers to the "Edge of Existence."

"To be on the edge is to experiment and to do different

things," he said. "The edge is the farthest away from the center."

"If you want to be a top athlete or a top artist, you got to try something new."

[Ed MacEwen](#), the library's volunteer art chairman for the past 20 years, said Schiff's unique combination of abstract art and realism impressed him and drew a reaction from him that's hard to explain.

"I quite honestly have never seen anything like that before and thought it would be of interest to the patrons of the library," MacEwen said. "It's museum-quality work."

While Schiff's pieces have been on display at different galleries in Fairfield County and New York City, and he was awarded Best in Category for watercolors at the 2011 Westport Arts Festival, "Edge of Existence" is special in its own way: It's his first exhibit at Wilton Library, and the first gallery in which all the paintings are his.

"It's very humbling to be able to face my paintings and to see them all hanging up like this," Schiff said. "And to think, 'I created all of this.'"

"Eventually, some will be in people's home and they'll each have a piece of me, which is the point of existence."

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