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Bursting With Ideas and Creativity, Here Comes The New Art Room

By Sophie Braccini



Carrie Klein and Gigi Voris Photo Andy Scheck

The talented artist who took over The Art Room at 50 Lafayette Circle (across from Chow), Carrie Klein, has the desire and creative energy to offer an array of art classes and collaborative working opportunities using a wide variety of media for all ages and avenues of life.

"When Gigi (Voris) had to sell The Art Room to move north and proposed it to me, I hesitated," remembers Klein. "I have been an art teacher, an artist, but never a business person. But then I thought about all I could do with it."

Klein has a real passion for teaching. She wants her students to enjoy expressing their inner voice, whatever their ability level and learning style. She says that art is about the process. "Art has its own language," she says, "and I feel that when a child or an adult is able to be enriched by that process, if they want to stretch it further and be more technical, then they will seek that. But it is important to let them be experimental and exploring."

She thinks that sometimes in classes students are afraid to make mistakes, but if they are allowed to go with the process and not worry about making a perfect scene and really enjoy what's happening, then they start taking risks.

"I can come up and give an example, but I try to give only a small one and then stop, so they create their own voice."

Klein honors her students' way of developing. "You have to read where the students are, let them try different approaches, so they find what will allow them to progress," she says.

As an artist, Klein was trained at the California College of the Arts in Oakland where she studied photography, sculpture, welding and glass. She incorporated glass into sculpture, weaving and mixing it with metal. She has been teaching for 15 years.

Students at The Art Studio range in age from 4 to 80. Klein wants to take what already exists in different directions. She'd like to add "messy art" for preschoolers, for example. The teen studio is very successful, and there is an adult studio offered on Wednesday nights. But Klein would like to add more evening adult classes, such as visiting artist workshops.

"People love hands-on classes with resident artists," she says. Klein wants to incorporate digital photography as art, using it as mixed media; she also wants to add 'claymation' (an animation process using clay figures) and classes for short movies, "something the teens are asking for," she says.

Another of Klein's projects is to start a class for special needs children. "My brother John works with special needs kids in San Francisco; we are collaborating on designing that project together," she says. She wants to be able to seek grants or financial aid so she can offer classes to people without much money, and would also like to develop opportunities for local artists.

"Since I've taken over, many artists have come in wanting to know where the other artists are on this side of the tunnel because they all want to be together." Her dream is to add an annex or studio to The Art Room for glass and the steel works, and maybe large ceramics, creating a place for collaborative work. "We are creating an avenue for art here, also with music (Lamorinda Music is close by)," she says. "It exists in San Francisco and the other side of the tunnel, but not as much here."

Visit The Art Room website at www.theart-room.com to find new class listings or to sign up for updates.

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