Creative Gifts

Greater Boston’s thriving seasonal art markets
by NELL PORTER BROWN

Each year, organizers of the Harvard Ceramics Program Holiday Show and Sale hide the potters’ wheels and messy buckets of clay to hang pine boughs and stock up on apple cider, transforming the studios into a showplace for hundreds of objects made by program ceramicists. Some 4,000 people turn up to see and buy items ranging from fanciful soap dishes, mugs, and vases to jewelry, dinnerware, and sculptures.

The sale—this year running December 6–9—is not only a chance to respond to holiday shopping lists with unique gifts; it also furthers the cause of creativity and bolsters the local economy. (Artists earn 65 percent of the sale price; the balance is funneled back into the program.) Perhaps even more important, the event, and others like it across Greater Boston this season, offer a meaningful, intangible exchange. The artists have the chance to exhibit work that might not otherwise be seen, says Kathy King, the program’s director of education, and “There’s something about that connection for the buyer—to know where a piece came from, and that they are supporting an individual’s artistic endeavors—that’s really wonderful.”

Many of those at the annual holiday ceramics sale (there’s another held every spring) are faithful attendees who enjoy socializing as much as seeing new works. Along with other browsers and shoppers who may be new to the program, or even the art form, they will be treated to a new attraction this year: in the front gallery, a ceramicist will be throwing clay, working on a potter’s wheel, and explaining how objects take shape.

After you’ve admired enough pottery, head next door to the festive Allston-Brighton Winter Market (December 6–9), sponsored by the Harvard Ed Portal. Now in its second year, the event celebrates local artisans and entrepreneurs and features about 25 vendors, like sisters Letisha and Zeena Brown, founders of the plant-based skin-care products company Brown + Coconut, and Lindsay Miller, who creates and sells hats and scarves through her business, WoHe-Lo Knitwear (short for “Work, Health, Love”).

Art plus food trucks, live music, and a beer garden featuring micro-brews by Somerville’s Remnant Brewing give the
market more of a party feel, and nicely complement the ceramics sale. “You can come browse the wares, listen to live music, sip on a beer, enjoy a meal, and make your holiday-gift purchases from a curated selection of local vendors,” says Eva Rosenberg, assistant director for arts at Harvard Public Affairs and Communications.

Far larger is the popular SoWa Winter Festival in Boston’s South End (November 30-December 2 and December 7-9). In fact, so many people turned out in 2017 that organizers have added a second weekend. (SoWa stands for “South of Washington,” an area bounded by Berkeley and Albany Streets, with Massachusetts Avenue to the west.) “It’s the time of year that people are ready to come and shop and drink hot chocolate and stroll around,” says Aida Villarreal-Li-
Harvard Squared

HIGH END LUXURY LIVING
THE RESIDENCES AT
20 MARLBORO STREET, BELMONT

Impeccably renovated in 2018. 3 units with 2-3 bedrooms. Front and back porches. Generous rooms with sunny exposures. State of the art systems. Garage parking plus storage rooms. Ideal location 2 miles from Harvard, convenient to transportation, shops, restaurants, and the universities. Exclusively Offered - $945,000, $769,000, & $995,000

WWW.BARBARACURRIER.COM

The Society of Arts and Crafts runs CraftBoston Holiday, where fine-craft artists from across the country showcase their creative endeavors.

The festival is a fun thing to do, and it’s got the ‘winter wonderland tent,’ with lots of lights and that nice, warm holiday vibe people are looking for.” In addition to that pop-up tent on Thayer Street, which has live music, drinks, and hands-on art activities, an adjacent building (a former power station) will house 105 artisans, she reports, including 25 specialty food-makers selling “jams, cider vinegars, spices, pesto sauces, honeys, and other gift-able food.” Look also for felted hats and booties, body lotions, candles, clothing, jewelry, mini-terrariums, wooden bowls, and seasonal decorative items.

Moreover, dozens of art galleries and shops in the neighborhood will also be open, along with the studios of some 200 artists who live and work in and around that section of the South End, which Villarreal-Licona calls The SoWa Art and Design District. For more elaborate drinks and food nearby, try: Southern Proper, Gaslight Brassiere, Cinquecento Roman Trattoria, or Myers + Chang. (Taking public transportation to the festival is strongly encouraged, as parking is limited.)

For those eager to get a jump on the holiday season, members of Somerville’s Brickbottom Artists Association and nearby Joy Street Artists complex open their live-work studios for the thirty-first annual pre-Thanksgiving art fête (November 17-18). Food and drinks are available, as art enthusiasts roam Brickbottom, a former industrial building, learning about art and the creative process. Works in every medium, format, and price range are available, from textiles, photographs, metalwork, and pottery to paintings, jewelry, and sculptures.

To meet more than 175 leading fine-craft artists, check out the CraftBoston Holiday Show, at the Hynes Convention Center in the Back Bay (December 14-16). Expect to see diverse, ingenious objects by makers working with materials like leather, paper, wood, metal, and fiber, including urban-chic satchels and clothing (by Canadian designer Annie Thompson), jewelry featuring preserved fruit (from Brooklyn artist Debbie Tuch), and glassware resembling...
“Time is Now: Photography and Social Change in James Baldwin’s America,” on display through December 30 at the Sert Gallery, features images taken from the early 1930s through the late 1980s by more than a dozen photographers. A joint effort by the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts and Harvard Art Museums, the exhibition evokes places, as well as personal and historic events, that influenced Baldwin and his work. “The exhibit looks at the way that photography can be transformative, and really calls witness to what was happening in the world” during Baldwin’s lifetime, says Daisy Nam, assistant director of the Carpenter Center. Its themes include religion, music, the role of race in America, sexuality, and family life, and highlight facets of the seismic cultural transformations often chronicled or critiqued by the writer. Marion Palfi’s 1949 untitled photograph of the wife of a lynching victim, from her series “There Is No More Time,” shares space with Diane Arbus’s 1965 image A Young Negro Boy, Washington Square Park, N.Y.C. Also featured are the pioneering fine-art photographer Roy DeCarava, who captured African-American life and jazz musicians in Harlem; Marion Post Wolcott, documenter of American rural life and poverty during the Great Depression; and Robert Frank, who collaborated with Beat Generation novelist Jack Kerouac on the influential 1958 book The Americans, which challenged romantic conceptions of the American Dream.

—BRANDON J. DIXON

C A R P E N T E R C E N T E R F O R T H E V I S U A L A R T S
https://carpentercenter
“Time is Now: Photography and Social Change in James Baldwin’s America”
Through December 30

Photography in Baldwin’s Era

The Brickbottom Artists Association, in Somerville, has been hosting an open studios show and sale since 1987. Also planned are afternoon talks and demonstrations, as well as a fashion show. Incorporated in 1897, the Society both supports the work of and fosters appreciation for contemporary craft artists. It’s based in Boston’s Seaport District, with a large, airy gallery space. Two new exhibits open November 8: “Adorning Boston and Beyond: Contemporary Studio Jewelry Then + Now” and “Our Cups Runneth Over,” the Society’s sixth biennial show and sale touting creative drinking vessels.

Thousands of works by emerging and established visual artists are on display at the annual SMFA Art Sale (The School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts, in Boston). This popular, four-day event (November 15-18) reflects a range of media—painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and even video—as well as jewelry; all objects are made by students, alumni, faculty, and others affiliated with the school. Prices can range widely, from $15 to $50,000; artists receive 50 percent of the sale price of their work; the other half supports financial aid and other resources for SMFA students. The sale is fun no matter when you go, but for an especially lively evening out, attend the opening reception on November 15, which

—AMANDA M. DIXON

The Brickbottom Artists Association, in Somerville, has been hosting an open studios show and sale since 1987.

Also planned are afternoon talks and demonstrations, as well as a fashion show. Incorporated in 1897, the Society both supports the work of and fosters appreciation for contemporary craft artists. It’s based in Boston’s Seaport District, with a large, airy gallery space. Two new exhibits open November 8: “Adorning Boston and Beyond: Contemporary Studio Jewelry Then + Now” and “Our Cups Runneth Over,” the Society’s sixth biennial show and sale touting creative drinking vessels.

Thousands of works by emerging and established visual artists are on display at the annual SMFA Art Sale (The School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts, in Boston). This popular, four-day event (November 15-18) reflects a range of media—painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and even video—as well as jewelry; all objects are made by students, alumni, faculty, and others affiliated with the school. Prices can range widely, from $15 to $50,000; artists receive 50 percent of the sale price of their work; the other half supports financial aid and other resources for SMFA students. The sale is fun no matter when you go, but for an especially lively evening out, attend the opening reception on November 15, which

—AMANDA M. DIXON

The Brickbottom Artists Association, in Somerville, has been hosting an open studios show and sale since 1987.

Also planned are afternoon talks and demonstrations, as well as a fashion show. Incorporated in 1897, the Society both supports the work of and fosters appreciation for contemporary craft artists. It’s based in Boston’s Seaport District, with a large, airy gallery space. Two new exhibits open November 8: “Adorning Boston and Beyond: Contemporary Studio Jewelry Then + Now” and “Our Cups Runneth Over,” the Society’s sixth biennial show and sale touting creative drinking vessels.

Thousands of works by emerging and established visual artists are on display at the annual SMFA Art Sale (The School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts, in Boston). This popular, four-day event (November 15-18) reflects a range of media—painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and even video—as well as jewelry; all objects are made by students, alumni, faculty, and others affiliated with the school. Prices can range widely, from $15 to $50,000; artists receive 50 percent of the sale price of their work; the other half supports financial aid and other resources for SMFA students. The sale is fun no matter when you go, but for an especially lively evening out, attend the opening reception on November 15, which

—AMANDA M. DIXON

The Brickbottom Artists Association, in Somerville, has been hosting an open studios show and sale since 1987.

Also planned are afternoon talks and demonstrations, as well as a fashion show. Incorporated in 1897, the Society both supports the work of and fosters appreciation for contemporary craft artists. It’s based in Boston’s Seaport District, with a large, airy gallery space. Two new exhibits open November 8: “Adorning Boston and Beyond: Contemporary Studio Jewelry Then + Now” and “Our Cups Runneth Over,” the Society’s sixth biennial show and sale touting creative drinking vessels.

Thousands of works by emerging and established visual artists are on display at the annual SMFA Art Sale (The School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts, in Boston). This popular, four-day event (November 15-18) reflects a range of media—painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and even video—as well as jewelry; all objects are made by students, alumni, faculty, and others affiliated with the school. Prices can range widely, from $15 to $50,000; artists receive 50 percent of the sale price of their work; the other half supports financial aid and other resources for SMFA students. The sale is fun no matter when you go, but for an especially lively evening out, attend the opening reception on November 15, which

—AMANDA M. DIXON

The Brickbottom Artists Association, in Somerville, has been hosting an open studios show and sale since 1987.
I joined the Harvard Club as a graduate student to meet new people and network. While I was job-searching after graduation, I was on a tight budget, yet I maintained my membership because the Club had become a place where I felt like I belonged. I met people at the Club who would become my closest friends, and who helped sustain me through that challenging year. I’m giving back by serving on the Member Engagement Committee, and co-chairing the Young Member Committee.

The Harvard Club has become my community.

— Amy Norton ’16

For more information regarding membership, please call 617-450-4444 or visit harvardclub.com.

New England winters are a good time to hunker down and create art—or at least get out and be inspired by others’ art-making. Kathy King, of Harvard’s ceramics program, has seen an “explosion of interest” among those who want to engage with art and “work with their hands.” “The majority of our classes fill up within minutes” of registration information appearing online, she adds. “People are at the point now that they are mainly staring at screens, glued to technology,” she suggests, and they’re learning that they want more tactile, less passive engagement with activities. “Giving themselves the time to be creative is almost like an act of activism! To take that one night and sit down and make art? It’s great for one’s psyche and health.” That interest also translates, she says, into wanting to see and buy more artful, handmade objects. “People are getting more creative about what they surround themselves with at home because they see that it adds to the experience” of living, she reports. “Even those not making the art want to participate somehow—and open studios and arts-and-craft sales offer prime opportunities for that inspiring engagement.”

Seasonal Art and Craft Events

SMFA Art Sale (Boston)
www.smfa.tufts.edu
November 15-18

Brickbottom and Joy Street Open Studios (Somerville)
www.brickbottom.org
www.joystreetartists.org
November 17-18

The SoWa Winter Festival (Boston)
www.sowaboston.com
November 30-December 2
and December 7-9

Harvard Ceramics Program Holiday Show and Sale (Boston)
https://ofa.harvard.edu/show-and-sale
December 6-9

Allston-Brighton Winter Market (Boston)
https://edportal.harvard.edu/allston-brighton-winter-market
December 6-9

CraftBoston Holiday (Boston)
www.societyofcrafts.org
December 14-16