

Art gallery could be economic engine

“There’s just so much talent locally, and we want everyone to feel welcome here and we want it to be a place where artists can learn. . . !”

—Jeff Tufano

By Patsy Nicosia

If Schoharie County’s arts needs one thing it’s a Main Street art gallery.

And some studios.

And a place for workshops and classes.

And a place—and a way—for artists to sit down and “plan, nurture, and present the unique art” here.

That’s how Jeff Tufano sees it, at least.

And that’s why he and his partner, Diana Cook, are turning his 1,400 square-foot Main Room and Gallery 548 on Cobleskill’s Main Street into the Jeff Tufano Gallery—and launching the Organization of Schoharie County Artists—OSCAR.

It’s a move that follows years of work to revitalize the arts locally through a variety of partnerships.

Mr. Tufano sees both the gallery and OSCAR as natural partners to the kind of re-grant and education efforts the Greene County Council on the Arts has been running through CREATE.

There’s no time like now, when upstate localities are seeing renewed interest from urban residents because of COVID-19, to go full steam ahead, he said Friday.

“We’ve taken the back burners off the stove,” he said.

“Now is the time to do this.”

Since 2017, Mr. Tufano has held three major shows and a

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handful of smaller exhibitions at the former Lamont Engineers Building he owns on the corner of South Grand Street.

He was all set to host a reception for CREATE’s grants awards in April; six mixed-media pieces by Ms. Cook, the 2019 individual artist grant winner, would have taken center stage.

Then came COVID.

The pause has given him and Ms. Cook time to think about what comes next and in June, they unveiled plans for the Jeff Tufano Gallery and OSCAR, something they hope to be able to kick off, in-person, after Labor Day.

“We had a virtual show online, but no one’s seen Diana’s pieces in-person,” Mr. Tufano said, and they’ll be the first show when the gallery reopens.

Ms. Cook and artist Bob Adragna are already utilizing the gallery’s studio space: Hope Glidden, who Mr. Tufano said literally kicked things off by ringing his doorbell and asking him what we was going to do with his Main Street win-

dows, also has pieces waiting to be hung there.

“There’s just so much talent locally,” Mr. Tufano said, “and we want everyone to feel welcome here and we want it to be a place where artists can learn—about art...different techniques...”

“Art is also a way we can grow the economy here—especially when so many folks from downstate are looking to get out of the city now. There’s so much we can do and so much we can spin off.”

Among them, OSCAR, which Mr. Tufano and Ms. Cook see as a way for artists to meet regularly to network, plan events, and work with local schools and SUNY Cobleskill—and promote it all.

He said he also sees his building as a place for community events—Zumba will be resuming upstairs once it’s allowed again—and he has even more ambitious plans for the warren of rooms off Main and Grand Streets.

“If we can come together and work toward all of this, I think we can make big things happen here,” he said.



Diana Cook and Jeff Tufano sit beneath one of the paintings that will be hanging in the Jeff Tufano Gallery when it hopes, hopefully after Labor Day. The two are also working on a new arts organization, OSCAR.—Photo by Patsy Nicosia.