



## ■ Upcoming

### May 31

#### *56<sup>th</sup> Annual Sidewalk Art Show*

10 a.m. – 6 p.m. • Roanoke

This exciting annual event takes place in the historic downtown area near the Taubman Museum of Art.

### June 7

#### *35<sup>th</sup> Annual Juried Watercolor Exhibition*

Lynchburg

A day trip to see this exhibition will be fun and informal. Email about sign ups will be sent by the end of May. Both drivers and riders wanted.

### June 8

#### *Christy Mackie Open Studio*

3–5 p.m. • Newport Rec Center

Christy Mackie is holding an open house in her new studio in the Newport Rec Center. Light refreshments will be served and carpooling is encouraged.

### June 14

#### *Jax Juried Exhibition Reception*

5–8 p.m. • The Jacksonville Center for the Arts

Mark your calendar for the opening reception for this annual exhibition.

### July 17

#### *BRAA Annual Theme Exhibition Reception*

5–7 p.m. • VTLS, Inc., 1701 Kraft Drive, Blacksburg

Come to the opening reception and see how fellow artists have interpreted this year's theme of "Family."

### August 9–10

#### *Stephen Doherty Plein Air Workshop*

The Studio School, Inc., Roanoke

Steve Doherty, artist and editor-in-chief of *Plein Air* magazine, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience with plein air work as well as writing about art, teaching workshops, and organizing plein air events. The workshop is \$200 and includes lecture and demonstrations. For more information, visit [www.thestudioschool.biz](http://www.thestudioschool.biz).

## A Triumph of Spirit

By Fred Jones • Photos by Teri Hoover

*"Success is often achieved by those who don't know that failure is inevitable." — Coco Chanel*

An interview with Darcy Meeker can be both beguiling and maddening. It is soon clear who is in charge of the conversation. When posed with a question having answer "A" or "B" Meeker might instead answer, "Yes." Certain lines of questioning are redirected. An inquiry into her childhood yields only a recollection of a movie she watched when she was nine years old: "It Happened One Night" starring Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. Gable was a reporter and Meeker recalls, "He didn't take any guff from anybody. I hate that thing that you are expected to stay in your 'place.'"

Indeed, Meeker has spent a lifetime following her heart regardless of whether it conforms to society's expectations.

With bachelor and master's degrees in English she had an exciting career as a journalist and public relations expert at the University of Florida. The likes of *Newsweek* magazine and the *Journal of Nuclear and Particle Physics* would look to her when breaking news occurred in that region and she was on call 24/7. But she felt something was lacking in her life so she took a three-month leave of absence. During that time she



Teri Hoover

Darcy Meeker loves the feel of the alabaster she uses for her sculptures.

took four classes at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee. Meeker came to the realization that, "My hands are hungry." At the age of 44 she resigned from her job and entered the world of art. In aptly creative words she claimed, "It was as if I had lived my life as a fire hose and suddenly I found a hydrant."

Her life as an artist has been extraordinary. Meeker has won numerous awards, has been featured in several publications and has a long list of solo exhibitions. She has

## ■ Exhibit Opportunities

### Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital Lobby

Proposals are invited for artwork that will enhance the healing process for those visiting the hospital. The proposal deadline is **May 30**. For more information, contact Marie Webb at [MARIEW@carilionclinic.org](mailto:MARIEW@carilionclinic.org).

### BRAA Annual Theme Exhibit July 17 – October 13 • VTLS, Inc.

The focus of this year's show is "family." Artists are invited to create works based on their own interpretations of this theme in any 2 or 3D medium. Entry deadline is **July 1**. For more information, visit the events tab at [www.blacksburgart.org](http://www.blacksburgart.org).

### Art at the Market

**July 19 • 9 am – 2 pm • Blacksburg**

Come celebrate Blacksburg's vibrant arts community by participating in downtown Blacksburg's Art at the Market (Farmer's Market, that is). The booth application fee is \$35 and the deadline is **July 1**. For more information, visit the events tab (see art and more) at [www.downtownblacksburg.com/](http://www.downtownblacksburg.com/).

### Self Portraits

**October 3 – November 29 •**

#### The Jacksonville Center for the Arts

Self portraits have been a part of the art world since the beginning of time. From the realistic to the surreal, interpret this topic in your own unique way. All media are welcome. Application deadline is **Sept. 2**. Reception is Oct. 11. For more information visit the "For Artists" tab at <http://jacksonvillecenter.org>.

## ■ Other Opportunities

### Figure Drawing

The Artful Place, A Fine Art Studio at 106 Faculty Street, offers live model drawing opportunities. Upcoming Sunday sessions are **May 25** and **June 8**, 6-8 p.m. Cost is \$10 per session and easels and drawing boards are provided.

Reserve your spot by emailing [diana@creekmorelaw.com](mailto:diana@creekmorelaw.com) by the Thursday before each session. Space is limited to eight participants.

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## Spirit continued from page 1

completed public and private commissions both regionally and nationally. She is represented in several galleries in the region, has participated in many juried shows, and taught classes to both adults and children. In 1996 she founded a group called the "Backyard Stone Carvers" that continues to this day.



Teri Hoover

*Despite contracting myotonic muscular dystrophy and having suffered two strokes, Darcy Meeker continues to pursue stone carving.*

march. If there is any positive side to the disorder it is the fact that the course of the disease is slow. That has allowed Meeker to adapt over time as much as possible. But MMD has not been her only obstacle.

In 2011 Meeker suffered two strokes. For a time she lost, among other things, her ability to talk and swallow. In her case, treatment in our health care system posed risks potentially as dangerous as the strokes themselves. Her intolerance to gluten and her allergies to dairy products, soy products and certain antibiotics continually presented threats. As the cardiologist treated her heart, the neurologist treated her nervous system, and the gastroenterologist treated her stomach, etc., only her husband, Jim Pease, stood guard to remind them all that there was a person connected to whatever organ system they were treating. There is little doubt that on more than one occasion his vigilance saved her life. After many months Meeker recovered well enough to launch back into her work.

There is irony that given the many art mediums available to Meeker she has gravitated to some of the more physically demanding disciplines, among them stone carving. To create her work, she has designed a rolling stand with a variety of flex-shaft tools. Her fingers no longer flex but her thumb functions as a clamp against her extended fingers to grip her tools. She has designed special shoes that allow her to stand and to walk short distances. Her PC tablet allows her to write short entries and voice actuation software allows her to write longer passages. She zooms, self-propelled, around her hardwood-floored house in an office chair on wheels. Her prodigious creative talents have been applied to adapting to her disabilities as well as to making art. Her assistants, Becca and Lily help with some chores and with activities such as installing shows. Becca is currently printing a book about Meeker's life called "Dancing in Stone." If MMD and strokes have slowed her down it is hard to notice. She recently completed a commission for a six-foot tall cross in tooled copper and pewter for a church in Baltimore, Maryland.

A walk through Meeker's house is a visual feast. Tooled and flamed copper shimmers on the walls. Light and shadow play within the sensuous curves of her stone sculptures. Ceramic masks laugh at the viewer from their perches on the wall. As the strength inexorably ebbs from her body, it is as if her vitality is being transferred magically into her work. The story of Darcy Meeker is much more than that of a

What sets Meeker apart from other successful artists is that in 1992, shortly after devoting her life to art, she was diagnosed with myotonic muscular dystrophy (MMD). This genetic disease results in progressive loss of muscle function. There is no treatment. No amount of physical exercise or therapy can slow its relentless

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## ■ President's Report

There are many things to smile about in BRAA these days.

We continue to have new members sign up including Rhoda Lowinger, whom I met at the David Pearce photography workshop April 27. Rhoda has only been in Blacksburg a few months, walked into Mish Mish and asked if there was an art association in town. Our friends there pointed her in our direction, she signed up and came to her first workshop. It was a pleasure to meet her!

The David Pearce photography workshop, April 27, was a success with 16 attendees. David did a good job presenting information about photographing 2D and 3D artworks and got people thinking about how to apply that information to their own efforts. The more informal second hour gave people a chance to mill about and share their own experience with others.



Photo by Gerri Young

*David Pearce's April 27 workshop on how to photograph artwork.*

The coming months have a few things in the works already.

- As the weather settles down we can begin our plein air days again. Last year, before I became president of your organization, I did all the coordination for these days. This year, I am looking for a member to take over this task. See more information on Page 4.
- On June 7, we will be going to Lynchburg to see the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Watercolor Society exhibition. See information on Page 4.
- July 19 we will participate in Art at the Market in downtown Blacksburg. More on that later.

Our luncheons are bigger and better than ever and the new energy of our organization is exciting and rewarding. The April luncheon had a record-setting 30 attendees! It was so much fun!

Thanks for all you do to make BRAA a great organization!

Your partner in art,

*Gerri*



Photo by Gerri Young

Sarah "Pippi" Miller (right) was the Art Spot speaker at our April luncheon and talked about the many options for art reproductions at Miller Off Main. Terri Hoover (left) holds up samples of printing surfaces available to artists. Join in the fun at the June luncheon and Art Spot featuring Jessica Wirgau from the Community Foundation who will be talking about the Arts Giving Circle.

## ■ Now Showing

**April 15 – July 15**

(except where indicated otherwise)

**Jordi Calvera** and **Darcy Meeker**, Blue Ridge Cancer Care, Blacksburg

**Jennifer Carpenter**, VTLS, Corporate Research Center, Blacksburg

**Charlotte Chan**, Community Arts Information Office (CAIO), Blacksburg (May)

**Riley Chan**, Pointe West Management, Blacksburg

**Carole Davis**, Zeppoli's, Blacksburg

**Susan Hensley**, See Mark Optical, Blacksburg and Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, Roanoke

**Ruth Lefko**, Montgomery Museum, Christiansburg (beginning May 1 through June)

**Maxine Lyons**, Real Life Dental Care, Blacksburg

**Darcy Meeker**, Mill Mountain Coffee and Tea, Blacksburg

**Betty Moore**, Brown Insurance, Blacksburg

**Dale and Nancy Norton**, ICTAS, Virginia Tech Campus (mid-May to mid-Nov.)

**Lois Stephens**, Virginia Tech Women's Center, Blacksburg

**Lisabeth Weisband**, ICTAS, Virginia Tech Campus (mid-May to mid-Nov.)

**"All great artists draw from the same resource: the human heart, which tells us that we are all more alike than unlike."**

**~ Maya Angelou**

# Hats off to volunteers

Big thanks to all the volunteers who helped BRAA in April.

All the officers, membership chair, newsletter team, gallery committee and chairs, program committee, and to the following for helping on special projects:

Big thanks to **David Pearce** who put on a terrific photography workshop on April 27, to **Robi Sallee** for bringing excellent refreshments and to **Bill Pulley** and **Fred Jones** for helping with setup and breakdown. Thanks to **Teri Hoover** for arranging the event and advertising it and to the library staff for preparing the flyer for the event and helping to set up the room.

Big thanks to **Susan Mattingly** for keeping an eye on the TV presentation in the window of the Community Arts Information Office (CAIO) and restarting it on the rare occasion it stops working. On going thanks to **Steve Miller** of Mish Mish for printing our few hard copies of the monthly newsletter and to **Maxine Lyons** for mailing them out.

When it comes to checking PO boxes, **Jeanette Bowker** is right on top of this and taking care of the treasurer duties.

If we missed your name, please know we didn't mean to and we really appreciate all you do for BRAA. ■

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person coping with a disability. It is a tale of the powers of will and intellect to prevail over adversity. It is a statement dealing with the triumph of spirit and the celebration of life. Foremost, it is an account of one woman's romance with art and her drive to share it with others.

Meeker currently has work on display at the Blue Ridge Cancer Center, Pointe West, Mill Mountain Coffee and Tea, Sheer Artistry, and Miller off Main. ■

## Opportunities continued from page 2

### Paint En Plein Air

Heritage Day at Montgomery Museum is set for Aug. 23. Artists are invited to participate by painting en plein air, setting up throughout the grounds. Contact Sue Farrar for more information at 540-382-5644.

### And More Plein Air Painting

For information on this year's plein air events or suggestions of lovely painting places we should consider, email [braaarts@gmail.com](mailto:braaarts@gmail.com). All who have expressed interest will receive emails of times, dates and places for painting, weather permitting. The info will also be announced on the BRAA Facebook page and website. There is no set schedule for the events, but we try to give good notice for most of them. If you are interested in coordinating the plein air events, email [younggerri@gmail.com](mailto:younggerri@gmail.com).

### Day Trip to Lynchburg

The June 7 trip to the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Watercolor Society Juried Exhibition will be a fun, informal day. We'll leave around 8 a.m. for the two-hour drive, spend a couple hours at the exhibition, have lunch and will be back home before dark. The only cost will be your lunch and chipping in on gas. A sign up email will be sent soon. Both riders and drivers are needed.



The art featured in this month's nameplate is "Chinese Dragon" (left, mixed media, 28 x 20") by Susan Hensley. This and more of her work can be viewed at See Mark Optical in Blacksburg through July 15.



## BRAA Officers

- Gerri Young**, president
- Charlotte Chan**, co-vice president
- Teri Hoover**, co-vice president
- Jeanette Bowker**, treasurer
- Fred Jones**, secretary
- Nancy Norton**, membership
- Robi Sallee**, past president



<http://www.blacksburgart.org/>



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Send Facebook news postings to:  
**Gerri Young** at [younggerri@googlemail.com](mailto:younggerri@googlemail.com)  
or **Teri Hoover**  
at [crystalirisphotos@gmail.com](mailto:crystalirisphotos@gmail.com)

Twitter @BlacksburgArt1

Send news, photos, comments, or newsletter suggestions to Lois Stephens ([stephens1@pemt.net](mailto:stephens1@pemt.net))

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