

<http://www.examiner.com/x-13937-Urban-Arts-Examiner~y2009m12d12-Touchstone--Foundry-Galleries-showcase-urban-art-by-the-community-for-the-community>

Touchstone and Foundry Galleries showcase urban art by the community, for the community

December 12, 8:44 PM ▫ [Urban Arts Examiner](#) ▫ Robert Gandy

Touchstone and Foundry Galleries teamed up last night for an exciting opening at Go Mama Go! on 14th St. The three day event "Art is a gift!" features artists from both galleries showing paintings, prints and photography, and go mama go!'s collection of contemporary housewares and art.

Touchstone Gallery went virtual when it left its home on 7th street due to overwhelming taxes and impending renovations. Although they still have an online presence and store, they are without a physical stable home.



Janathel Shaw stands with her sculpture at go mama go! Photos by Robert Gandy

Touchstone artists Rosemary Luckett and Mary Ott said that the landlord had no choice but to pass the tax costs along that forced the gallery to relocate. "The building value is ten thousand [dollars], but the land value is five million," said Luckett.



Ott had a series of four sunflower prints, and Luckett had two mask collages up among many works in the show.

Foundry Gallery President Ronald Riley said their space faced a similar fate, only to be saved at the last minute thanks to a cooperative landlord who agreed to slash their rent.

"We very fortunately had a someone come in who is professional treasurer" Riley said. "You know how artists are [with money]."

The store is a draw for residents and artists alike in the arts-friendly community.

Riley said the bookkeeper was a "godsend" and led them through the whole process. "We probably only became aware of how desperate we were about two months ago," Riley said.

Foundry artists Kathy Blakeslee, a self-trained watercolor painter, and Patsy Flemming, a painter in acrylics and mixed media, explained that Foundry Gallery is the oldest cooperative gallery in

the city. "They started in 1971," Flemming said, "and they were in the foundry in Georgetown." They said how the gallery was cooperative and helped emerging artists.

Giving advice for new artists, Riley suggested simply going to galleries first.

"Never introduce yourself when going to galleries," Riley said. "Then go home, put your resume together, and send a package. It's always nice if you go first, because you can say, 'well I think my art will work very nicely with your gallery.'"

Touchstone Gallery Director Ksenia Grishkova asserted that, although the gallery was no longer on 7th street, it was open virtually and still sold art online. "We're still operational," Grishkova said. "The galleries have been going for more than 30 years. Both of them [Touchstone and Foundry Galleries]."

Grishkova said Touchstone Gallery's virtual existence was only temporary, and that a new street-level space was in sight. "We're very close," she said. "I think in the beginning of the new year, we'll announce it. But it won't be ready [to open] until Spring."



Sunflower prints by Touchstone artist Mary Ott.

Touchstone and Foundry Galleries are treasured by area residents because they feature local artists. Local arts are proving to be a key factor in the recovery of the once-blighted 14th St corridor.

"I think the re-uppance of 14th street is inspired by all the creativity," said Marshall Rorer, neighborhood resident. "I've never lived anywhere and had such fun."

Neighborhood resident Ed Conley said the re-emergence of 14th street is tied to the arts, with urban art being particularly important.

"Retail stores all over support local artists," Conley said. "Urban art is community-focused, as opposed to some of the stuff in the museums. It ties the community together. It defines the community."

Grishkova said that local art was "more unusual, less conservative." She said, "If you go to other areas outside DC, like less urban, you find it's more traditional."

Touchstone artist Janathel Shaw said, "Art can be beautiful and wonderful, but should also reflect what happens in society, its ebbs and flows." She added "I know that I am definitely affected [by the urban environment]"

For more information:

<http://www.touchstonegallery.com>

<http://www.foundrygallery.org>

<http://www.gomamago.com>