

KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

Last week the Packard lineage was our ending topic. This family of artists is so successful that they have their own gallery. Anne Packard started with a "board" outside her beachfront house stating—paintings for sale—not even a sign. The Blue Heron Gallery was the next step, then Steve Fitzgerald's "Hell's Kitchen" Gallery. After the purchase of the adjacent property to the beach house, that became the Packard Gallery. When 418 Commercial St., the former

years of its operation. Daily people asked, "Do you paint?" Leslie was near defiant, avoiding the brush and palette. Finally she ripened. She loves the gallery paintings along with all the visitors and feels fortunate to be part of such a talented family with such a beautiful space to exhibit the family's work.

Leslie is and has been the clerk of it all. She hangs all the shows and deals with the artists. The idea of "competing" with these two dynamic women painters had always been overwhelming to her until she experienced exposure from a different angle.

A friend studied with Leslie's mother, Anne Packard, for three years. Her resulting canvases were beautiful, and they sold. Leslie asked herself, "If a stranger can achieve this in three years, why do I let the opportunity pass me by? People stand in line waiting for them perceiving them as teachers. I'm crazy not to take advantage of all this knowledge and talent."

So, for her last birthday, Leslie asked for paints. Mother Anne was delighted. They opened the paints and Leslie immediately painted her first canvas, a blue chair in her mother's house. "I picked up that palette knife

and it was like buttering bread. It was so comfortable. I felt so free, uninhibited. I got paint on the rug and made a bit of a mess but they thought it was good—everybody did. I sold that painting last month." Leslie told me that she "sells as she paints." "I'm the affordable Packard." Leslie laughed, but for how long? Buy one today and some day soon you will be able to say "I knew her when..."

Summer is a time challenge for Leslie, Gallery Director, Mother and now Artist. The lineage has moved laterally to two Packards in this generation. Leslie's son Stephen is 14 years old, handsome and quite social. He is training to help in the gallery. So, we will see more Leslie Packard paintings as Stephen grows and moves into the role of entrepreneur. Here will mark the fifth generation. So what will Stephen ask for on his next birthday?

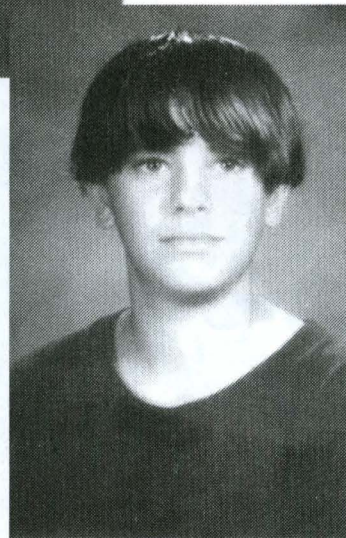


Christian Science Church was for sale, Anne Packard purchased the building and that is where three Packards are currently showing. Leslie Packard has been the Director from the beginning and is the newest member of the family to pick up the palette.

Max Bohm began this line of successful painters. Born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1868, he left high school with family consent to attend the Cleveland School of Art where he became a successful painter by the age of 15. By the following year he was self-supporting and by the age of 19 he travelled to Europe to study art in Paris. He was an expatriate much of his life, having found an art school in Etaples, France. Max and his wife, Zella Newcomb of Minnesota, also spent a year in Italy. They later spent time in London raising a family of 3 children.

Esther was the second generation artist—Anne Packard's mother—and Anne herself represented the third generation. Until August 5, 1997, Cynthia Packard represented the fourth generation. Cynthia has had 16 one-person shows in New York, Boston, Atlanta and Provincetown and is represented in several notable private collections.

Leslie has directed the Packard Gallery for the entire ten





A few blocks away, just West of center town at 234 Commercial Street, you do not have a long lineage, but a solo flight, practically a one-wing flight. Rhonda Venezia has known since she was an artist and as an adult knew she wanted a gallery. When I visited her gallery, she asked "Did you ever think you would be sitting in my gallery?" "Yes," I replied. I've known Rhonda for almost 20 years and knew of her work and direction then. Always an artist, she was drawn to Provincetown in the mid 70's and was smart enough to know she needed to study more and work openly. So she returned to Boston and the Art Institute and to study. But Rhonda wearied of the many constraints of art school and went off again to explore on her own. Provincetown once again "opened the door" for her. Working for Diane Vetrinile, Rhonda started a career in wearable art—sweatshirts and leather—ever the triangle motif. "The hardest thing for me was having to work and to be unable to pursue my art. Diane Ventrinile gave me that opening. From that moment on, I began creating and putting stuff in shops. I just kept doing it in Provincetown and Florida.

I always loved drawing and loved color I did my studying. These are my building blocks. That's what shows in my work today, colors and shapes. My family wanted me to go to college to be secure, and not become an artist. I'm a solo person. I went my way."

Rhonda Venezia has been in the lure of the triangle all these years. "There are so many shapes, yet we are only familiar with the square, rectangle, triangle and the circle. The circle symbolizes unity but the triangle reflects the unity of consciousness. The pyramid was a well-chosen shape. My triangles are inverted. That shape came to me in a dream. I've painted them since that dream long ago when I was painting for Diane Vetrinile. I got up in the middle of the night and drew three triangles, close to a trapezoid, then the shapes floated. It's a concept that points to the sky, but when it's upside down it is collected consciousness grounded into you. So you can bring it forth, you can create. In daily life spirit connects so that you can transcend the self.

"My clients are always amazed at how minimal my work is. At first they say 'that's a landscape? It's a triangle.' Then they look again and see it.... Seeing is looking out into the world. There are so many colors involved. A practice of conscious color looking will have you seeing color and shape equally."

Seeing for most people is tangible but for Rhonda Venezia it is intangible. When most people look at a table they see the table. Rhonda wants to know what is under, around, beside, what this table is all about. Rhonda wrote out her definition of seeing: "Seeing is to experience the world with the entire being. Seeing is to lay bare the core of everything to witness the unknown and to glimpse into the unknowable."

The Venezia Gallery is a livable space for art, a waystation, an environment for art that speaks for the art before it moves on to its next home. Rhonda does not like to see art laying on floors, leaning against walls or stacked to the side. She is also very careful about mismatched hangings which show contrast rather than mutuality, differences rather than likenesses. It must flow, otherwise it's stagnant and does not present each piece in all its potential beauty. The Gail Brown show enforced this theory and the viewing pleasure was obvious in the patrons' comments. Gail Brown's beautiful works sold easily.

Rhonda will be having a show of her own works for Labor Day Weekend—landscapes and pastels on sandpaper. I'll see you there. I'll be the one with the 20 year old Venezia sweat-shirt with the original triangle design. Still chic and still drawing comments after all these years. In the meantime, we will see the first American showing of Jennett Inglis' show—"Supernova," so successful in Europe and now coming to an American gallery. More about that next week.