

MOOREFIELD EXAMINER

and Hardy County News

Artists Serve Coffee Art, Dark, Light or With Salt



An artist uses medium and dark roast coffee for background washes.

Aromas Serves Up Art From the Coffee Palette

Coffee can be a feast for the palate (and palette!), as evidenced by an exhibit at Aromas Coffee House in Moorefield.

All puns aside, Jinyuan Duan, owner of Aromas, has partnered with the Hungry for Art League for "Coffee Paintings," a show featuring art which uses coffee as paint. The exhibit will be on display at Aromas through July.

Artist Sandy Osgood of Moorefield first approached Duan with the idea.

"We regularly meet at JD's coffeehouse," she said.

During one meeting, the discussion turned to offbeat art, and someone mentioned seeing a magazine blurb about painting with coffee and tea.

Something clicked for Osgood. "It immediately made sense to me," she said. She asked Duan if he would be interested in such a display, and he said yes.

The painters quickly discovered the challenges of painting with coffee, and each created solutions to the puzzle.

"The key issue was getting it dark enough," said Joanné Perkins of Moorefield. Straight from the coffee-pot, first attempts produced light, yellowish washes. "It's hard to work with something when you don't have contrast in values," Perkins added.

Perkins turned to a special espresso powder, and applied her "paint" in a unique way. She decided to think of it as "ink" and used a special refillable art pen to draw her abstract piece "Hidden Visions." But even with that specialized application she said it took several layers and lots of patience to carefully go over the lines repeatedly. In the piece, the coffee reveals many nuances of color, sometimes appearing more gray/black, while in other areas the tint is more a warm brown. To punch things up, Perkins also added bits of color with colored pencil.

Those shifts of color also appear in Kathleen Puffenberger's "The Saturday Bath," where the details in an old cook stove reflect the curious color range of the coffee, which also creates spatial depth.

Many of the paintings in the exhibit use Aromas coffee exclusively. Duan provided coffee to the artists, ground it as finely as possible, and even lent a coffee press for extracting the darkest brew.

Like Perkins, many of the artists stressed that patience was the key to application. "You had to layer to get darks," said Osgood. "But if your brush was too wet, then the coffee would wash right off. It was really hard to do large, even washes."

Osgood used lots of contour detailing in her coffee paintings to avoid those large flat areas as much as possible. The resulting crisp textures lend themselves to rocky shorelines, for example, such as those in "Popham Beach, Maine." Pat Lang of Moorefield solved the dilemma in "The Wheel of Many Miles" by breaking up large wash areas with the detailed nooks and crannies of weathered wood.

A different approach was used in Norma Parker's "Hollyhocks." The Moorefield artist used a wet-into-wet painting technique — coffee was added to an already wet surface where it bled into soft shapes. To add additional texture, she applied salt, which soaked up additional water and left little white halos. The resulting painting has a soft, impressionistic feel.

Another wet technique was used by Bess Rexroad of Old Fields, who sprinkled coffee grounds into a large area of her painting, "Waiting for the Storm."

The resulting darkness and rough texture balance the composition and add visual interest.



Kathleen Puffenberger's "The Saturday Bath."