

Mother-daughter exhibit at Silvermine

By **PHYLLIS A.S. BOROS**

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A love of nature — and a desire to work with each other — has brought two artists together in a mother-daughter collaborative project that opens next Sunday at the Silvermine Guild Arts Center.

The paintings of Jane Sutherland of Fairfield and the sculptures of her daughter, Alexandra Sax of Astoria, N.Y., will be featured in “The Crane Project,” which they say was inspired by the increasing precariousness of the majestic bird whose ancestry goes back to prehistoric times.

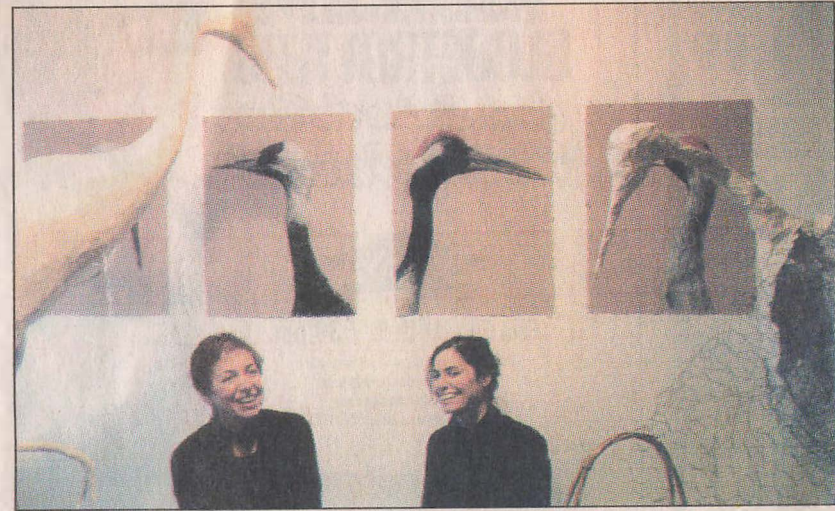
The exhibit opens Feb. 16 and runs through March 23 along with four other special shows that celebrate nature and the urban experience.

Also on display at the Silvermine Guild Galleries will be:

“Eden at Risk,” about 20 landscapes in drypoint by Nancy McTague-Stock, of Weston, who has worked with the Nature Conservancy of Connecticut to highlight preserves and forests throughout the state. (McTague-Stock will give a Gallery Talk & Tour of her “Eden” March 2 from 2 to 3 p.m.)

Recent prints and works on paper by Nancy

► Please see **MOTHER** on F2



Contributed photo

Mother and daughter reunion: The paintings of Jane Sutherland, left, and the sculptures of her daughter Alexandra Sax go on display next Sunday at Silvermine.

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Continued from F1

Lasar of Washington, Conn., including abstract landscapes.

"Reflections," by Lucy Krupenye of Wilton, featuring assemblage sculptures created from objects found in nature, such as wood, stone and bone.

"Landmark(s)," by Taisha Hutchison, of New Haven, featuring drawings, prints, paintings, photography and sculpture inspired by a photo she took in New Haven in 2000 of a small white flag on a demolition site.

Sutherland and Sax, both elected members of the Silvermine Guild, will give an Artists' Talk on "The Crane Project" Feb. 16 at 1 p.m. A reception for all five shows, open to the public free of charge, will follow from 2 to 4 p.m.

"The Crane Project" features one large oil painting on linen of a marsh and 10 crane portraits in pastel on paper from Sutherland and three large papier-maché crane sculptures from Sax.

Sutherland, a full-time artist and professor emeritus of art at Fairfield University, said she was "incredibly flattered" when her daughter asked her to collaborate on the project — the first ever for the pair.

"On the spot I accepted," Sutherland said, laughing. "It's very thrilling for me to share my love of making art with my daughter."

"I'm very proud of her," said Sutherland of her 31-year-old

"I have many memories as a child going to my mother's shows at Silvermine."

— Alexandra Sax
sculptor

daughter. "I think she is a fantastic artist and I am honored that she would want to show her work with me."

Sax said her artist mother has "always been someone who has inspired me . . . and the idea of doing a show with her at Silvermine just seemed to make sense."

"I have many memories as a child going to my mother's shows at Silvermine," where Sutherland has been a member for more than 20 years, Sax said.

Sutherland said that they chose to focus on birds because of their shared "interest in the natural world." Cranes came to mind because each had read — and been impressed by — "The Birds of Heaven: Travels with Cranes" by Peter Matthiessen and illustrated by Robert Bateman.

After agreeing on cranes, the two traveled last year to the headquarters of the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wis., to do a bit of research.

There they learned about the 15 species of cranes that live on every continent except Antarctica and South America — 11 of which are vulnerable to extinction.

Cranes have inhabited the earth for the last 34 to 50

million years, Sax and Sutherland noted.

"They are such large, elegant birds," whose form has captured the imagination of civilizations around the world for thousands of years, Sutherland said.

"That we chose to work on a common subject matter was totally unexpected for me," Sax said, adding that "it has brought our work even closer."

Sax said she was drawn to

the cranes because they embodied "both strength and fragility, and working with cranes as a subject matter was a way to talk about the human experience."

Sutherland is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College and received a master's degree in fine arts from the Universidad de las Americas in Mexico City. Sax has a master's in fine arts from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Silvermine Guild Art Center is at 1037 Silvermine Road in New Canaan. The galleries are open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free. For additional information, call 966-9700.