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Longtime Goshen artist's new show celebrates 'Places and People'

By **Emily M. Olson** Published 8:45 pm EDT, Saturday, June 1, 2019

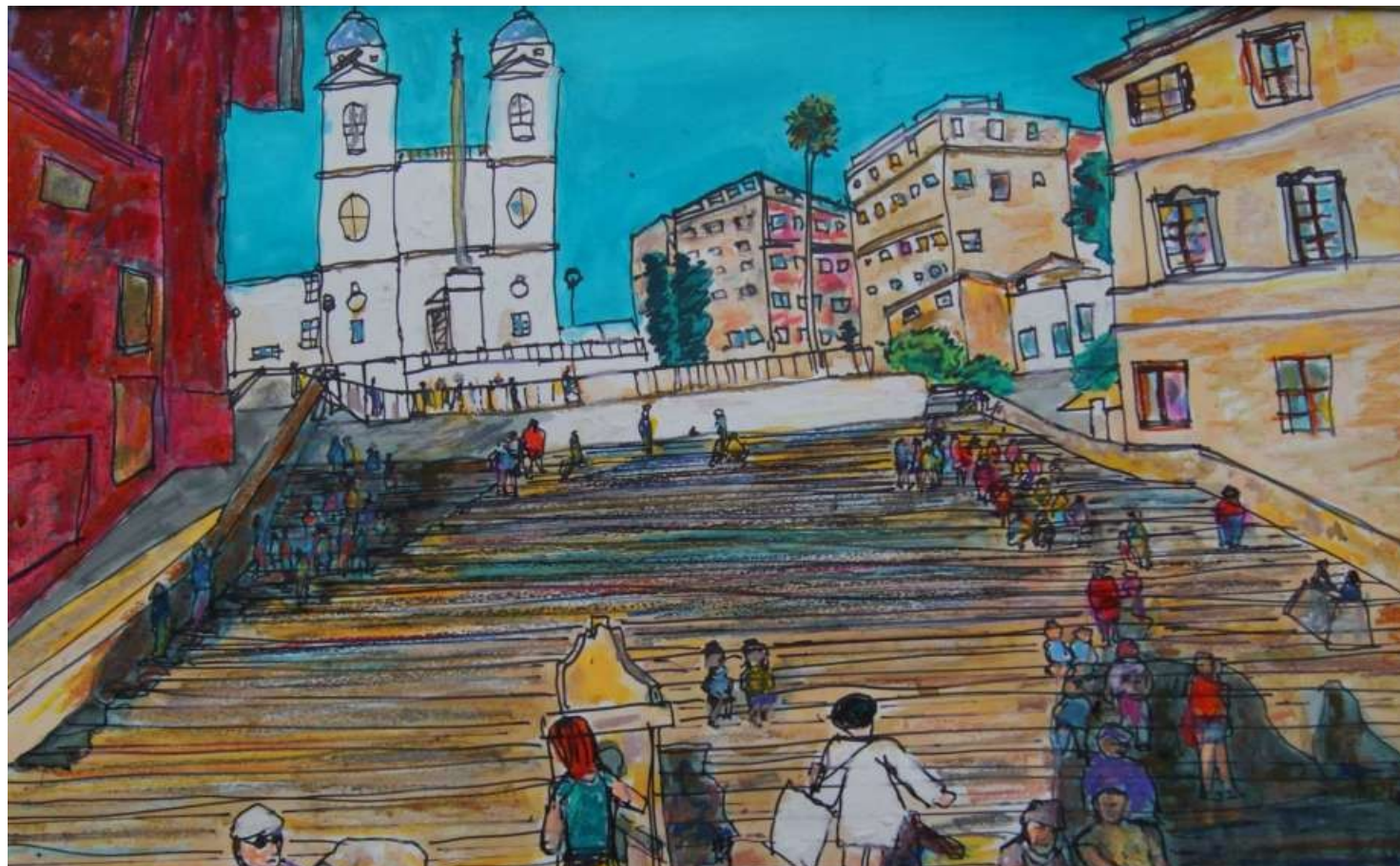


IMAGE 1 OF 7

GOSHEN — Don Sexton's paintings are full of movement and vivid colors, depicting scenes of people going about their daily lives in places around the world.

Sexton, a resident of New York City and Goshen, has painted in the streets of Manhattan, Paris and cities in China, Latin America and Europe. Now, he primarily works in his Goshen studio where he and his wife, Laura Cohen, spend as much time as they can. Years ago, he could be found painting outdoors with an easel and a canvas, and people often stopped and watched him work. These days, he often takes photographs and uses them back in the studio where it's quiet.

Many of these colorful paintings capturing street scenes and people will be exhibited at the Northeast-Millerton Library in Millerton, N.Y., in his new solo show, "Places and People," running June 4-28 with an opening reception June 4.

Goshen artist Don Sexton's work will be exhibited at the NorthEast-Millerton Library, 75 Main St, Millerton, NY, June 4-28. Above, "Spanish Steps," in Rome.

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Traveling the world

Sexton recently returned from a trip to China, a place he visits several times a year as a consultant, helping businesses develop brand and marketing strategies.

"I taught marketing and brand courses at Columbia in New York, and I started going to China in 1984, mostly for teaching assignments," he said. "I've probably been there 120 times since the 1980s. This time, my trip was for Brand Day in China, which is May 10. The people there feel, and rightfully so, that for China's economy to grow, they need to market brands outside of the country.

"Of course, this (branding effort) is all happening with the trade wars they're having with President Trump. But even with that, Chinese companies are growing, and they need guidance," he said.

On his trip in May, Sexton was the keynote speaker in Shanghai, during the fifth annual Brand Forum.

"Usually when I go, I'm there for week, but this trip was really short, only 3 days," he said. "Being the speaker was a compliment for me, but it was a short trip ... I was probably one of the first Western faculty to go there in the 1980s. It's been a real experience."

His travels also take him to Europe, and Sexton expressed his sadness about the huge fire that destroyed much of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, where he has painted and photographed many times.

"I've painted (the cathedral) and it's one of the most beautiful places I've ever been," he said. "The fire was such a tragedy, and it's wonderful that it's going to be rebuilt."

Life experiences turn to art

Sexton grew up in Hartford and Wethersfield, and attended Boy Scout camp in the area of West Hill Pond. "I always loved this part of Connecticut, the northwest corner," he said. "I love the chaos and excitement of New York City, but I also like to get out of the city, where I don't have to fight my way through to get somewhere. I found a place up here, and my wife and I settled here about 30 years ago."

Over the years, Sexton joined Artwell in Torrington and is a member of the [Kent Art Association](#), among others, and is fond of Torrington and surrounding towns. He enjoyed concerts at Tanglewood in nearby Massachusetts, and remembers going to Playland, the amusement park in Rye, NY, as a child.

Both of these places are part of his show at the Millerton library. The paintings show people sitting on the grass at Tanglewood during a concert. In the Playland piece, a carousel in the distance faces children and parents under a green and white awning. Everyone is watching or walking, eating or talking. Their faces are not visible, but each individual, pair or trio is engaged.

"I only went to Playland a few times when I was young, but I was struck by the contrast of the colors, the brightness and shadow," Sexton said. "It's these kinds of things that are of interest to me."

Another painting experience came in 2001. His home in New York City was only five blocks from the Twin Towers when they were struck by terrorist attacks on 9/11.

"Living so close to Ground Zero, it was pretty intense," Sexton said. "For a few months after the attacks, I'd take a face mask and my paints, and I painted Ground Zero from many different street corners. I painted people looking at Ground Zero. I just painted a lot. Those paintings don't sell, and I don't expect them to sell, but one day, I'll do a show with them. I'm just waiting for the right time and place to do it."

Sexton's technique

Sexton's painting techniques have evolved over time.

"First I used oils, but I don't have the patience anymore," he said with a laugh. "When I use oils, I have a tendency to keep touching (the painting), and the paint gets muddy. So I experimented, and I found I could draw reasonably well, and that's where this technique started."

He first draws his images with black ink, "the underpainting," he said, and then continues with oil pastel crayons.

"Those allow me to use a lot of color, many shades of the same color," Sexton said. "Then I come back again, and use concentrated watercolors with just a little bit of water. When you put the watercolor on top of the oil pastel, you get something very different. I used to paint outside, but I finally stopped doing that because it's an enormous amount of work to carry everything around, and people would gather behind me and watch ... when I got to the end, and started doing the watercolor, the painting would just come alive."

The work he does brings him a lot of pleasure, he said, mainly because he imagines the people in the paintings. In one piece, "Guang ghou, shopping street" in China, the people are all on their way somewhere.

"I enjoy doing it. It makes me think about who these people were, and what they were doing," Sexton said. "They're on their way to work, taking their child to school, whatever it is. The painting I did of Notre Dame, I put myself in there. There was some guy painting there, and he was wearing jeans like me. I thought, what the hell, I can put myself in there. So I did."

An artist's education

Sexton studied painting, drawing, printmaking, and etching at Wesleyan University and at the New School, the Stacy Studio Workshop in New York City and at the American Center for the Arts in Paris. His paintings have been exhibited in numerous shows in New York and Connecticut, have received several awards, and are in collections in the United States,

Europe, and Australia. He is frequently engaged for commission projects.

"I actually enjoy doing commissions, and I like putting people in the paintings," Sexton said. "People will ask for a painting, and say, 'My husband likes a particular bridge in New York City,' and I'm very happy to do that; to do an image or a painting of something someone likes. That's what I do."

He earned his bachelor of arts from Wesleyan University in mathematics and studio arts. He also has a masters and doctorate from the University of Chicago. For 50 years, he was a full-time faculty member at Columbia University's Business School, and is now retired. His works have won many awards such as best in show, awards for achievement in mixed media, award for general excellence, artist of the month at the Kent Art Association and the bronze gavel award and award in mixed media at Artwell.

Sexton has been an active participant in the community of artists. He has served on the board of JAM Gallery in New York City and was vice president of the board of Artwell in Torrington. He is a lifetime member and serves on the board of the Kent Art Association and is a member of the Mamaroneck Artists' Guild, the Washington Art Association and 14th Colony Artists. He taught Columbia courses on management of the arts for many years, and worked with the Museums Collaborative to conduct training programs for executives of numerous arts organizations including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art. He also assisted the Whitney Museum and the New York City Ballet with their marketing, and consulted for the Metropolitan Opera. He is the founder of The Arrow Group, Ltd. which provides advice and training in marketing and branding.

The artist's family includes his wife Laura, daughter Mitra, and sons Daniel and Jonathan. Daniel is working in the film industry in Brooklyn, while Jonathan is completing his studies at Syracuse. For himself, Sexton enjoys the quiet of Goshen. "It's just peaceful," he said. "I don't like chaos when I'm painting."

Sexton was happy to be invited to show his work in Millerton. "I was delighted, actually," he said. "([The Northeast-Millerton Library](#)) is a nice library, it's a friendly library, in a house. It's a comfortable place. I'm also having a show in

Manhattan this year, and I'll use more of my New York City stuff there. And I'm having a fall show at the Mamaroneck Artists Guild in Larchmont, N.Y."

Sexton's work can be seen on his website, sextonart.com. His Northeast-Millerton Library show opens June 4, with a reception from 5-7 p.m. and continues through June 28, Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Visit <http://nemillertonlibrary.org/> or call 518-789-3340 for information.

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