

Valley Craft Network Studio Tour — *Celebrating 40 Years of Art*

NOVEMBER 20 & 21, 2021 — 10:00 AM TO 5:00 PM
VALLEYCRAFTNETWORK.ORG

Written by: **Sara Mullins**

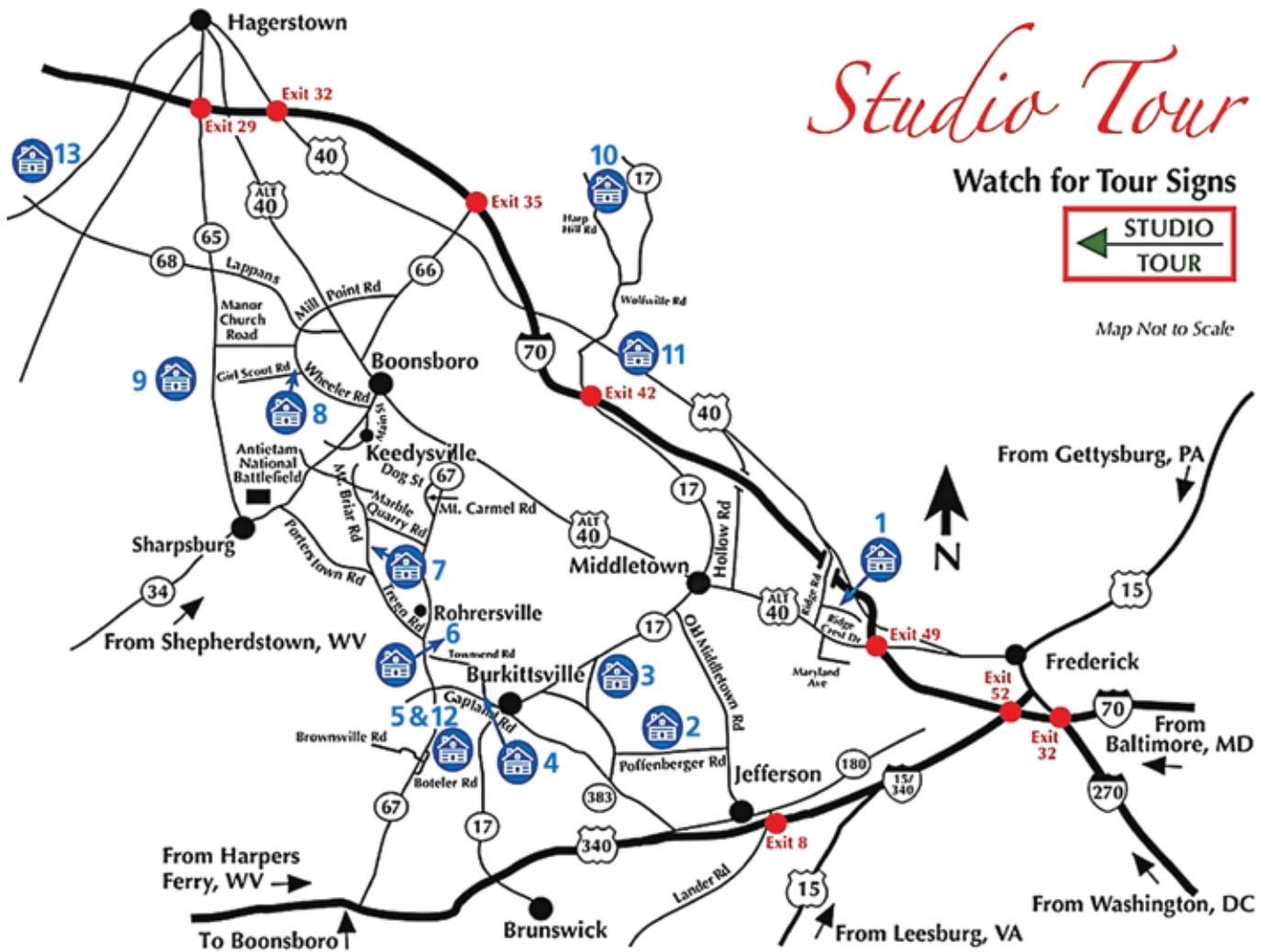


Bill van Gilder (inset), founder and organizer of the Studio Network and Tour and interior of the Van Gilder Pottery Shop (above). PHOTOS BY BETSY DEVORE

This fall, a group of 13 rural Maryland artisans is looking forward to a notable anniversary. The Valley Craft Network will celebrate its 40th Annual Studio Tour during the weekend before Thanksgiving.

The event is Maryland's oldest studio tour, featuring gorgeous scenery along gravel roads through forests ablaze with fall colors. Visitors can tour as many or as few studios as they'd like, where they can meet the artists and observe their work. The timing is perfect for holiday gift shopping.

"It's a labor of love, and we're grateful to the people who come on the tour," says Bill van Gilder, a potter with an international reputation for his craft and teaching skills. Before the tour began in 1981, the network's artists, like most of their peers, participated in craft shows around the country to sell their wares. This was a time-consuming and painstaking process that involved carefully packing fragile items to avoid breakage, dealing with limited display space and worrying about the possibility of bad weather.



“We decided, why not bring people to the artists to share our ‘making life?’ Bill says. “People could see how works were created and tour the studios. It was pre-internet shopping, and it took off!” He says that more than 1,000 people visit his gallery every weekend, and notes that visitation continues to grow with the arrival of new residents previously from urban areas. “It’s a labor of love, and we’re grateful to the people who come on the tour. We take precautions to keep people safe. They worked well last year.”

The 13 artist participants and a brief description of their work are listed below, in an order that corresponds with the Studio Tour map. Visitors can choose to visit studios of interest in any order. Please note that Woodendeavor and Kesra Hoffman Landscapes share studio space. More information about each artist can be found by visiting the Valley Craft Network website at www.valleycraftnetwork.org and clicking on the “Artisans” link.

The following is a list of member’s comments and a sampling of their work from the artisans’ web sites:

ARTISAN PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY VALLEY CRAFT NETWORK

#1 Jenny Bernhard Ceramics, Frederick – Jennifer

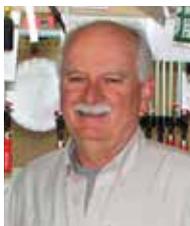
Bernhard, ceramic artist. “Presently my work deals with simple forms that provide a canvas for rich surfaces. The vessels are playful yet provocative with bold images of botanicals and geometric patterns. All of the work is food safe.”



#2 Willow Oaks Craft Cider, Middletown – Eric and Laurie Leitzel Rice, cider and wine makers. “We craft our farmhouse style cider from certified, organic, American heirloom apples. Our portfolio of ciders has grown to 12. We also make four port-style dessert wines.”



#3 Contentment Turnings, Jefferson – David Swiger, woodworker. “As you examine my turnings, please take the time to notice what nature has given us to appreciate. I sincerely hope that my pieces impart in you the feelings that I experience when creating them at my lathe – serenity, happiness, and pleasure...feelings of contentment!”



#4 Van Gilder Pottery, Gapland – Bill van Gilder, potter. “I make pottery with the hope and anticipation that the pots will invite use. The process is complete when the pot is held in the hand, connecting the maker to the user – a subtle form of communication and enough reason for me to make pots again.”



#5 Woodendeavor, LLC and Design in Relief, Knoxville – Daniel Rudy, woodworker and printmaker. “Growing up as the son of a custom home builder, I have been playing in a wood shop for as long as I can remember. There is something about the act of creation...at the end of the day my muscles may ache but the satisfaction that comes from the completion of another project far exceeds the pain.”



#6 Caprikorn Farm, Gapland – Alice Orzechowski and Scott Hoyman, goat dairy operators, cheese and soap makers. “We make a variety of goat milk cheeses including Cheddar, Gouda, and Fetina, as well as fresh traditional and flavored chevres. Our soap is handmade using the finest moisturizing oils, with natural essential oils and fragrances, and ...we use the highest possible concentration of fresh goat milk.”



#7 M4Studios, Keedysville – Kirke Martin, ceramic artist. “Martin creates a range of functional and sculptural wood-fired ceramics that fuse traditional techniques with independent design. His work reflects inspiration from natural elements and historical forms.”



#8 JRW Creations, Boonsboro – Judy Williamson, textile artist. “Sewing is my passion. It began at age nine when I made my first apron. From the beginning, I’ve loved transforming fabrics, trims and threads into wearable garments, accessories and furnishings.



#9 Tamaría Martínez Clay, Boonsboro – Tamaría Martínez, potter. “Being a potter has opened a world of discovery of clays, glazes and firing techniques over a 33-year career. Wood firing became my primary method of firing since 2014. In the process of discovering the effects of the wood fired surface I have concentrated on clays and forms that allow atmospheric effects to develop complex surfaces.”



#10 Jane Pettit Art, Myersville – Jane Pettit, mosaic artist. “Everything I make is mosaic art, inspired by people and nature. It reflects my love of color, texture and the abstract aesthetic. An inclination to celebrate what’s right in the world adds a sense of humor and whimsy to much of my work.”



#11 Studio 2/Beth Carey Jewelry, Myersville – Beth Carey, jewelry artisan. “Growing up in Frederick County, I became an artist inspired by nature. And like a spider spinning her web or a dragonfly emerging from water, I am compelled to create and make things. Just can’t help it.”



#12 Kesra Hoffman Landscapes, Knoxville – Kesra Hoffman, fine art landscape painter. “My work celebrates the rich colors, dramatic moods and cohesive shapes of the water, land forms and skies around the world. I find a thrill in the constantly changing dialogue between light and shadow in nature.”



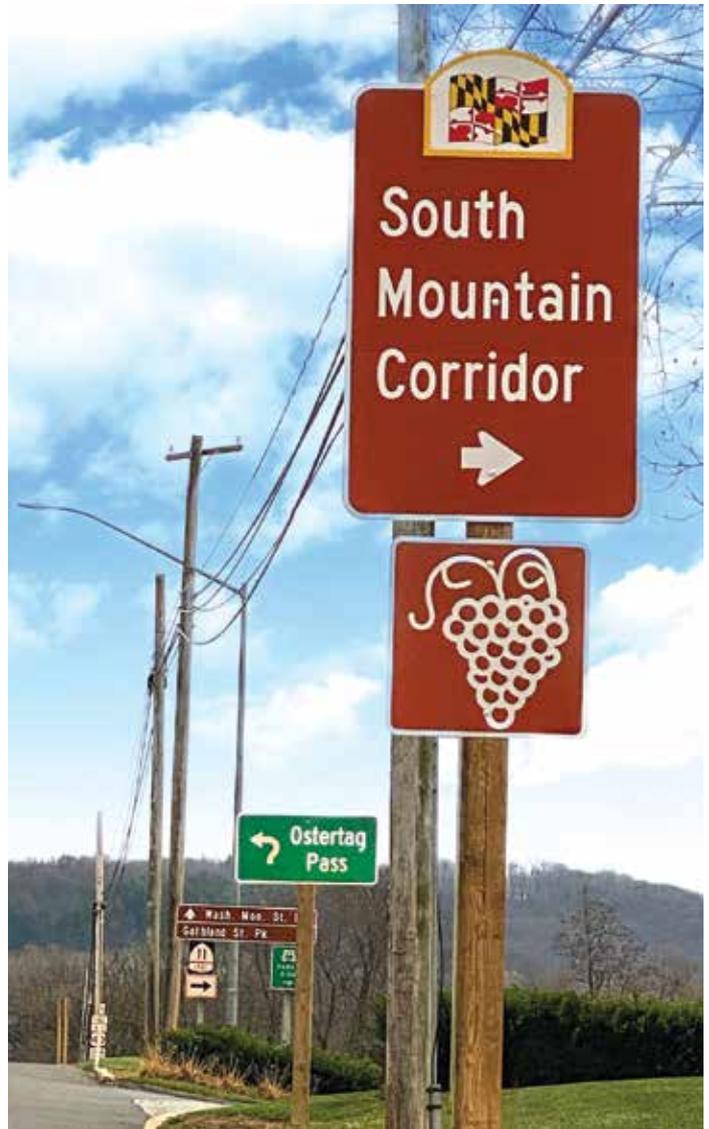
#13 Foxcross Pottery, Sharpsburg – Dirk Martin, potter. “In the early 1970s, my father, Del Martin started Foxcross Pottery in the basement of my family’s home. Time in the studio alongside my father taught me an incredible appreciation for handmade artisan work, his craft, specifically, and the unique style of pottery he produced.”



To boost the visibility of these and other artists in the Hagerstown area, the state of Maryland created the South Mountain Corridor to define the geographical region they call home, which runs north/south along the borders of Washington and Frederick Counties and east/west along

Route 40. This project is part of Maryland's Tourist Area Corridor program, which uses signage with images to welcome and guide visitors to attractions of interest. The South Mountain Corridor offers a wealth of other activities and places to explore. Here's just a sampling:

- Sample local wines at Big Cork Winery, Red Heifer Winery and Knob Hall Winery.
- Enjoy a variety of Caprikorn Farms goat cheeses.
- Find treasures from years past at Beaver Creek Antiques, Antique Crossroads, Hancock Antique Mall and Rocky Ridge Collectibles & Antiques.
- Go spelunking at Crystal Grottoes Caverns.
- Enjoy a bike ride along the C&O Canal Towpath.
- Go kayaking on the Potomac River.
- Head to Gathland State Park and visit the National War Correspondents Memorial, an impressive structure dedicated to the photographers and correspondents who covered the Civil War.



Above right: South Mountain Corridor signage guides visitors to attractions of interest.

PHOTO COURTESY VISIT HAGERSTOWN

Above: A few of the wines at Big Cork Winery.

PHOTO COURTESY VISIT HAGERSTOWN

Right: Gathland State Park and National War Correspondents Memorial, dedicated to Civil War correspondents.

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Crystal Grottoes Caverns is located at 19821 Shepherdstown Pike in Boonsboro, MD.

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The Corridor's abundant and varied range of activities, natural beauty, and proximity to metropolitan areas all contribute to the longevity and success of the Valley Craft Network,

- Take a hike along Maryland's scenic segment of the Appalachian Trail, which traverses the length of South Mountain State Park.
- Drive or bike through Antietam National Battlefield.

but ultimately its members' commitment to their calling as artists has been a key factor. "We're all full-time professionals, not hobbyists," Bill says. The Network demonstrates that making a life as an artist is possible and rewarding.

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