

10 TGIF!

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THINGS ARE SHAPING UP IN MORRISTOWN

New exhibit at the Center for Spiritual Living focuses on art of the square

By **BILL NUTT**
CORRESPONDENT

The message of the art exhibit on display at Morristown's Center for Spiritual Living is clear: It's hip to be square.

"Three Foot Square" is a display of a dozen abstract works by artists Gail Mardfin of Bernardsville and Penny Wise of Morris Township. Each piece measures 3 feet across by 3 feet high (except for one or two that measure 2-by-2 feet).

The square theme came about almost as an accident, says Mardfin, an artist who has been the curator of 10 shows at the center in about 18 months. This past March, Mardfin was putting together an exhibit of works by members of the center, and Wise was considering submitting a piece that wasn't yet finished.

"It was a large piece, and it was square," Mardfin says. "We realized it wouldn't be finished in time for the March show, but it got us thinking."

The two artists then decided to mount a show together of pieces entirely on square canvases.

"We decided to do it in August," Mardfin says, adding with a laugh, "At the time, that seemed a long time off." (Ironically, the painting that inspired the show will not be one of the pieces exhibited.)

For Wise — who studied art but has worked as an interior designer and an architectural artist — this show is an opportunity to rediscover her own love of drawing.

"This is something of a renaissance for me," she says. "I got into interior

design because I loved doing the renderings and the architectural drawings. But now so much of that is done on the computer. I'm trying to get back to using my hands."

Same shape, different styles

The women agreed that their exhibit would reflect their own individual approaches to art.

"We didn't collaborate on anything, and we didn't discuss what we were doing," Wise says. "You'll see a contrast in styles, but hopefully, the show will come together."

Though she is pleased to have presented so many shows in a relatively short time, Mardfin hopes to display even more works by up-and-coming artists and photographers at the center.

"We would love to give a showcase for emerging artists," she says.

More immediately, Mardfin and Wise are looking forward to the reactions of visitors to "Three Foot Square."

"I go to art shows, and I go to galleries, and I always feel so exhilarated and inspired when I see other people's art," Wise says. "I just hope people will feel the same way when they see our work."

Mardfin feels that art shows are perfectly in keeping with the mission of the Center for Spiritual Living.

"For some people, looking at non-representational art is a bit of a stretch, and I like to stretch people. We hope that they'll also feel stretched spiritually. That's what art can do."



"The Purpose of Life is Joy" by Gail Mardfin is one of the works featured in the "Three Foot Square" exhibit at Morristown's Center for Spiritual Living.

THREE FOOT SQUARE

Featuring works by Gail Mardfin and Penny Wise • Artists' reception from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday; exhibit on view from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and noon to 1 p.m. Sundays through Sept. 17 • Center for Spiritual Living Morristown, 331 Mount Kemble Road (Route 202 south) • Free • 973-539-3114; www.CSLMorristown.org • Emerging artists interested in future exhibits at the center should call 908-696-1363