

ArtScape Aficionado

Anthony Matthews loves to promote other artists and Salt Spring Island as a world-class arts destination.

Q. Your Salt Spring Artist Directory initiative is shaping up beautifully. Can you describe it and share the rationale and inspiration for taking on this project?

A. The Salt Spring Artist Directory launched in early April and the response from both artists and advertisers has been amazing. Essentially, the directory is an ever-growing catalogue of the creative souls on Salt Spring Island who are engaged in some art form or another. Members pay a modest \$45 per year and get a web page in a searchable database with images of their work, an artist biography and statement, with contact information as well as links to print and web sources so the visitor can learn more about the artist. In addition to the website, there are directory accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. My aim is to bring together the entire spectrum of arts practitioners all in one place and it is becoming a tremendous resource for arts tourism, collectors or arts professionals. I invite everyone to visit the website at www.saltspringartistdirectory.com to discover the “ArtScape” that is Salt Spring Island.

Q. You also set up Salt Spring Fine Art Consulting in the past year. What are the aims and services of that venture?

A. For me, art consulting is a natural progression from selling art. What I want to achieve there is to bring my experience as an arts administrator, gallery director and curator into the home of the private collector. Buying art is only a small part of being a collector, and I advise on installing and lighting the art as well as documenting collections. Essentially, I act as a private curator for my clients. On the other side, for artists and arts organizations I can advise and organize exhibitions, including the marketing and public relations.

Q. You have an authentic passion for promoting the arts and individual artists. How did that come about?

A. I was lucky to have a very early exposure to the arts and I cannot imagine a world without it. Basically, I am a passionate person and when I see something I like, I try to communicate that and share it with the people around me. I eat, live and breathe art and I want everyone to see what I see. We are lucky to live in a great artistic community full of wonderful people and part of promoting the arts is to promote people, and promote community, so for me it is a joyful experience. Although I run a full-time office, it doesn't even feel like work — plus I get to go to a lot of art show openings.

Anthony Matthews in front of a detail from The Kitchen from the Banquet series by Diana Dean, part of Anthony's art collection.



JEN MACLELLAN PHOTO

Q. Do you have any plans for upcoming exhibits either on your own or in collaboration with other artists?

A. There is always an exhibit in the works! I am happy to announce here that Stefanie Denz and Morley Myers will be the feature artists in the anchor exhibit at Mahon Hall for the 8th annual Easter Art Tour in 2014. As well, the OXOgraphy collective will be scheduling a show for 2014, so as a founding member, I will be creating art for that. Of course, I have lots of ideas for other shows, and the directory should prove to be fertile ground.

Q. Who are some of your favourite artists, either on Salt Spring Island or beyond, dead or alive?

A. So many artists have resonated with me and I discover new ones all the time. Perhaps I am a product of my time, but I love the American minimalists and colour field artists from the '60s and '70s, some of whom are still alive. Barnett Newman and the light sculptor Dan Flavin are two favourites. Here on Salt Spring, I love, as everyone knows, the masterful figurative and allegorical work of the doyenne Diana Dean. I feel so privileged to live with a few of her pieces in my own collection.

Q. How did you end up on Salt Spring and what makes you stay?

A. This is my third and longest stint on the island. I first came here briefly in 2002 and returned two years later when Michael Ableman asked me to come and help run his farm for a season while he was writing his last book. I had previously done an internship with Michael at the Center for Urban Agriculture in Santa Barbara, Calif. A few years later I returned to visit a friend and, like many people, stayed. Right away I jumped into volunteer arts administration and sat on the board of the Salt Spring Arts Council where I was one of the founding organizers of the annual Easter Art Tour. I stay for one reason — “community.” Salt Spring Island is an exceptional place, with exceptional people, and I am proud to call it my home. ✨