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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**IN-PERSON FIRST FRIDAY OPENINGS ARE MAY 7  
AT THE OCEAN CITY CENTER FOR THE ARTS AND BEYOND**

OCEAN CITY, MD — *April 28, 2021* — In-person First Friday art openings continue at the Ocean City Center for the Arts on 94<sup>th</sup> St. bayside on May 7 from 5-7 p.m. as well as at the Art League’s new satellite gallery locations at the Princess Royale and Coffee Beanery. The events will maintain CDC guidelines and require masks and social distancing. The public is invited to attend.

The Thaler Gallery at the Arts Center hosts “Expressive Plein Air Plus” by award-winning plein air painters Jim Rehak and Alison Leigh Menke. “Plein air” is a French expression meaning “in the open air,” used to describe the art of painting outdoors.

Rehak, who lives in Seaford, De., started with comic book illustration and progressed to oil painting while studying for his BFA at the Maryland Institute College of Art. During college summers, he worked as a portrait and caricature artist in Ocean City and was later an art director at a sign company, a freelance court illustrator, and a teacher. Rehak captures the seasonal changes of the landscape through his paintings. “Plein air painting is an ideal way to connect with nature and connect with myself,” he said. “The Eastern Shore has been a beautiful place to do just that.”

Menke is an expressive impressionist who paints directly from life. Her approach emphasizes the importance of expressing a sense of light and

place while showcasing the rich qualities of oil paint and brushwork. Born in Caracas, Venezuela and raised in Clarksville, Md., Menke graduated in 2010 from the University of Maryland with a degree in Art and Art History and studied abroad in Amsterdam and Greece. She has competed in nearly 100 national and international plein air competitions and festivals. Her commission work is permanently on display at the National Harbor in Washington, D.C., and she will be the juror for the Art League's 2021 Artists Paint OC plein air event.

The Galleria will feature a group show entitled, "Up Close and Personal," judged by photographer Brook Hedge, Coastal Camera Club member and resident artist at the Peninsula Gallery in Lewes, De. The exhibit features close-up photography that puts the focus on moments that may be overlooked, and Hedge will award cash prizes to the winners.

The Spotlight Gallery hosts fabric artist Dale Ashera-Davis of Berlin. Her interest in fabric began as a child and quickly moved into fiber art using commercial cottons as well as unusual materials such as dryer lint, copper roofing sheets, and found items. She hand dyes and prints many of her custom fabrics, combining cottons and silks to create one-of-a-kind pieces.

Lisa Marie Penn answered the call for a free artist-in-residency for Studio E in May, and was chosen from many applicants. Born in Baltimore, she attended the Maryland Institute College of Art and opened "2 Hot Art Chicks Gallery" in Hampden before becoming an Amtrak train conductor and later moving to Ocean Pines. Penn specializes in the traditional art of Baltimore screen painting and will be teaching classes at the Arts Center on the technique in May and June.

Wood turners Paul and Andrew Neeb of Pikesville, Md. are the artisans-in-residence for May. The brothers turned their love of the outdoors into creating lathe-turned art décor pieces inspired by nature, including intricate inlaid wooden bowls, birdhouses, platters, and custom walking sticks made from misshapen trees and vines they find on hikes.

The First Friday receptions are now branching out to other points in North Ocean City. The new Art League satellite gallery in the main lobby of the Princess Royale Oceanfront, 9100 Coastal Hwy., displays the paintings of David Simpson through May. Simpson was born and raised in West Ocean City and currently occupies an artist studio at the Arts Center as well as instructing classes in painting and drawing.

A second satellite gallery on 94<sup>th</sup> St. is located less than a block from the Arts Center at the Coffee Beanery and will feature the work of Rebecca Morgan. Morgan is an illustrator and painter from the Eastern Shore who works between Maryland and Barcelona, Spain and is influenced by both cultures. She creates brightly-colored images to energize and uplift the viewer.

The Art League's new monthly online exhibit at [ArtLeagueofOceanCity.org/online-exhibits/](https://ArtLeagueofOceanCity.org/online-exhibits/) features art by students of all skill levels created during the Art League's online Zoom art classes.

All shows will be on display until May 29. More information is available at [www.ArtLeagueofOceanCity.org](https://www.ArtLeagueofOceanCity.org) or by calling 410-524-9433.

*The Art League of Ocean City is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing the visual arts to the community through education, exhibits, scholarship, programs and community art projects. Financial support comes through individuals and corporate sponsors, The Maryland State Arts Council, the Worcester County Arts Council, and the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore.*

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