

'Gimme Shelter' exhibit continues through Aug 27

'Gimme Shelter', Middletown Art Center's (MAC) current exhibition, on view through August 27, is all about protection, refuge, and establishments that house, shelter or shield. The concept of 'shelter', a basic human need, is of particular relevance to so many of us in this community and even globally at this time.

When in the gallery, you hear viewers sharing memories and feelings of security, loss, retreat, protection, asylum and sanctuary that the works evoke in them.

'Dorothy' created by artist and architect Ken Berman, is a mobile shelter or "Turtle" prototype. The title is inspired by the story line in the Wizard of Oz: "there's no place like home". This relatively tiny (4' X 8') teardrop-shaped 'trailer', can be towed by a bicycle or popped into the back of a pickup truck. It features a comfy, carpeted interior with lighting, artwork and a picnic basket from which a stuffed Toto the dog greets visitors eagerly. The hubcaps are red like Dorothy's ruby slippers. Berman explained to us: "my goal is to remove the stigma of homelessness via a unique and well-designed work of art that could be used universally by people of all socio-economic levels. At the same time each 'Turtle' incorporates a variety of functions and features and could be used for temporary homeless housing, disaster relief, recreational shelter, etc."

Lisa Kaplan's 'That's My Rebuild' contextualizes the anguish and agony of having a home go up in flames as well as the audacity of building anew. In this roughly life-sized structure, an ever-so-slightly bas relief woman rendered in drywall compound, earth and clay, lifts aloft arms which morph into the slender beams that support the frame of a roof. The woman confronts us from a screeching red background, bringing to light the constructs of framing buildings, work of art, and framing and reframing reality.

Another perspective of shelter comes from Graham Lloyd, who gives us 'My Street House'. This 2' X 4' acrylic on canvas shows us what it must be like to be a street person. The homeless man's roof is a blue plastic tarp while red plastic crates provide ballast. Painted

in primary colors on a muted gray background, the palate is as basic as the life of a down-and-outer in the city.

Other works by local artists include Sage Abella's primal 'Midnight Wild Arrives at the Doorstep' giving



'My Street House,' Graham Lloyd, 2' X 4' acrylic on canvas

us a sense of danger, in the form of a heavily clawed turquoise wolf with tangerine striations that lurks just outside our door. This 'danger' is one we must confront, however safe we might feel within our own four walls.

Shirley Dodge has provided us with 'Solace' in the form of a tent-like enclosure constructed from swathes of hand woven aqua, pale peach and dove gray silk, draped over bamboo poles. Inside, two pillows, a cloth bundle, zoris (sandals) and a tatami mat invite you to step in and settle down.

There are many more intriguing pieces in the Gimme Shelter exhibit by local and regional artists. Come and see them at MAC located at 21456 State Highway 175 at the junction of Hwy 29 in Middletown. The gallery is open Thursday 11 to 4, Friday 11 to 6, Saturday 10 to 6 and Sunday 11 to 4.

MAC (a.k.a. EcoArts of Lake County) is a local non-profit offering exhibitions, classes, musical performances, poetry readings and community events. Check the schedule or learn more at Middletownart-center.org or call 707.809.8118. Come and enjoy the burgeoning arts scene in Middletown!