



Landscape by Barry Keith featured at Gallery Underground in October.



Barry Keith, painter.

# The Road from Recovery to Art



Landscape by Barry Keith.



Landscape by Barry Keith.

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

It all started when someone gave him a crayon at 4 years old. Now Barry Keith is a rising painter with a show called "The Pluviophile" opening at Gallery Underground in Crystal City on Oct. 3 and running through Oct. 28. Keith is prolific and has had 21 solo shows around the area including other solo shows at Gallery Underground.

Keith says this show is dedicated to his older sister. "I was very close

to her, and she died just a month before her 65th birthday. She used to tell me how much she loved the rain because it calmed her. The day I gave her eulogy it rained so I took a lot of pictures and created this show for 'one who loves the rain.'" He says the show is very colorful

**"One thing I love is translating the beauty of the world. I never took notice until I got into recovery."**

— Barry Keith, painter, 31 years sober

with different palettes representing a lot of emotions.

When he isn't painting, Keith is an elementary teacher at Matta-

poni Elementary in Prince George's County and has an art club for 100 students ages 7-12 years old. "We paint. I take them outside to draw nature; we play with clay and do crafts. We even had a dance party, they loved it." He says, "Some kids are so articulate. When you see kids with interest at this age, it can be amazing."

Previously Keith taught high school students at Suitland High School for 15 years.

But Keith tells his students that when they are just getting off the bus, he is at home in Accokeek putting on his apron. And he tells them that's

when his day starts. "It takes a lot of energy after all day with kids that age." On the weekends he will paint outside. "I have a lot of images to work with."

Keith considers himself an en plein air painter which is a French expression for painting in the open air where the artist has a better ability to see the light and color. However, Keith comments it has

been too hot to paint outside much this summer. "Now the weather is getting better for me."

En plein air has been used for centuries but was popularized by the French Impressionists, and Keith says his love of Impressionists forced him to paint outside. Keith began drawing Marvel car-

SEE THE ROAD, PAGE 5

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# The Road from Recovery to Art

FROM PAGE 4

toons for the other kids in the class when he was in grade school in Alexandria where he was born and grew up. By the time he was at the University of Delaware he was taking graduate art and design courses in his sophomore year. "Sometimes I was the only one in the class."

He says in the beginning they would paint abstract objects and bring them to class to critique for light, shade and color. "But these had no meaning. Once I got outside and started to paint landscapes I developed the real idea of painting." He started using his materials in a different way, using transparent glazes and learning how to manipulate materials instead of just straightforward. "I grasped the form." Keith says his goal is to become a great American painter who is considered on the level of someone like Edward Hopper.

But his experience at the University of Delaware was mixed. "I felt a sense of inadequacy. It was 98 percent White, and some teachers were really hostile. One teacher gave me a D because he thought I knew the material too well, and thought I must be cheating." Keith started to drink, and by the time he graduated he says he was smoking weed and then went to hard drugs. He was working to fuel his habit.

But Keith says eventually he was forced into treat-

ment by the State of Virginia. Keith explains he was caught by the Alexandria police and they put him in a program which required him to report to the courthouse. "But I kept coming up dirty and they said they were tired of this." They put him in detox at Phoenix House in Arlington where he spent 90 days. "It was May 5, 1993.

"I was lucky to get help. I realized when I got to Phoenix House that I hadn't slept for 10 years." He says Phoenix House made him focus on himself "to get to the bottom of why I felt inadequate. You step outside yourself to see where everything is going."

He remembers when he was ready to leave Phoenix House, "They looked at the 75 of us there and said 'only 2 of you will be sober next year.' I got so angry. He was speaking of statistics. I didn't want to be one of those." Once Keith left the program he never drank again and has been 31 years sober.

Keith reflects, "Sometimes it will click that I've gone from a drug addict to someone who values life and art." Keith is also writing books and currently has four on the market.

"The power of living reflects my relationship with my family and friends. One thing I love is translating the beauty of the world. I never took notice until I got into recovery."

Now he thinks, "Who am I when no one is looking? It is the solitary pursuit of crafting things alone."

## BULLETIN BOARD

Submit civic/community announcements at [ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar](http://ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar). Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before the event.

### SATURDAY/SEPT. 30

**Expungement Clinic.** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. At Arlington Presbyterian Church, 918 S. Lincoln Street, Arlington. The Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney, together with the Clerk of the Circuit Court, is hosting their second annual Expungement Clinic. The Expungement Clinic will be a "one-stop shop" for those with expungement eligible charges to have them expunged. A fund is available to cover the cost of expungements (\$91) on a first-come, first-serve basis making the expungement application free to Clinic participants. If you would like to apply for an expungement during the Clinic, please bring the Warrant of Arrest or Final Disposition for each charge that you wish to have expunged. Please note that charges must consist of Arlington County/City of Falls Church arrests to be eligible for expungement in this jurisdiction. Pre-registering is advisable no later than September 28, 2023. If you have not pre-registered by this date, you may still participate, but arrive no later than 10:30 a.m. to complete the initial paperwork required and expect to wait up to two hours for your application to be processed.

**PLANNED ROAD CLOSURES FOR SEPT. 30**  
The Arlington County Police

Department will conduct road closures in order to accommodate three upcoming events taking place on Saturday, September 30.

#### Clarendon Day

The 2023 Clarendon Day will take place on Saturday, Sept. 30 and will begin at approximately 11:00 a.m. The following roadways will be closed from approximately 3:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.:

Wilson Boulevard, from Washington Boulevard to N. Highland Street  
Clarendon Boulevard, from Washington Boulevard to N. Garfield Street  
N. Highland Street, from 11th Street N. to Wilson Boulevard

N. Herndon Street, from Wilson Boulevard to the alleyway behind CVS  
N. Hudson Street, from Wilson Boulevard to the alleyway behind CVS  
Beckett's Celtic Festival

The 2023 Beckett's Celtic Festival will take place on Saturday, Sept. 30 beginning at 12:00 p.m. The following roadway will be closed from approximately 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.:

Campbell Avenue, from S. Randolph Street to the parking garage entrance in front of the Shirlington Harris Teeter

#### National Landing Oktoberfest

The National Landing Oktoberfest will take place on Saturday, Sept. 30 beginning at 1:00 p.m. The following roadway will be closed from approximately 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.:

22nd Street S., from S. Fern Street to S. Eads Street

### 2023 NATIONAL COFFEE WITH A COP DAY EVENTS

In honor of National Coffee with a Cop Day on Wednesday, Oct. 4, the Arlington County Police Department's Community Engagement Division is inviting the public to two events to celebrate community/police

relations. These morning and afternoon events are welcome to all and are a great informal engagement opportunity to ask questions, voice concerns, get to know neighbors, interact with the Community Engagement Division and meet officers from different sections of the department.

#### The Arlington County Police

Department is committed to developing and maintaining strong relationships with those we serve as a vital component to ensuring the public's trust. We work proactively to engage with all who live, work or visit Arlington County and Coffee with a Cop provides a unique opportunity to build these partnerships, one cup of coffee at a time.

National Coffee with a Cop Day will be celebrated at the following locations and times on Wednesday, Oct. 4:

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.  
Compass Coffee – 4100 Wilson Boulevard  
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Idido's Coffee and Social House – 1107 S. Walter Reed Drive

### OCTOBER IS URBAN AGRICULTURE MONTH

Urban Agriculture Month shines a spotlight on the significant role urban agriculture plays in our local food system. They'll be kicking off the month with a celebratory event on Sunday, Oct. 1 from 1-3 p.m. at the Arlington Central Library, 1015 N. Quincy Street, Arlington, with speakers, demonstration sessions, free seeds and seedlings,

SEE BULLETIN, PAGE 9

## North Old Glebe Road over North Glebe Road Bridge Replacement Arlington County

### Virtual Public Information Meeting

Wednesday, October 18, 2023, 7 p.m.  
<https://www.virginia.gov/OldGlebe>

Find out about plans to replace the North Old Glebe Road bridge over North Glebe Road (Route 120). The bridge was built in 1964. The new bridge will feature a wider sidewalk on the eastern side and a new sidewalk on the western side.

The meeting will be held as a **virtual/online meeting**. Information for accessing and participating in the virtual meeting is available at <https://www.virginia.gov/OldGlebe>. The project team will make a presentation beginning at 7 p.m. and answer questions after the presentation.

Review project information and meeting details on the webpage above or during business hours at VDOT's Northern Virginia District Office, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. Please call ahead at 703-259-2429 or TTY/TDD 711 to make an appointment with appropriate personnel.

Give your comments during the meeting, or by **November 1, 2023** via the comment form on the project website, by mail to Ms. Dipali Patel, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, 4975 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030 or by email to [meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov](mailto:meetingcomments@VDOT.virginia.gov). Please reference "North Old Glebe Road over North Glebe Road Bridge Replacement" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures nondiscrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 703-259-1775.

State Project: 6743-000-914, B610, P101, R201

UPC: 119204

Federal: NHPP-5B01 (257)

In case an alternate date is needed, the meeting will be held Wednesday, November 1, 2023 at the same time.

Past issues of

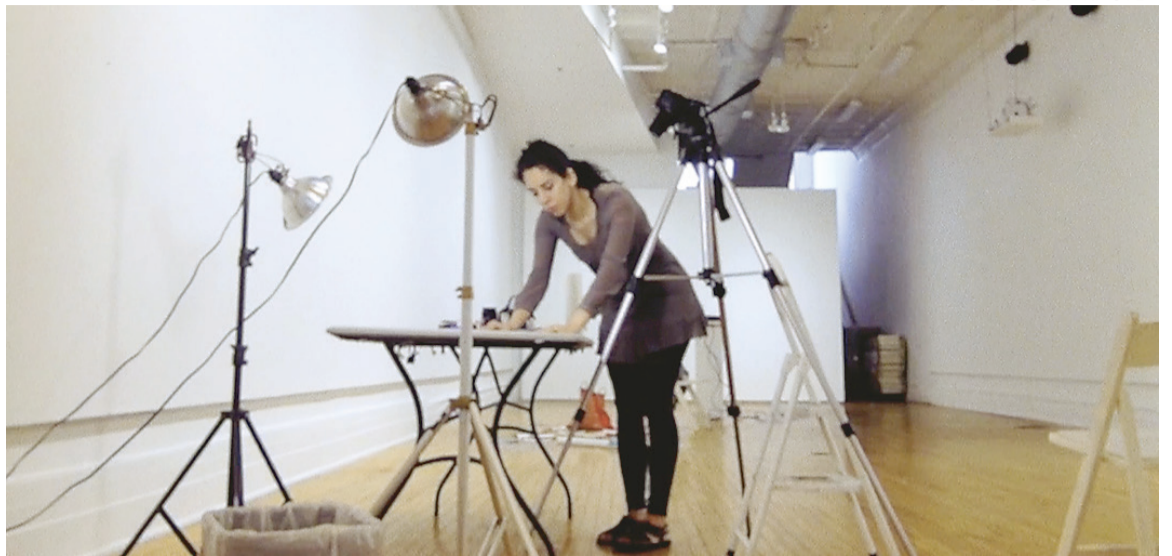
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Christine Sloan Stoddard. Her first feature film "Sirena's Gallery" has just premiered and been accepted for distribution on Amazon.



Christine Sloan Stoddard creates her first feature film in isolation during Covid in an art gallery in Richmond.

# Arlington Native's First Feature Film Premieres on Amazon

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

Christine Sloan Stoddard remembers back to kindergarten at Jamestown Elementary in Arlington when her drawing won the contest for the cover of the literary magazine. Now 29 years later she has had her first feature film, "Sirena's Gallery," accepted for distribution on Amazon, Hoopla and Vudu among others. The film debuted Aug. 27 at the Byrd Theatre in Richmond.

In addition to being a filmmaker, Stoddard is an author with a book of plays as well as an artist working in watercolor, mixed media collage and sculpture with a juried show at the Howard County Center for the Arts in Maryland.

"I owe a lot to Arlington schools," she said.

Stoddard said "Sirena's Gallery" grew out of a college assignment to produce a short 8-minute film script. She always wanted to use that trial as a stepping stone to a feature film. She had a lot of ideas and questions about the power structure in art galleries and when the opportunity actually came, she had a good sense of what she wanted to do. When she was awarded a two-week residency at 1708 Gallery in Richmond, she used the time to make the film.

"It was during Covid-19 so I had the gallery all to myself in May 2020 when we weren't exactly sure where the pandemic was going. I had envisioned conversations with gallery patrons but because of the pandemic, I had to do everything over Zoom." As a result Stoddard

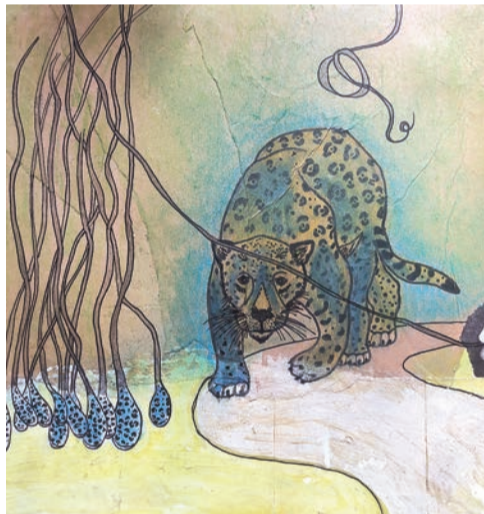
wrote, produced and was the only actor in her film. "Sirena's Gallery" is about a Salvadoran-American woman's struggle as an art gallery owner during the pandemic as she adapted to isolation while grieving the recent loss of her husband.

Stoddard says the film is very loosely inspired by her life. "She is Salvadoran-American like me. The protagonist runs a gallery. It is inspired by my experiences in the gallery world. But it is definitely a work of fiction."

Stoddard says she waited until March 2021 to edit the film. "When I returned to Brooklyn it was right after George Floyd, and many stores were ruined. It was frightening to think what would have happened if I'd been there at the time. There was a lot of chaos in the city." That was also the time she was moving apartments. "It also took me a lot of resettling and rethinking my life during the pandemic."

"It's also a project to edit a whole film by yourself. It took me one and a half months to finish. The film was largely shot in the gallery. I also made use of the outdoors." She explains the work was entirely digital. "At one point I had two different laptops; I had so many different clips and had to scan in some paintings." She also had archival footage of a trip she had made to San Salvador for a residency when she was 29-years-old, her first trip to the country where her mother had been born, had left and never wanted to return. "I spent hours watching the footage; it wasn't unusual to watch dozens of times."

She finished the editing in May



Christine Sloan Stoddard is also a multimedia artist with a degree in fine arts.



2021 and then started submitting the film to distributors. "It's difficult to get on a platform as an independent." She said it is also difficult to secure funding. The government doesn't provide much funding for non-profits so you have to rely a lot on independent funding from philanthropists. Then in September 2021 Summer House said "we want it."

"I was very excited. Then I had to wait two years for the distributor to put it on Amazon." She adds, "That's actually very fast; 5-7 years is not unusual."

"Theatre attendance is down. People are watching at home now so the process of getting it picked up is condensed. But you have to come up with all the marketing, pitch it." She says it was held off because the film is Covid-related and many people needed distance from that period.

"I was lucky the distributor kept the project. I was afraid they

would change their mind."

She says filmmaking is a cut-throat business but all of the creative industry is like that. "Part of it is that we get to use our creative talents to express ourselves, and it doesn't have a commercial value in our society like the sciences for instance." She adds, "There is a lot of competition to be seen, known, recognized."

A lot of things coincided to bring Stoddard to where she is today. Her father was a native New Yorker who worked as a documentary filmmaker for NBC. Her education in Arlington centered on creative writing and visual arts; and she still remembers Mr. Russell, her Jamestown teacher. By the time she was at Williamsburg Middle School she says she ran a wonderful weekly arts club with her sister "where we would hang out and draw."

In high school she remembers another incredible art teacher and

became associated with "Teen," a national arts magazine and got to interview Laura Bush at the White House.

She headed off to Grinnell College in Iowa on a scholarship for a year and then graduated in arts at VCU after which she received her MFA at City College of New York. Now she is an MA Oral History candidate at Columbia University. Stoddard always has projects in different phases and is continually looking for different partnerships and grants.

Her short film "Uncontested" just premiered, she is preparing a talk at William & Mary. Her play "Tank" is just entering its fourth week at a small theatre close to Penn Station with the idea to pitch it to a larger theatre.

She says New York City is the place to be. "New York It is a place for artists with a more independent artistic feel. It really has all of the creative interests."

# Survivors Find Healing by Writing Poetry

BY SHIRLEY RUHE  
ARLINGTON CONNECTION

The poets sit scattered across the auditorium at Lee Center in Alexandria waiting for their turn on the stage. The goal of “Embrace Your Poetry Share” is to create a trauma-informed, survivor centered space for all of those impacted by sexual violence and their supporters.

“It illustrates the power of community and art in the individual collective healing process and reminds us all that we are not alone,” says Linley Beckbridge, Development director at Doorways in Arlington.

The participants who have signed up to read their poetry at the event on Wednesday, April 26 each have an individual story but all share the trauma and self doubt that come from sexual violence in its many forms. Some are nervous, others are assertive, others still recovering from the hurt and still seeking answers. Some can’t let go of it; others won’t let it define them anymore.

“I pray for the ability to self regulate, let go of my fear; to ask the question again and again even when I cannot bear to hear the answers again and again.”

Holly Karapetkova, Arlington’s poet laureate, begins the evening by reading a poem written by her student, Jordan, for Karapetkova’s creative writing class at Marymount University and read at a campus event last fall. Karapetkova says she held this “Speaking Out on Sexual Assault Event” because she had heard from a number of students who had experienced sexual assault and wanted to speak out about it. She explains that sexual assault is a big problem on all college campuses.

Solidarity is why she held this event because part of what is going on is that people speaking out gain courage from each other. “Some shared experiences for the first time,” says Karapetkova.

Jordan said the sexual assault happened when she was 16 years-old, about five years ago. And at the Marymount event when she read her poem, “I finally felt like I got it out there. I came from a community that was very religious. If I told people about it, the common response was to pray about it.” She says she was frustrated and angry. “I didn’t feel like I was getting help. I felt like I was alone.”

Jordan says it helped her to heal by writing. She found that by putting it in words really helped instead of telling about it. “Saying it out loud and openly left me vulnerable with a form of media like this. But there were other people there who knew.” She said it was a release, more of an honor to be able to feel comfort. “It was more of a survival story in a way.”

“Her eyes scream ‘help me’  
Why did it happen?  
I have no answer.....  
Will we be ok?  
I finally have an answer



Poet LKN from the Philippines on zoom for Embrace Your Poetry Share event on Wednesday, April 26.



Holly Karapetkova, Arlington poet laureate.



Sonja Allen, Executive Director of Alexandria’s Guest House.



Doorways staff, board and volunteers at Embrace Your Poetry Share event.

I hold her shaking hand  
We will be ok  
She is hurt  
She is guarded  
She is withering  
but someday she will be ok.”

LKN, a poet attending the event from the Philippines, explains even the male gender can be assaulted. He is a victim of rape in 2017 by four men in Manila who drugged him in a bar. The poem he wrote is a reaction to a comment he got several weeks ago about a poem he had written relating to his rape. “They wanted me to make it less powerful, less impactful.”

He had performed in person in Manila earlier this month and was approached by some attending the event who had not been personally impacted themselves. LKN says they found it disturbing and wanted him to make the poem more hopeful. “Rape is never hopeful. But those who were there who had experienced sexual assault lauded my poems.

LKN was published by Doorways in 2020

and has been attending Poetry Share virtually since 2021. He says poetry has been a companion of his trauma. “It listens to the pain all survivors share — a part of us got stolen that moment, and we can never have it back. Later in the year he plans to release his debut full collection of poetry.

“when I share about rape,  
I wish my rapists taught me  
how to water it down lower than ignorance  
is bliss of softening trauma can feel so good  
like how they try to shush me  
when I tried to scream for help?....

I wish rape didn’t burn  
the children’s books in my body  
or the spotlight of my childhood’s innocence  
they were all razed of judgment i can’t reclaim  
the recollections of my ruin is all i have  
should i let others’ consideration fill my library?

Sonja Allen, Executive Director of Guest House, read “I Need to Speak,” a poem from the Alexandria poet laureate, Zeina Azzam.

“Choose to remember or not to remember,  
forgive or not to forgive

the ones who hurt you. Each time you speak  
the prick of a memory fades.”

Elizabeth Tropea is assistant director of Artemis House, a 24-hour emergency shelter in Fairfax County offering temporary housing, case management, access to employment resources and legal services. She puts her experience with the clients into poetry. “It’s magic to put words onto paper.”

She observes that their clients are in major survival mode when they arrive at the shelter and are dealing with homelessness as well as sexual assault. “They can’t work through their grief yet; they are worrying about their next meal and where they will stay the night.”

And she adds that unlike other assault victims the people who come to their shelter don’t have a support system to help them through the grief.

“I have always loved poetry and this Share the Poetry Event was an intersect of poetry with the work I do. Art is incredibly healing; I hope to incorporate more of it in the work I do.”

“I pray for the strength to step into these spaces  
again and again and again  
to ask the questions again and again and again  
even when I cannot bare to know the answers  
again and again and again  
I hold onto hope that these inadequate actions and efforts will  
somehow contribute to the end of another’s abuse  
so they do not come home to pain  
again and again and again  
so they might begin again  
I cannot be a savior, but I can be a seer.”

The event was sponsored by Doorways, a 24-hour emergency shelter and family residential home for formerly homeless in Arlington; Guest House, a residential facility in Alexandria for women who have committed non-violent crimes; and the Alexandria Sexual Assault Center which has a 24-hour hotline and offers services to abuse victims. Over the last 10 years, the event has morphed from in-person before Covid, to all virtual during the pandemic to a hybrid in-person/virtual event on Zoom this year.

“I’ve made bad decisions  
You’re behind bars  
and I’m shooting for the stars  
I’m no longer the victim  
You didn’t win and I’m proud to be me.”