
Arts & Culture » Visual Art, Rosendale

November 09, 2024

Women's Studio Workshop Celebrates 50 Years

A New ED, A Birthday Bash, and a Campus Expansion Mark WSW's Golden Anniversary

By [Remy Commisso](#)



"I don't think there's many arts organizations that have been around for 50 years, in the steadfast way of promoting women, trans, no binary, intersex, and gender-fluid individuals, by giving them a brave space to be able to freely share and express themselves," says Executive Director Sharon Loudon. "That, to me, is the backbone of freedom of speech."

WSW's golden anniversary marks a big year for the organization, starting with the addition of Loudon to the team in September. "Sharon's commitment to supporting artists, at every stage of their careers, is legendary, and fits beautifully into WSW's mission," says Board President Rachel Weiss. "Sharon builds community wherever she goes, always foregrounding accessibility, equity and inclusion as basic attributes of all of the arts organizations with which she has worked: she leads with sincerity, and follows through with resolve."



On November 16th, Women's Studio Workshop will **celebrates the 50th-year mark with a birthday bash**. The event will bring together local businesses like **Hudson Valley Bakery** and **Kakes A La Kim** to commemorate 50 years of art and activism. "We've had so many vendors donate as a token of their appreciation. They've given a lot of the food, the wine, everything that you can think of," Louden says. At the end of the night there will be a toast to two of the founders, Ann Kalmbach and Tatana Kellner, who still live across the street.

The Makings of Printmaking Powerhouse

WSW started as Kalmbach's and Kellner's love child in 1974. Since then, the studio has had hundreds of artists-in-residence contribute to the giant collection of books and works of art.

**Like what you're reading?
Subscribe to our newsletter.**

Email Address

Zip Code

SUBSCRIBE

Chronogram



Kalmach and Kellner founded WSW with fellow artists Anita Wetzel and Barbara Leoff Burge as a creative outlet for women artists. The first studio was a townhouse in Rosendale. Now the workshop consists of two houses by the Wallkill ValleyRail Trail. WSW has grown into a print-making powerhouse and has published over 230 limited-edition books. Looking toward the next 50 years and to meet the needs of the expanding projects, another building, currently under construction, will be a state-of-the-art ceramic studio and private studio rental.

In 1974, women couldn't own credit cards or open mortgages. It was nearly impossible for women artists to support themselves. As the world has changed, so has the mission of WSW. Now, the artist residency has expanded to all marginalized people, becoming an intersectional utopia of artistic expression for all gender identities. "Binary was invented and defined by the very system that was creating the conditions under which our founders were having trouble finding place and opportunity," says Natalie Renganeschi, the deputy director of WSW.



Chronogram



The four founders were just the beginning of all the individual artists that would make their mark on the studio. WSW evolved through political landscapes and the book archives map these shifts. The first book published in 1979, *Suspender Saga*, was the work of Kellner. The pages portray Kellner's partner, Kalmach, putting on a pair of suspenders. "It's a sort of radical series of images in that it's this glimpse into lesbian interiority. The male gaze is fully removed. It's a lover taking pictures of a lover as she's cross dressing, and we have that literal gaze from her camera," Renganeschi says.

The most recently published book was created by 90-year-old resident Ruthe Karlin. *Karlin in Bed* is a series of images of Karlin's legs taken in bed. "It's funny, it also is very matter of fact. It addresses her relationship to technology as a 90-year-old woman. She talks about her iPad as her companion," Renganeschi says.





Chronogram



Since its birth, WSW has been a nonprofit and receives public funding. “I think that one of the reasons they were able to stay open for so long is that they were very responsive, and they were always open to evolving,” Renganeschi says. “We also get state and national funding through the National Endowment for the Arts. Hopefully that is still a department that exists in a few weeks. We also work with a few different foundations that either support the arts or kind of support the local community.”

WSW’s nonprofit status stops them from endorsing political candidates or funding, yet they depend on a political landscape that values the arts to stay alive. “We tend to attract artists who are doing deeply political and deeply social-justice-based work,” says Renganeschi. “If national funding dries up, hopefully individuals and community members will come together and find systems that can be built in a grassroots way to continue to support the arts.”



“If you were to be here for a whole day, you would hear laughing, you would hear happiness, you would hear breathing of relief,” Loudon says. “It’s a place celebrating humanity.” Here’s to 50 more years of art and humanity.

Tickets for the Birthday Bash can be found on WSW’s [website](#). All proceeds from the party will go towards the WSW programming.

Location Details

Women's Studio Workshop

722 Binnewater Lane, Kingston | Rosendale

845-658-9133

www.workshop.org



Tags: [Visual Art](#), [wsw](#), [women's studio workshop](#), [artist residency](#), [Web Only](#)