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Friends, public invited to honor late artist Joyce Johnson in Orleans

The artist Joyce Johnson was a force of nature to those who knew her and an inspiration to many who never met her. She lived a simple life to achieve the things she felt were most important. When she died earlier this year, she left a legacy that belied a humble existence. Johnson was the founder of the Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill, where she served as director for many years before focusing primarily on her own art and teaching.

“She was a great teacher,” says longtime friend Josephine Del Deo of Provincetown. “It was her purpose in life to pass on these wonderful things which she so vibrantly expressed and felt. At every opportunity she promoted searching for a platform of expression for artists.”

Even after her death, Johnson’s legacy as a mentor goes on. In her will, she stated her wish to maintain her Truro home as “a retreat for an artist, a shelter for a naturalist or an abode for any other type of worthy person who needs financial assistance to pursue his or her career,” and to safeguard her major pieces so that they are “available for exhibitions.”

Johnson’s will specifies that her long-time friend and gallery representative Helen Addison, owner of Addison Art Gallery in Orleans, is to sell certain works to fund the specifications of her will. In keeping with those wishes, Addison is holding an art reception to honor her friend and colleague of more than 25 years from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22, at her art gallery.

The public is invited to join Johnson’s friends to share tea and brownies early in the day, and wine and cheese later on, along with stories, videos and photos of Johnson’s life. The exhibit includes Johnson’s most current work as well as rarely seen linoleum prints, paintings, drawings, photography and sculpture. Fred Fried is providing the music from 3 to 5 p.m.

The reception is planned to be a celebration of her life in a way that honors Johnson’s favorite things.

“Joyce was a most generous artist, giving her time and talents to teach and encourage others in their own pursuits,” Addison says. “Despite all the time she spent on her own work and for non-profit organizations, she always had time for others. She lived a life abundant with friends and immersed in the natural environment. To know her was a gift, to represent her work an honor, to support her legacy, a privilege.”

Johnson lived simply so she could pursue her art, but also taught and wrote part-time over the years for The Provincetown Advocate, The Cape Codder and the Barnstable Patriot.

She was also the voice behind the long-running radio show, “Sands of Time,” broadcast of Provincetown’s community radio station WOMR. The show focused on the local colors of the Outer Cape.

“She was a person who was just hands on, 24 hours a day,” Del Deo says. “Her friendship was extremely valuable. If she considered you a friend, she was always there for you no matter what the circumstances and she was as cognizant of what you were doing as what she was doing. She was just broadly engaged in civilization and the human equation.”

Next month, Johnson is also being honored with a Truro Public Library exhibition that runs from Dec. 3 through 29.



Joyce Johnson. Photo Janice Walford

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