

Jonathan Stewart

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

jonathanstewartart.com

Jonathan Stewart was born in New York City in 1946. His mother almost immediately moved to Middletown, NY, where they lived until moving again, this time to the Philadelphia Main Line suburbs in 1960. In the meanwhile, they had a summer place at nearby Cragmoor, a small one-time artist's community atop the Schwangunk mountain range that had been attractive to artists since the late 1800's. Artists included Charles Curran and George Innes, Jr., both well known in their day. Cragmoor was still lively during Jonathan's boyhood (1950s), with plays at The Barnstormers Theater and Sunday brunches at the Mountain House, a well-known resort at the other end of the short mountain range above New Paltz.

Harry Wickey, an artist living near Middletown, was so impressed by thirteen year old Jonathan's work that he arranged for him to have a one-man show at the Free Library in Middletown.

In 1966 Jonathan enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving four years of active duty as a Photomate, achieving the rank of E-2. As a Photomate, Jonathan was stationed at the Naval Air Field in Albany, GA. after graduating from the Naval Photography School, Pensacola, FL. Following his discharge from active duty, he continued to serve for two more years in the Naval Reserves while attending the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

He married Virginia, another Academy student, and took an apartment in Center City Philadelphia. During this period, he earned a living as a free-lance graphic designer / hand-lettering artist His clients included Primavera Systems and Avery-Dennison . At the same time, he had his own hand-lettering / Photostat studio at 1730 Walnut Street, just off Rittenhouse Square.

He was put out of business by zoom copiers, as well as computer based design and desktop publishing systems. So he learned computer graphics, first on Macintosh/Apple platforms, then on PCs. He immediately saw the obvious artistic purposes to which this new technology could be put and transitioned to a new life as a computer artist.

In 2008 Jonathan moved to Phoenixville, PA, where he resides with his wife, Virginia, He continues to journey into new creative frontiers, in this case, 3D imagery and animation.

Influences:

While at Cragmoor, Jonathan was exposed to cultural diversity usually found only in major cities. For instance, the Empire State Music Festival, showcasing the Symphony of the Air, made its first home after the death of its original conductor, Arturo Toscanini, in the town of Ellenville at the foot of the mountain. The orchestra, previously known as the NBC Symphony Orchestra, performed in a big tent under the baton of various famous guest conductors. The orchestra moved a couple of years later to Tuxedo Park, so as to be closer to New York City.

The Festival featured a wide variety of music under prominent guest conductors. It was here that Leopold Stokowski conducted one of the first productions in America of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with music by Carl Orff, as part of a full production starring Red Buttons as Puck, Basil Rathbone as Oberon, Nancy Wickwire as Titania, and Elizabeth Wilson as Helena.

During this time and since the late 1800's Cragmoor was an artist's community at one end of the Shawangunk mountain range, above the town of Ellenville, home to the (now defunct) Nevele Resort Hotel. At the time, Cragmoor had its own summer stock theater, The Barnstormers, the Cragmoor Inn, with its small but challenging golf course, and Bear Hill, a scenic rocky overlook to the valley below.

Various notables made their summer homes in Cragmoor, including George Innes Junior. His estate, "Chetolah" was well-known for its lavish parties and a gallery that showcased his landscape paintings.

A short drive along the range was Sam's Point with its glacier lake, Minnewaska, a popular tourist attraction then and now. The name "Sam's Point" derives from a tale of an early settler in the region named Sam, who leaped off the cliff's point to escape pursuing Algonquins, landing with only minor injuries in the trees below.

At the other end of the short Shawangunk mountain range was (and is) the Mohonk Mountain House, famous for its home-made ice cream and Sunday brunches which Jonathan attended over the years.

jonathan@jonathanstewartart.com