

P E R S P E C T I V E

AROUND AND ABOUT NORWALK / Harold Littledale

The Artist

Mindy Green arrived a little late for an interview at her downtown art studio.

"I'm kind of a multi-task person," she explained breathlessly. "I'm always doing a bazillion things."

Ms. Green is a portrait painter, an art teacher, a wife (husband, Chuck, is an executive at Oxford Health Plans) and mother. She is also an enthusiastic jazz dancer.

"It's always something," she says.

Ms. Green has just come from picking up her 12-year-old daughter, Emily, from New Canaan Country School. Harry, her 9-year-old son is a fourth-grader at Rowayton Elementary School.

The two are involved in sports and dance and piano lessons, she notes, "so I run around a lot."

Busy people have schedules. Ms. Green has hers: Jazz dancing at Lauri Maclean's Jazzworx Studio on West Avenue on Monday and Friday mornings. Painting in her downtown studio Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Teaching on Wednesdays.

Her teaching activities include Art

Escape, a program for children in preschool through middle school, conducted with two other women; Learning to Look, a volunteer art appreciation program she coordinates at Rowayton Elementary; and Arts in the Center, a hands-on art program for cancer patients at Norwalk Hospital's Whittingham Cancer Center.

Her painting currently involves preparations for an exhibit of her work scheduled for a February opening at the Bistrot du Soleil in Rowayton.

Ms. Green says she always wanted to do art and realized she wanted to be a portrait artist when she was in her 20s. She studied art at the Philadelphia College of Art and art, psychology and religion at Manhattan College.

But she went into business instead, working for 13 years with a research and consulting firm in Greenwich.

After her daughter's birth, she and a friend started a children's clothing company, Kindersak, manufacturing backpacks, baseball caps and suspenders. It showed promise: the baby boomer market was just heating up. But it wasn't art and it became a drag.

They let it go.

She did volunteer work. Ran an art show for the Community Cooperative Nursery School in Rowayton, coached Little League (before she was an artist, Ms. Green was a slugger in the Greenwich softball league, batting .657 for Augie's Angels in 1982 and .400 for the Flying Tigers in 1983).

Although she took some painting classes in her 20s, it was not until 1990 that she went to the Silvermine School for the Arts and began serious study with Charles Ray, who she describes as "a great teacher." Her first portrait commission came from a family who had seen some her work in a Silvermine student exhibition.

The commissioned painting was a 3- by 4-foot group portrait of three generations of a local family. It involved painting from life and painting from photographs.

"It was difficult, but it worked out pretty well," she says. She prefers painting from life.

"Photographs flatten out the light," she says, "and you have to make things up."

"With a live model, you put a brush stroke down and you don't fiddle with it.

All the information is there when you're painting from life. You just see it better. Art is about how well you see."

A visitor to Ms. Green's studio recalled having sat for a portrait when he was child. It was a drag, he said, sitting still like that when he wanted to be outside playing.

Ms. Green nodded.

"It's hard to get children to sit still," she said.

One painter she knew of had a niece who would read stories. Another painted children while they watched television.

As for adults, "We're all so busy these days," she said. "It's hard to find the time."

Thus, portraits from photos.

Looking into the future, Ms. Green sees more painting, more teaching, more dancing. But there might be something else.

"My astrologer says I shouldn't be surprised if I end up somewhere completely different from where I'm at right now," she says.

She seems to be OK with that. *Harold Littledale writes about the people and places of Norwalk.*

