

## THE BOROUGH



Visitors enjoy the artwork at the Staten Island Museum's 64th annual Fence Show on the grounds of Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, Livingston. (COURTESY/STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM)

## LIVINGSTON

## S.I. Museum's 'Fence Show' turns 64

*Appeal of community art growing for all-ages*

By Rob Bailey

bailey@siadvance.com

"W.W.E.D. — What would Elizabeth do?"

That's the question dedicated Staten Island Museum staffers asked themselves repeatedly when faced with the usual challenges of presenting the annual "Fence Show," compounded this year by the absence of their fearless leader of 12 years, Elizabeth Egbert, who died Aug. 30 after a hardcore battle with multiple myeloma.

"Rain? No money? Bologna! — of course we can do it! That's what (museum president) Elizabeth would have said, so that's what we're doing. Our primary task is to make art happen," said S.I. Museum's exhibitions director, Diane Matyas, during Sunday's 64th annual edition of "The Fence Show" on the grounds of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden.

"Elizabeth led a team of people that would do her bidding — because we were doing good work," said Matyas, laughing warmly as she recalled her longtime friend and collaborator. "She was an artist. She promoted artists. She was always there to teach artists how to write grants ... Elizabeth was very democratic: It was important to her for the entire community to be able to enjoy art."

Well, Egbert's mission was once again accomplished this weekend (even after getting rained out on Saturday). More than 130 artists of all ages, ethnicities and skill levels — hailing from Tompkinsville to Tottenville and beyond —



Acclaimed artist Sarah Yuster was on hand at the Staten Island Museum's 64th annual iFence Show, Sept. 14, 2014, on the grounds of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, 1000 Richmond Terr., Livingston. (STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/ROB BAILEY)

adorned the fences of New York City's original pop-up art gallery from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

#### More than 1,000 on hand

There was no official head count for the free, unticketed event, but it's safe to say that more than 1,000 people turned out to appreciate — and in many cases collect — works by every one from established painter Sarah Yuster (this West Brightonite's haunting work is in the Smithsonian, folks) to The Outsider Collective's intriguing upstarts, Rudy Baker and Stephen Corrigan.

One thing that stood out: The number of kids and young adults in attendance with their families, getting

the chance to discover the works of veteran S.I. artists like Bill Murphy and Antonio DeSantis, to name just two.

"To think a few years ago I was jumping this fence to play tag with my friends — now I'm here showing my work," said S.I. native Eric Mapp, one of two talented under-30 artists wrapping up SHARP (Snug Harbor Artist Residency Program) Showcases in Snug's Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art.

That pretty much says it all when it comes to the increasingly far reach of the borough's burgeoning arts and culture scene.

Young people are paying attention, contributing — and

getting a chance to get their art seen.

#### Beyond the frame

Of course, not all of the featured work was of the canvas, sketchpad or photographic variety.

Among the crowd favorites: Vibrantly colored origami by Joseph Adia (check him out on Facebook and Instagram), handcrafted metal jewelry and hollowware by Sage Reynolds of Four Hands Design Studio, custom glass mosaics by Yordanka Fragova, the fabulously fragrant Tottenville Soap Shoppe (they'll be on hand at Sept. 20's Westerleigh Folk Festival) and hand-knitted scarves by Mary Jo Andriulli (full disclosure: she is the Advance's powerhouse newsroom office manager).

The growing (literally) art of the S.I. Orchid Society was also on display, making its very first "Fence Show" appearance.

"It's our job to make the community aware of us," said John Foley, who was "using the facilities" 13 years ago when, unbeknownst to him at the time, he was elected president of the S.I. Orchid Society. "So many people buy these plants at the Home Depot and Trader Joe's, then throw them away when they stop flowering. They don't have to do that."

Foley and company are willing and able to offer free advice: Call 718-996-1064 or email jf1738@yahoo.com with any questions.

"All different types of artists show up for this every year," Matyas said, perhaps summing up the event's enduring appeal. "No matter what, there's always someone out there who will like your art — and buy it."