

## West Hartford Art League Exhibit Honors Late Member Margaret Del Vecchio



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**T**he West Hartford Art League's latest exhibit is the result of a phone call received out of the blue.

Roxanne Stachelek, the art league's executive director, said she got a phone call asking if the nonprofit wanted a donation of photographs taken by Margaret Del Vecchio.

Stachelek immediately said yes and the idea of a show honoring the late Del Vecchio was born.

"I had always admired her work, so I said yes [to the phone call]," Del Vecchio said. "We were lucky to have this. We could use these as a tribute to Margaret."

Del Vecchio was a West Hartford resident who died on May 29, 2018, at the age of 96. Though she was a microbiologist for the Connecticut Department of Public Health, she also shared a lifelong passion for photography.

"She had a love for photography, which continued throughout her lifetime, having been taught as a young child by her father; himself an avid photographer," reads her obituary.

She was also a member of the Charter Oak Photographic Society and the Photographic Society of America, from which she received a national honor in 1991. She was a member of that society for over 50 years.

Stachelek said Del Vecchio, who is a member of the art league, has long been entering her work into West Hartford Art League exhibits and often had her work selected to be displayed.

"Up until her early 90s she was entering our exhibits," Stachelek said. "I would always get a kick out of her because she would enter the clubhouse gallery on the handicap ramp with her walker and she'd have her photographs balanced on her walker. She was determined to come in with her work."

Stachelek said that even in her 90s she would still be admitted into their shows based on merit alone.

Her favorite memory regarding Del Vecchio comes from 2012, when a 90-year-old Del Vecchio entered her work into the nonprofit's annual regional art show, CT+6. That year, the show's juror was Susan Cross, who is the curator of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, Mass.

"We had 500 pieces entered into the show that year," Stachelek said. "It was overwhelming. Margaret had a piece there that she loved. A lot of jurors will mention a piece and put it down. She did that, but then she went back to it at the end of the day. She said this was a really nice piece. We had artists here in their 20s who were dying to get into the show who didn't get in. And here's Margaret, who is 90, who is getting singled out. Margaret was so thrilled."

Stachelek said Del Vecchio's photography shows that even though she didn't make her career from photography, she was certainly so amateur.

"It showed you here level of expertise," Stachelek said. "She wasn't just a hobbyist. She took it seriously. She had a good body of work."

Though Stachelek doesn't want to speak for Del Vecchio's work, she has her own take on what makes them so impressive and worthwhile of a solo art exhibit.

"She does a lot with the colors and the patterns," Stachelek said. "She has these beautiful still life photos. And she would play with filters. She was adjusting the background. She started playing with them. My feeling, and I don't know this, is that she was thinking like a scientist and experimenting. That was her background and it kind of came into her work."

The exhibit will be on display the West Hartford Art League through Aug. 24 with the potential for an extended end date. The gallery is currently on its summer hours and is open from Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or by appointment. And all of Del Vecchio's work is for sale, with the proceeds to benefit the nonprofit.