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## Ad Hoc Artists Residency

by Paul Smart

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Martha Walker and two artists in residence.

Martha Walker's home on Millstream Road is classic Woodstock, of both the modern and historic types. It's a rambling mixture of wings and rustic woodwork and enough windows to bring the outdoors in. Plus a pool and a good-sized unattached garage. She and her family have been using it as a getaway from their Brooklyn lives for the past 11 years. She explains how they'd rented in town, thinking the town would be a good base for wider house-hunting...and then decided to stay.

All quite contemporary, that side of her story.

Over the past three summers, a whole other narrative's rolled itself out at Walker's house, though, which connects her into that other side of Woodstock legend and lore which goes back into the Byrdcliffe and Maverick art colonies and their legacy, as well as the many ad hoc situations that made the town a hotbed of creativity for over a century.

Walker, who re-started a career as a sculptor after a long hiatus to raise her kids, says it was her eldest son who first suggested she set up a welding studio in her garage upstate to augment the work she does in a shared studio she's kept for nearly a decade near the Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn.

"I then figured I should try something more challenging and decided to make a real effort at something creative," she explains over lunch at her massive old dining table on a recent afternoon. "I could have been up here all alone and worked in a cocoon but I realized that I really liked the give and take of working alongside other people in a shared situation."

So Martha Walker began what she's now calling her "Ad Hoc Artists Residency," based partly on experiences she had at the Vermont Studio Center and similar retreats over the years, and partly on her studio-sharing experience downstate.

She asked the women she rents her studio with, pleine air painter Ella Yang, to come up, along with some other artists she knew from the cooperative 440 Gallery she's shown at in Brooklyn (alongside her other gallery home at Manhattan's Kouras Gallery). Before long, folks in some of the other cultural spaces in the building where her studio lies, including the Brooklyn Artist's Gym, also started asking about taking time upstate.

"I want people who will work well together," Walker says of her method of selecting artists to share her home with each July...for free. "The result has been that most who have come up have fed off each others' work."

Yang, sharing lunch, explains how she loves it when Walker visits wherever she's painting to offer suggestions. Walker notes how she'd recently thought a work finished...until Yang suggested changes.

## VISITOR'S GUIDE



## TODAY'S EVENTS

### event calendar

?	July, 2010					
«	◀				▶	»
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Select date						

Monday, 26, 2010

Bard SummerScape: Spie... 10:00 PM to 10:00 PM

SpiegelClub. A late-night bar and dance f...

Bard SummerScape: Spie... 10:00 PM to 10:00 PM

SpiegelClub. A late-night bar and dance f...

Mohonk Preserve - Even... 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Join Jacqui Potente, Certified Yoga Instru...

Kiran. 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM

Kiran. On-going. namasteyogawoodstock.org

Open Door Art Studio- ... 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Mondays in July. Artist Michelle Spark. 6...

Show more events...

"We all talk about the business side of things, as well," Yang adds.

Walker talks about how her own schedule sees her up at 5 a.m. and in her garage studio, welding, by 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. By 5 p.m. she's exhausted.

People make their own meals, but tend to get together around meal times, or at the pool.

This past summer, one artist worked in the main living room in the house, because it was the only place she could hang the large canvases she was working on. Walker adds that she's found it best to max out those staying at five. And notes that it was purely accidental that this summer saw three women working alongside her, after a fourth male dropped out. Usually it's more mixed a crowd.

"It's all about maintaining a charged energy," she says.

We tour the house's four bedrooms, its nooks and crannies and porches. Everything's open, yet also private.

En route I ask if there's been any thought to expanding this program, and Walker immediately says no very firmly. It's fine as is, even with more and more artists clamoring to be part of the experience.

We speak about the ad hoc residency's history in town, from those who'd stay with George Bellows or Eugene Speicher each summer, to the various boarding houses around town that become veritable artist colonies each summer for decades, long after Byrdcliffe's zenith years, or the boisterous beginnings at the Maverick. We nod towards all those who spent time at Thomas Cole's home in Catskill, or shared farmhouses up here throughout the nineteenth century, ostensibly creating America's first art movement during their summer sojourns.

In the garage, Walker shows off her own welded steel pieces, amoebic, sea-like shapes rendered timeless via her "puddle" processing of molten steel, black, atop her frameworks. It's spectacularly original work, yet timely. One new piece is an ode to the Gulf...a dripping, oil-like shaft that feels like oozing metal.

Headed back through the house, Yang returns from her own painting... a commissioned piece of a Brooklyn brownstone she has to finish in the week.

"I just had to note how all of us are constantly floored by Martha's generosity," she says.

"I believe we all benefit from each other," she replies. "I am the grateful one."++

For more on Martha Walker's art visit [www.marthawalker.net](http://www.marthawalker.net).



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