

**“Two Artists: Two Visions” with MaryBeth Sorber and Peter Valenti**  
**Written by Gallery Coordinator Karen Jean Smith**

Nature offers many opportunities for enjoyment and creativity. “Two Artists: Two Visions” comprises the work of two Central New York artists who both look to nature for inspiration and yet interpret it in very different ways.

Peter Valenti, a ceramic artist and potter, and MaryBeth Sorber, an oil painter, are exhibiting their work in the art gallery of the John A. Weeks Interpretive Center at Baltimore Woods Nature Center through April 25. The public is invited to attend the artist reception on Saturday, March 1 from 2:30 until 4:00pm. This is an informal event when visitors can meet the artists, ask questions and enjoy refreshments. The exhibit may also be viewed Monday through Friday 9am-4pm and Saturday 10am-4pm. There are no admission or parking fees, and all of the art work is for sale.

MaryBeth Sorber works predominantly in oils to create paintings of landscapes, flowers and birds of the Central New York area. The distinctive style that she has developed over the years has been described as impressionistic. This means that while the subject matter is easily recognizable, brushstrokes are evident, giving her work a painterly quality. Sorber states that her early influence was from her great aunt, a New England painter, and she counts NC Wyeth and Claude Monet among artists she most admires.

Always inspired by natural surroundings, she has spent many painting hours in the last few years developing skills as a Plein-Air artist. Sorber finds Plein Air painting, or painting on location outdoors, to be challenging, but she considers it to be among the most rewarding educational processes she has experienced. In large part self taught, Sorber has also taken numerous workshops, studied with other local artists, and attended classes at Syracuse University.

Peter Valenti is a ceramic artist whose current work is an exploration of nature, tradition and transformation. The textured copper glazes of his decorative wall pieces capture the beauty in the world around us. Sumac and gingko leaf impressions, as well as celestial imagery invoking moons and suns, serve as the focal point of this work.

Valenti’s wall pieces are created using a process called raku that originated in Japan. In American raku, ceramic pieces are fired in a kiln powered by gas, and while still red hot, they are placed in a container lined with combustible materials like paper and straw. There, the specialized glazes react with the lack of oxygen and transform to their intended unique result. Any exposed clay absorbs carbon making it black in color.

This exhibit also features Valenti's recent work of wheel thrown jars that are both functional and sculptural, often crowned with delicate bird finials. These small handcrafted birds evoke the fleeting beauty of nature and the state of the world around us.

MaryBeth Sorber is a member of the Onondaga Art Guild and paints frequently with Cazenovia Plein Air Painters and Syracuse Urban Sketchers. Peter Valenti taught ceramics at East Syracuse Minoa for 30 years and is a founding and current member of the Independent Potters' Association and a founder and former director (15 years) of Feats of Clay, a central New York high school event.

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Baltimore Woods Nature Center is a leader in facilitating opportunities for people to build personal connections to nature. Through engaging experiences and place-based exploration, we envision communities united in stewardship and love of the natural world.

A portion of the proceeds raised from the sale of the artwork goes to support the mission of Baltimore Woods Nature Center.

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