

Passport PICKS

Words and Forms

At Wisdom House

Guests visiting the Wisdom House Retreat and Conference Center in Litchfield, Conn., this spring are in for a treat, as two phenomenal women will engage them with literature and art.

Nationally-acclaimed best-selling author Francine Prose will teach guests how to “close-read” and artist Joy Brown will not only show the evolution of her work but will take part in a forum that is sure to fascinate guests.

In her program, Ms. Prose will include her New York Times best-selling nonfiction work “Reading Like a Writer, A Guide For People Who Love Books And For Those Who Want to Read Them.” In the book, she describes how writers learn to write by reading, and how reading and great literature can help you learn to write.

“Word by word is how we learn to hear and then read, which seems only fitting because it is how the books we are reading were written in the first place,” she writes in the first chapter.

The more you read, she explains in her book, the faster someone can see how the letters have been combined into words that have meaning.

“The more we read, the more we comprehend, the more likely we are to discover new ways to read, each one tailored to the reason why we are reading a particular book,” she writes.

Ms. Prose explained that the upcoming program at Wisdom House is essentially about looking at a way of reading for writers—by reading word for word, slowly, and considering the technical aspects of a text like narration, dialogue, detail and gesture.

“We are going to just look at stories and go over them line by line, word by word. [We will] look at the choices the writers make how the writer gets his or her ideas on the page how fiction is written,” said Ms. Prose. For the class, Ms. Prose has chosen stories by John Cheever and Denis Johnson, who recently won a National Book Award, along with other writers.

The book “Reading Like a Writer ...,” evolved out of giving lectures and talking to students about what they were reading and from years of teaching and being a writer. Ms. Prose has written



Top and above, works by the sculptor Joy Brown, shown with more works at right. Photos courtesy of Ms. Brown.

14 novels. She is currently working on her new novel called “Golden Grove.”

Ms. Prose is not only a teacher, but also a critic and essayist, and she has taught literature and writing for more than 20 years.

The program will begin Friday, May 16, at 6 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

Artist Joy Brown will be displaying the evolution of her work at the Marie Louise Trichet Gallery in an exhibition entitled “Life With Clay: 35 Years of Joy Brown.” It will consist of her earliest works as a potter to her most recent figures and ceramic wall murals.

Ms. Brown will also take part in a forum with other artists in which she will engage in a conversation about the role of acceptance and rejection in her own life and how she has grown spiritually through experiencing both. The forum is entitled “Acceptance and Rejection Tending the Spirit” and is scheduled for April 27.

Ms. Brown was raised in Japan, she returned to the United States for college, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Eckerd College in Florida. After college, Ms. Brown returned to Japan

and studied as an apprentice for four years with the family of Ichino Toshio, a 13th generation potter in Tamba.

In those four years, she learned how to become a potter by making a thousand cups without ever firing one. It taught her the technical skills of pottery and the experience of working with clay. After her apprenticeship was completed, she traveled around Japan and Korea, researching different forms of pottery and kilns.

“In Japan I was working in a potters village [that had] a continuous history of pottery for thousands of years and everyone had something to do with making the pots,” said Ms. Brown.

She returned to the United States and settled in New York State for five years before moving to Kent, Conn., where she built her own wood-fired kiln with a showroom and workspace.

A major part of her evolution included transforming over time the figures she developed while she resided in New York. Ms. Brown makes her iconic ceramic figures from red brick clay and uses a coil, pinch and paddle method.

“I start with the torso and coil out ▶

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from the bottom part to make the legs inch by inch," said Ms. Brown.

She will then slowly coil out the arms in what she described as a "slow meditative process." The hands, feet and face are made separately and added on.

Ms. Brown credits the influences of pre-Colombian figures and Japanese tomb figures known as "Haniwa," and she has always loved the sculptor Henry Moore. Her other works include vessels, carved and bronze figures.

Ms. Brown opened the Art Within Gallery six years ago; it is predominantly an online gallery with a few shows at Ms. Brown's home. She also co-owns a nonprofit organization called Still Mountain Center that she started 10 years ago.

The organization provides opportunities for cross-cultural appreciation, education collaboration and innovation in the arts.

Ms. Brown's exhibit at Wisdom House will run through July 12.

For more information on either Ms. Prose's program or Ms. Brown's program at Wisdom House, call



Francine Prose

860-567-3163 or see the Web site www.wisdomhouse.org.

Arts Renaissance In Beacon, N.Y.

A chance to spend a Saturday surrounded by art and culture is being offered in Beacon, N.Y., through Second Saturday events that promote the city and the arts. Galleries are open late and visitors are

invited to spend the day looking at artists' work, along with enjoying the culture of food and shopping. Upcoming Second Saturday events are scheduled for April 12, May 10 and June 14.

These city-wide celebrations of arts and culture were begun by the Beacon Arts Community Association (BACA), a nonprofit organization formed in 2002 that is dedicated to promoting the city of Beacon as a center for the arts.

BACA member Linda Hubbard explained that the organization formed when artists, galleries and nonprofit arts advocates began to recognize the communal needs of the fast-growing arts community. Beacon is also a member of Art Along the Hudson, in which four New York cities celebrate the arts on successive weekends each month—Kingston has First Saturday, Beacon comes next, Poughkeepsie's Art Celebrations take place on the third Saturday and Newburgh finishes up with Last Saturday.

"We get a lot of locals that come out. Beacon is becoming a tourist destination, and we also get a lot of people from ▶



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