

# Pen, ink and patterns define artist's style

By Josh Lasser

"I never thought of myself as an artist," Lyn Traverse said of her younger self as she sat surrounded by her pictures inside the Hastings Municipal Building. "I just drew because I wanted to. I needed to draw. I loved to draw."

The 17 works adorning the hallways in Traverse's first solo exhibit suggest something has changed.

Traverse is an artist, but one by avocation, not vocation. Before college — Traverse was born in 1952 in Kalamazoo, Mich., but has lived in New York and Connecticut since age 11 — her father, a graphic designer, told her that she had her own style, and to never go to art school. She didn't. She went to NYU to study philosophy, but not because of his advice — art school didn't interest her.

Currently, Traverse, who has lived in Hastings for almost a decade with her partner, Charlie Copeland, a village resident since 1974, is the director of development for Silver Hill Hospital, a mental health facility in New Canaan, Conn., that is an academic affiliate of Yale.

Traverse has known people who pursued art full time through the years, but "over time, I ended up doing a lot more art than they did." This has to do, she believes, with discipline, with having to focus on her art in between her other activities and responsibilities. "Art was so much a part of who I was and what I needed to do," she explained, "that I always could find time for it."

Time is a big theme for Traverse, and the current exhibit, which runs from Jan. 23 thru April 1, makes that clear upfront with its title, "Different Time." Representing her output over the course of the past 20 years, the pictures depict individuals from the turn of the century through the 1950s.

Traverse finished works are in pen and



Lyn Traverse's picture "Norwegian Forest Cat"



Traverse's picture "The Great War Veteran"

## Traverse

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ink. She starts by sketching out her subject with pencil, and then draws with a rapidograph (a technical pen generally used by an engineer or an architect), and lastly adds color using ink and a paintbrush.

Every picture is based on an old photograph. She doesn't recreate the image, but offers a loose interpretation (people she knows or has known sometimes appear in them). Traverse said she is "notorious for adding animals" as well, and her works tend to feature intricate patterns, which she said originated because she is "an inadequate artist" and "didn't know how to work with the inks." Patterns became a way for her to fill large spaces. Looking at a completed work, the viewer might be able to discern the time period solely from the patterns in the background or clothing.

While her pictures always contain peo-

ple, they are not solely portraits. Traverse views them more as stories. Another apt description might be scenes frozen in time. The photos that are her raw material come from multiple sources and are often candid. They derive from personal collections, flea markets and even photography books.

"Time," Traverse said, "is a human construct. And so how we approach it and hold on to it is very personal." The images she creates are personal as well, and even if each photo references a particular moment, with her addition of other individuals and interpretation, that moment takes on unique and novel characteristics.

Pointing out an image where a woman has two right hands (something not necessarily apparent upon first glance), Traverse explained, "I don't have a sense of perspective or a sense of anatomy, because I was never trained. So when I draw a picture it's a real challenge for me. I kind of get it to where I need it to be and then I'm satisfied, usually, and it somehow evokes something, even if it's not perfect."