

Quite a few pieces of Pound Ridge artist Susan Manspeizer's exhibited or purchased work have traveled far, including one that was featured at "Art at Embassy" in Tallinn, Estonia. But she also shows her work — mostly sculpture — in northern Westchester and throughout the New York metropolitan area as well, including, through Dec. 28, at the Walter Wickiser Gallery in Manhattan.

The gallery, on 11th Avenue between 24th and 25th streets, is in the heart of Chelsea and offers a group show, "Non-Objectivity," that features Ms. Manspeizer's pieces.

'Wood became my material of choice because I like the organic quality.'

— SUSAN MANSPEIZER

Among the items included in "Non-Objectivity" are representatives of Ms. Manspeizer's "Habitat" series. The exhibition title is appropriate, she said, because her work and that of the other three exhibitors, all painters, comprises "no recognizable objects."

Formally trained as a painter, Ms. Manspeizer, who moved to Pound Ridge 16 years ago after raising her family in Chappaqua, now works primarily in the medium of sculpture. And most of that is in wood, specifically pieces of plywood she purchases at local lumberyards.

An interest in the form and function of shells has led to her latest sculptural subject. "As a mature woman, I have taken the concept of the shell as a metaphor for the human emotions of life at a stage when one's vitality has diminished," she said. "I look at the shell as a concept of a new beginning, as I transform it into another life."

Shells are particularly meaningful, Ms. Manspeizer said, and should not be disregarded. "Why would we collect them if not for their history and inherent beauty?"

When asked if she collects shells herself, Ms. Manspeizer said yes, but not to copy from when doing her art. "I'm not trying to replicate a shell, but my thinking about them is what stimulates my imagination," she said. "I strive to make sensitive and sensual organic shapes that explore convex and concave forms."

To create the patina she wants, Ms. Manspeizer adds depth to each sculpture with acrylic paint, graphite and oil crayon.

A Bronx native, she studied at City College of New York, earning bachelor's and master's degrees there. "I grew up originally a painter



PHOTO COURTESY SUSAN MANSPEIZER

Pound Ridge artist Susan Manspeizer and her sculpture "Habitat 5." Left, Manspeizer's "Habitat 3."

Manspeizer Habitats make Manhattan

By MARY LEGRAND

on a two-dimensional surface," she said. "My studies were always in acrylic painting, and I loved drawing. But about 30 years ago I decided to push off the canvas and go out in the three dimensions. Wood became my material of choice because I like the organic quality. Unlike plastic, it was a living thing."

Wood "always feels good and smells good," said Ms. Manspeizer, who, also by taking drawing classes at the New York Botanical Garden, came upon "all kinds of beautiful organic forms there" and found similarities between the life cycles of plants and humans.

"We all begin with a seed, we're fertilized,

we develop, we mature, and eventually we die," she said. "The beauty is that before the mature plant dies there is pollination, and new life begins again. That's true in human development as well."

One highlight of Ms. Manspeizer's most-recent career was having her wood sculpture "Lines in Space" honored by the Kohler Co. in a competition in conjunction with the firm's new line of Karbon articulating kitchen faucets. She, along with other artists including South Salem's Jim Felice, showed their winning work earlier this year at the Time Warner Center in Manhattan.

A member of the Silvermine Guild in New Canaan, Conn., Ms. Manspeizer is also a member of the Katonah Museum Artists Association, for which she heads a group called Show and Tell. "We meet once a year and

show our works in progress," she said. "It's always wonderful to see what other artists are doing. I always find it so fascinating to try to get the visual concept out of somebody's head and then see it out there in real life. I find the artists are very sharing and there is this camaraderie about it. However, artists work alone. We work by ourselves in order to create, and then we want to show our work in galleries."

Acknowledging that "there's a lot of angst to art," Ms. Manspeizer nevertheless creates objects of beauty. "I strive to make things really wonderful to look at," she said.

For more information about the exhibition "Non-Objectivity," call the Walter Wickiser Gallery at 212-941-1817 or visit walterwickisergallery.com. Ms. Manspeizer is also profiled at artswestchester.org.