

KATY HELMAN

My first day on the job as the Deer Isle- Stonington High School (DISHS) art teacher was as a teacher/chaperone for Haystack's Studio Based Learning program- a three day workshop for DISHS and George Stevens Academy (GSA) students - that takes place in September. I had spent the weekend moving from Massachusetts and was exhausted. I didn't know my students from GSA's. I found myself in the printmaking studio with Susan Webster placed in front of a large sheet of gelatin wondering, why? I was soon to discover its magic as a printing plate and over the course of a couple of hours made my first two gelatin prints. From that moment on I was hooked on Haystack.

A remarkable resource, Haystack has broadened my skill base and introduced me to new ideas and mediums which have expanded my options both as an artist and a teacher. Whether I am participating in workshops, going to “walk-throughs” or furtively creeping around the studios taking photos during Sunday brunch, I marvel that here on this small island I have such easy accessibility to other artists and their visions.

Once I've learned new techniques, they tend to surface in my work and in my teaching – it becomes part of the toolbox from which I can draw to make my work more visually dynamic. I've discovered that sometimes rather than painting a line, drawing it with a router or hand stitching it is the best solution. Or at age 55, I discovered sewing machines and went a little nuts so currently my compulsion to buy fabric is on the verge of becoming unhealthy.

Haystack, teaching, and my own work has become- over the past thirteen years- a circular and inseparable relationship. All of my Haystack experiences have become embedded in my own work as well as in my teaching. Each workshop has contributed to my courses and has made my classroom a more exciting learning environment. My experiences there never fail to be exciting, fun, and reenergizing. As a direct result of my time at Haystack, I currently offer classes which include, surface design, sewing, printmaking, ceramics, altered books, and many individual projects developed from work I have observed or photographed over the past decade.

The full immersion one achieves at the Haystack campus creates a sense of isolation which after only a few days, makes a run to the Galley feel like urban shock.

I would like to thank every person on the staff of Haystack for their individual contribution which makes it possible to put the world on hold and allows one the privilege of focusing on art work.