

almanac

LOCAL CULTURE

MAY 20, 2026

GRAND TOUR

“Travel as Muse” opens May 23 at Wired Gallery in High Falls

by Frances Marion Platt

A new exhibition opens this Saturday at the Wired Gallery in High Falls, titled “Travel as Muse,” and the road to its creation is a long and adventurous one. When Wired came into being in 2012, the original concept was to fill a gap left after the economic collapse of 2008 had induced many local art galleries to close up shop. Legendary restaurateur John Novi of the DePuy Canal House invited Sevan Melikyan to show some of his own works — what the artist-turned-gallerist calls “reduced constructions,” each inspired by a favorite work of art seen in a museum — in an uninsulated barn whose walls proved too fragile to hang the art directly. The pieces had to be hung up on wires running from floor to ceiling, whence the name. People came to see them, though, and soon Melikyan was inviting other local artists to fill the space with their works.

In the next couple of years, the Wired Gallery moved twice, finally settling into a permanent home at 11 Mohonk Road in 2014. Around the perimeter of the floor and ceiling of the main exhibition room run metal pipes, allowing attachment of vertical wires to hang heavier artworks, as in the original barn space. The mission of the gallery — to highlight the works of artists from Ulster County and the immediate vicinity — has remained consistent as well. Melikyan has no difficulty finding local artists whose work is of the highest quality and typically hangs eight to nine shows per year. “I never seem to find the bottom of it,” he says.

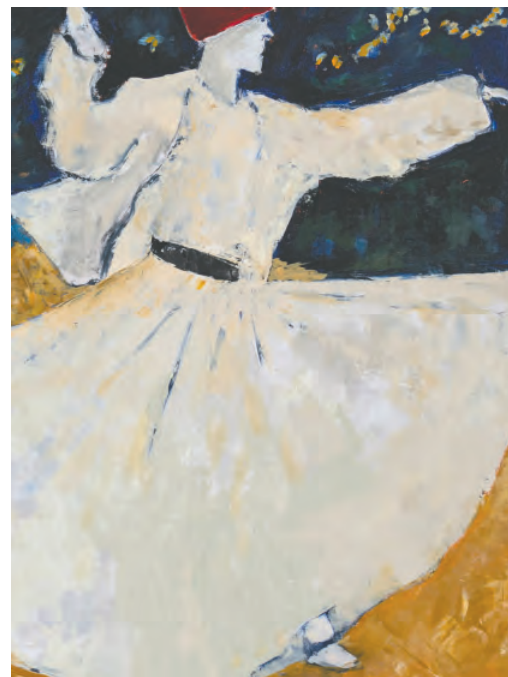
In 2020, however, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, the bottom fell out of the general public’s ability to congregate in art venues. The gallery had to close for several months, to reopen on a limited scale for a while with “one-wall shows” featuring a single artist. Fortunately, Melikyan had a way to stay sane and keep busy sharing the art he loves with a broader audience: conducting virtual art tours via Zoom. Beginning in 2018, he had already curated live tours of Provence and Italy for a company called Artful Journeys, and his employer needed someone to keep clients engaged online until the art tourism business was up and running again.

Haunting museums and galleries was in Melikyan’s blood from a young age. Born to an Armenian family in Turkey, he moved to Paris at the age of 9, when the war with Greece over the island of Cyprus was making life “unsettled” for ethnic and religious minorities even in the cosmopolitan city of Istanbul. His father encouraged his interest in drawing and sketching by hiring an artist to give him lessons, and Sevan spent much of his teens and early 20s soaking up modern art in French museums.

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Sevan
Melikyan.





Grand tour

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

“Matisse showed me the window through which I entered the world of art,” he recalls. “That started my quest.” He also studied piano, drummed on pots and pans and began organizing art and music salons in the family home.

TAKEOUT THAT TASTES LIKE DINING OUT

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“Whenever something really excited me, I wanted to share it. I always believed that talent needs to be showcased.”

When it came time for university, Melikyan yearned to learn to be a curator, but France’s elite art scene

wasn’t open at the time to admitting immigrants to such closely cherished posts. So he studied marketing, taking six years to complete his degree. “I was bored to death,” he says. “Multiple times, I came to the brink of dropping out.” His diploma did, however, enable him to get a visa to work in the U.S. with sponsorship by a New York City-based nonprofit, the Armenian General

Benevolent Union.

That organization offered him a job helping to establish an arts department. “I had to scout for talented Armenians to bring to New York: musicians, playwrights, producers. The idea was to introduce the Armenian identity to the general public.” His research led him to classical pianist Armen Babakhanian, who had placed fifth in the prestigious Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 1993. That’s how he got acquainted with Maria Guralnik, a Van Cliburn employee who had been appointed as Babakhanian’s manager during his travels in the U.S.

As it happened, Guralnik was planning a visit to New York, where she had grown up as the daughter of a concert



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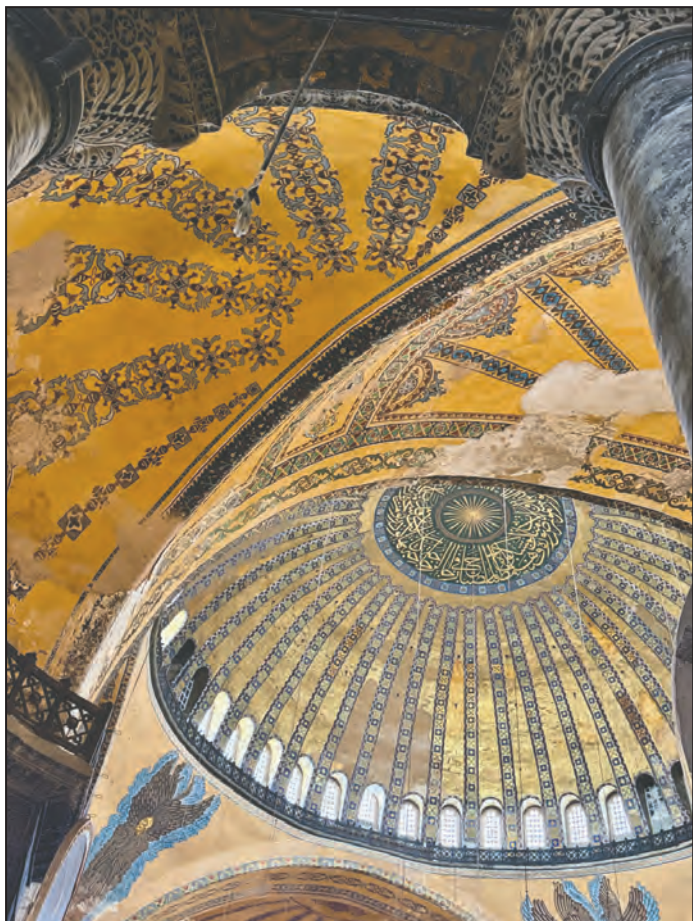
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so that Maria could be closer to her mother, Pat Guralnik, who had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Maria quickly secured a position at SUNY Purchase teaching arts management, but the transition to the Hudson Valley left Melikyan feeling unmoored professionally for a while. He lost his inspiration to paint, got more serious about drumming, joined a band called Fishbowl, learned website design and gave lectures about art — especially former High Falls resident Marc Chagall — at retirement homes. When the opportunity opened up to become a curator at last, he found his footing once again. The Wired Gallery has since become a respected showcase for the best in local art.

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PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

pianist dad and a mom who was one of the Mohonk Mountain House Smileys. They met, bonded over a shared love of the songs of Jacques Brel and fell quickly in love. "My father told me I'd have to marry a green-eyed girl, since

very few Armenians have green eyes, so the chance of marrying a cousin would be nil," Melikyan recalls. "And a psychic told Maria that she'd marry a foreigner. So I guess we were meant for each other."

The two carried on a long-distance relationship after Guralnik went back to her job in Fort Worth, but got married in less than a year — at Mohonk, of course. Melikyan joined her in Texas, took a marketing position at the Van Cliburn headquarters, started painting on the side and found a gallery to represent his work. They had a son, Robert, and in 2009 moved to High Falls

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950 Animals

Blessing of the Animals at the Third Lutheran Church, 31 Livingston Street, Rhinebeck, **Saturday, May 30th**, 12 p.m. Rain Date, Sunday, May 31, 1 p.m. **ALL ARE WELCOME!**

SAUGERTIES ANIMAL SHELTER... HELLO SPRING! Yes. It's a time of renewal. Along with the first buds saying, "We're back"; how lovely would it be to experience nature's reawakening with your new family member? If you adopt a cat, they will look out your windows, and marvel at the beauty, and the animals that the beauty brings. Let's welcome the season by giving a shelter animal a loving home. It's a perfect time to adopt a homeless animal, or two, for comfort; physical and emotional. Adopting a shelter animal could be one of the most joyful things you can do. If you adopt an adult/senior cat, you know you've given them a second (or maybe third) chance at love and kindness. **NEW THIS WEEK!! TANGERINE**; beautiful 1-year-old, medium hair calico cat girl. Although she's shy at the shelter, she will open her heart in a loving home. **ESME**; very loving, petite, short hair, dilute calico cat mama. She gave birth to 5 KITTENS! This is a heartbreaking story. **We have two 9-year-old cat siblings,**

whose person just died; TESSA; the gray and white cat sister. She is a reserved and sweet girl. Her brother, **TITO**; big, grey boy, who is SUPER SWEET! They are mourning, and are now in a strange place, wondering: What did we do wrong? Please make their lives whole again. **THESE KITTENS AND CATS WILL FILL YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR HOMES WITH LOVE. WE HAVE 3 DILUTE CALICO CAT GIRLS; COCO**; 3-year-old short hair, dilute calico. Miss Coco is an opinionated lady & wants to be your one & only; all to herself! **CHLOE**; dilute medium length hair calico who's very sweet. **MAGNOLIA**; the third super sweet, 7-year-old dilute calico. She's on a special urinary diet. You'll have no question about what's your girl is having for dinner! **AMI-GA**; beautiful (but aren't they all!), 7-month old, grey and white kitten. She's a shy little one, who'll need a bit of extra love to let her know she's safe forever. Let's take another look at **CURLY SUE**; sweet, chatty, 5-year-old, medium hair, gray cat girl who prefers mingling w/adults. **If you're looking to adopt 2**, Elly & her staff know the animals very well & can make recommendations. **We STILL have lots of kittens longing to be your new best friend**, and more coming in weekly. In case you were wondering: Black kittens grow up to be elegant, beautiful, intelligent, loving adult cats. Living w/them (and all cats!) is pure happiness! **We have BARN CATS, too. We call them "Working Girls"**. If you'd like to give a cat(s) food and shelter and in return, they'll help to keep your rodent population under control, consider adopting a barn cat. They're ready for a barn, workshop, garage, winery/distillery.

One such working girl is **MILLIE**; 3-year-old grey cat girl w/short hair. Get your applications in and approved, so when we welcome more kittens & puppies, which we often do, well call you! We welcome a new group of puppies every month! In order to meet them, you'll need an approved application and appointment. (We very rarely get small dogs.) Most are in the 40-50lb. range; short-hair southern mixes. **WE THINK YOU'LL WANT TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THESE SWEETHEART ADULT DOGS & PUPPIES! FINN**; very sweet, active, **BIG**, 1-year-old black Shepherd dog boy. **SAPPHIRE**; 3-year old, 40 lb., fawn & white terrier mix dog girl. **AND LUCKY**; 7-month-old oh-so-sweet, tan & white hound mix puppy boy! **MEET ELSIE!**; sweet 4-month-old, blue/brown eyed, tan mix breed puppy girl; probably about 50 pounds full grown. She's a beauty! The shelter is open by appointment on Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays. Please call 845-679-0339 to make an appointment to meet your new love! Saugerties Animal Shelter (located behind the transfer station); 1765 NY-212, Saugerties, NY 12477. Here in this house... I will never be a substitute for anything I am not. I will never be used to improve peoples' images of themselves. I will be loved because I am who I am, not someone's idea of who I should be. I will never suffer for someone's anger, impatience, or stupidity. I will be taught all the things I need to know to be loved by all. If I do not learn my lessons well, they will look to my teacher for blame. ~Author Unknown~ ... If you'd like your home to be like the home described, please see the wonderful animals

we have at SAS.

960 Pet Care

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Sunday, 5/24 • 2pm
Watching Mr. Pearson

Denizen Theatre, 10 Main St., New Paltz.
A new independent drama about an aging Hollywood actor losing his grip on memory will be presented in New Paltz by writer-director Dillon Bentlage, who will also be on hand for a post-show Q&A. The Boston-based filmmaker drew on his grandmother's experience with dementia. It was shot over 16 days on the Connecticut coast. The cast is led by Hugo Armstrong playing a once-famous film star who finds coherence when reenacting scenes from his old roles.

By the time the pandemic came around, Melikyan had already curated and led several art tours in Europe for Artful Journeys. His passion for art, his broad knowledge base and his enthusiasm for sharing made him an engaging host, and he continued to communicate all that when the tours had to go virtual. He built a whole new lecture series for the company. But when real-life travel resumed, the owner of the company decided first that she wanted to shift her focus to classical music, and soon after that it was time to retire. She urged Melikyan to take up the torch and organize art tours himself — bookings, logistics and all.

And so it was that a new business came into being, known as Artblazing Tours. With assistance from Maria and his sister, Sheyda Eversley, Melikyan is now an art tourism entrepreneur, leading trips in spring and fall when the gallery is on hiatus between exhibitions. In 2025, they visited Istanbul, Belgium and the Netherlands, Malta and Sicily. This spring, they revisited



5/22-5/24 • various times
Night Swim 2-Year Anniversary

Night Swim, 744 Broadway, Kingston. Kingston's women-owned Broadway bar marks two years with a three-night birthday run co-presented by prolific local punk and hardcore outfit DCxPC Live. Night Swim opened in May 2024 when Brooklyn bar veterans took over the former Anchor space and rebuilt it as a hip neighborhood hangout spot that continues to support underground live music. Across the weekend, twelve acts spread over three nights will cover a range of styles.

Sicily and Malta and added a Provence trip. They'll return to Istanbul the first week in October and launch a new itinerary in Spain a week later.

These highly specialized tours naturally appeal to people with a strong curiosity about the visual arts, of course. And a large percentage of the participants are working artists themselves — some of them folks who have had shows up at Wired Gallery in the past. It's their work, inspired by the

things they saw on these tours, that will adorn the walls beginning this weekend. Marcia Clark, Julie Fornaci, Pam Garrit, Susan Hennelly, Dion Ogust, Fran Sutherland, Doris Vaughn and Beverly Wallace are the featured artists.

It was on last autumn's journey to the rich cultural cityscape of Istanbul that the idea for the "Travel as Muse" exhibition began to germinate. "The artists started showing sketches at dinner," Melikyan says. "We had been at this venue, built in the 1400s, watching whirling dervishes. Picture-taking is not allowed there, but nobody forbids making sketches. Dion [Ogust] was feverishly trying to capture what she saw. It only lasted an hour, but it left such a mark in her psyche." He recalls watercolorist Fran Sutherland making preliminary studies on the tour as well: "She sketches on the bus while it's bouncing around."

New destinations for Artblazing Tours are in the works for next year, possibly including Paris, Prague and Vienna. And new extensions, including culinary arts destinations, are being added as options to tours that have already become successful. Melikyan says that this group show is likely to be the first of a series, as more artists sign up to participate in the journeys abroad.

"This brings together the two sides of me," he explains. "Being able to create this environment gives me incredible satisfaction. I feel like I'm the matchmaker to the people who gave birth to this art."

The opening reception for "Travel as Muse" takes place from 5 to 7 p.m. this Saturday, May 23, and is free and open to the public. The show will be up through Sunday, June 21. Gallery hours are from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. each Saturday and Sunday. The Wired Gallery is located at 11 Mohonk Road in High Falls, just a block or so south of Route 213. For more information, visit thewiredgallery.com, facebook.com/wiredgallery or call 682-564-5613. To learn more about upcoming Artblazing Tours, visit artblazing.com.

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