

fine art

Twigs & Leaves Gallery: Where Art Dances with Nature

BY PAM J. HECHT

Step outside. Take in the awe-inspiring colors of fall as you catch a floating leaf or feel the cool breeze on your face. Then, stop by Twigs & Leaves Gallery in downtown Waynesville for a piece of Western North Carolina's mountain paradise to enjoy all year long. Inside, you'll find a treasure trove of

home furnishings inspired by the outdoors. The variety is endless, featuring rustic and finished furniture, jewelry, photographs and paintings, quilted wall hangings, stained glass and metals, among other things. "Our goal is to bring nature into your home," says Carrie Keith, who owns the gallery with husband, John.

Some interesting items in the shop include colorful leaf tiles; lamps, vases and furniture crafted of wood and rock; landscapes; silk leaf mobiles and jewelry with animal, acorn, leaf and tree motifs. The shop is grouped primarily by artist, with the exception of the wall art. Most everything is handcrafted by local and regional artists and crafters and comes with a bio of the artist when available.



Carrie Keith and Debbie, the Keith's dog.



Pottery with leaves by Karen Stoner.

The Beginning

Carrie Keith had no idea that her favorite store in Waynesville would one day be her own. Carrie, who once owned a floral/nature gift shop and her husband, John, a commercial banker, from Northwest Florida, had spent many happy summers vacationing in the nearby Cashiers/Highlands, North Carolina area.

The Keiths, outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy camping, hiking and fishing, noticed an outfitter store for sale while camping in the area. "It gave us the bug," says Carrie. "We were ready for a change."

The pair pursued their hunt for commercial property in Western North Carolina. On a whim, they stopped by Waynesville one day, so that Carrie could visit her favorite store there, and found out that it was for sale. Two months later, they owned it.

They also live there – the second floor of the century-old building is now their year-round home. "It was a perfect match," says Carrie, incorporating their mutual passion for nature and appreciation for art.

And though John, who now works as a real estate broker, helps out with maintenance and fills in as needed to help with sales, it's Carrie who runs the show.

The Shop

Both Twigs & Leaves and Debbie, the Keiths' dog – a permanent fixture at the shop – celebrate their 11th birthdays this month.

Meanwhile, since buying it in 2007, Carrie has put her "thumbprint on the store," she says, bringing in new artists in keeping with the nature theme. She selects the artists – now more than 180 – who sell their work primarily on a consignment basis, based on uniqueness, space availability and quality of work, she says. "I'm committed to the artists and they are committed to



Watercolor by Andrea Wilson



me," she says. And because she "knows their stories, each piece is special."

The Goal

"I want to maintain the integrity of the gallery and make it a Waynesville destination," says Carrie. "It should be a pleasant experience, delighting all the senses, so that people will want to return again and again." Just as she did.

As part of Art After Dark, an ongoing downtown event sponsored by the Waynesville Gallery Association, Twigs & Leaves Gallery is open from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. the first Friday of every month, May through November.

Twigs & Leaves Gallery

98 North Main Street, Waynesville, NC
(828) 456-1940
www.twigsandleaves.com
Open Mon. – Sat., 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.,
Sun. 1-4 p.m. (seasonal)



October 2, "Celebrating the Colors of Fall," Andrea Wilson, botanical watercolor artist from Tennessee, demonstrations of flowers and leaves paintings.

November 6, Peg Pike, jeweler from Asheville. Hors d'oeuvres, wine and piano entertainment, 6 to 9 p.m.

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