

# IN NASSAU

## It's Show and Sell at Women's Expo

Centereach library spotlights artists and entrepreneurs

BY RHODA AMON  
STAFF WRITER

There are hundreds of women artists where Madonna Cole comes from.

"They do functional art," says Cole, who was born and raised in Sierra Leone in West Africa. "They like to wear bright colors, so they tie-dye fabric with leaves and bark. They create necklaces out of shells and terra-cotta beads. They weave mats for their homes and book-packs for their children out of raffia."

Cole, who lives in Wantagh, will showcase her own functional art — tie-dyed, hand-painted or woven designs in the African tradition — at the third annual Women's Expo on Thursday in the Middle Country Library in Centereach. She's one of 52 Long Island women artists and arts and crafts entrepreneurs who will be showing and selling at the one-day marketplace.

For many participants, not unlike the West African women, art is a way of life. They work out of their homes, and, for some, the expo is a first opportunity to show their work and generate a market outside their own neighborhoods, said Sandra Feinberg, the library director. "It's a chance for women to nurture each other." At the expo, she said, "they realize that they are not alone and isolated. Some will go on for further training in business acumen."

Some of the women have been doing art all their lives but with few outlets for their creations. Others discovered their talents only recently after years in other careers or raising a family. Some have turned their homes into small import boutiques.

Cole, who left Africa in the 1970s to study at the London School of Printing, was always an artist. But, she said, "I was concerned that people think an artist can only do things with her hands. I wanted to show that there was more to me." She studied cultural anthropology at Marymount College and later earned a master's degree in art educa-



Photo by Lee S. Weissman

Madonna Cole of Wantagh is participating in Thursday's expo with her tie-dyed and hand-painted clothes.

tion at Brooklyn College.

Now in her late 40s and on her own after a divorce, the mother of two jump-started "a new beginning" last fall when a call from the Wantagh Citibank invited her to display her wearable art there. "People were shocked at first to see fashions in a bank," she says. The show went on for two months, gathering more fans for her "different look."

At the expo she'll demonstrate her techniques and show evening clothes, ties, throw pillows and wall art.

Wendy Gardner, 37, a practical nurse who was raised on the the Shinnecock Reservation in Southampton, didn't know she could draw until two years ago. Doodling in her notebook during a class in international business and marketing at Hofstra, she came up with a sketch of her professor that looked remarkably like him. Gardner was then also commuting to a film and video job with the National Museum of the American Indian in lower Manhattan.

She stopped commuting and started her own business, SageQuest Fine Art

& Graphic Design, doing custom art on T-shirts, sweatshirts, greeting cards. She also has paintings on exhibit at the Shelter Rock Historical Society and recently helped repaint the stage on the reservation powwow grounds.

Marsha Benoff, of Shirley, also stumbled serendipitously into her latest creative career. Some six years ago, she enrolled in a Herstory Writers Workshop led by author Erika Duncan. Having studied art at Queens College and dabbled in a number of crafts, Benoff brought her beads to the Babylon workshop and worked them into jewelry as her fellow writers read chapters from their memoirs. "I began getting orders for jewelry from the other women," she recalls. "I thought they were doing it because they knew I needed the money," she says, "but friends told me they saw the women wearing my jewelry." Bouyed by fellow writer Hazel Weiser who told her, "You can do anything you want to do," Benoff will bring bracelets and take orders for necklaces.

While the art of displaying their prod-

ucts is new to many expo participants, Flo Kemp is an experienced show-hopper, on the road most of the year in a van loaded with her etchings. She works at the etching process in a studio attached to her Setauket home. Each etching is done by hand, and since each proof is different, each is considered an original.

A former Spanish-language teacher, Kemp once considered art "too easy, too much fun" to be considered as a serious career. When her children were grown and on their own, however, she returned to her first love. Most of her etchings are of beaches and seascapes. Two of them have traveled to the ambassador's residence in Taipei, Taiwan.

For many, their work is a passion that they might pursue even if they didn't get paid for it — though they're not averse to sell-

ing their products.

"I've always loved personalized things, and I love books and children," says Helene de Gregorio, 58, of Middle Island, who left a less than satisfying job as an office manager to baby-sit her year-old grandson, Edward, three days a week. In between, she prints and binds personalized children's books. As she works at her home computer, she says, she can picture the gleam in a little girl's eyes when she finds herself the star of "A Ballerina Princess."

Women's Expo 2003 is planned by a committee from Long Island industry and nonprofit groups co-chaired by Judi Schillaci, director of the Hempstead-based Verizon Community Affairs, and Margaret Harvey of the Long Island Fund for Women and Girls. The Bethpage-based fund is co-sponsoring the event with the Middle Country Library Foundation.

The expo will be 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday at the library at 101 Eastwood Blvd. in Centereach. Call 631-585-9393, ext. 224. ●

## TOWN HALL AGENDA

Here is a list of some local government activities:

### TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD

Meetings are at town hall, 220 Plandome Rd., Manhasset.

**TOWN BOARD** 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

### ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

At its 9 a.m. Oct. 8 meeting the board will consider:

**Floral Park Center:** Jackie Tush seeks a variance to add to and alter a nonconforming dwelling with insufficient setbacks, on the east side of Barwick Street, north of Bryant Avenue.

**Garden City Park:** Geraldine Salli and Robert Labanbera seek a variance to permit the retention of an addition to the dwelling with insufficient side yard, on the west side of Nassau Boulevard, north of Dyckman Avenue.

**Glenwood Landing:** Daniel and Nicole Berry and Home Works Modular Homes seek variances to permit the erection of a single-family dwelling on an unimproved street, with insufficient lot area and into a required front-yard setback, on the north side of First Street, west of Highland Avenue.

**Great Neck:** Alan J. Cooper and Barbara Leivent seek variances to permit the alteration and addition to a single-family dwelling with insufficient secondary front-yard setback, at Somerset Drive South and School Road.

**Great Neck:** Eddie and Cemile Aydag seek variances to add to and alter a nonconforming dwelling with insufficient setback, at Grandview Avenue and Spinney Hill Drive.

**Great Neck:** David and Lois Rosen seek a variance to permit the retention of a wood deck with insufficient side- and rear-yard setbacks, at Hutchinck and Circle North.

**Roslyn Heights:** Nicole Kanaris seeks a variance to permit the erection of a masonry wall exceeding the maximum height, on the south side of Powerhouse Road, west of Browers Lane.

### EAST HILLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

8 p.m. Oct. 20, Village Hall, 209 Harbor Hill Rd.

**GREAT NECK WATER POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT**  
8:30 a.m. Tuesday, 236 East Shore Rd.

**HILLSIDE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

8 p.m. Oct. 8, library, 1950 Hillside Ave., New Hyde Park

**MANORHAVEN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD**

8 p.m. Oct. 20, Village Hall, 33 Manorhaven Blvd.

**MANORHAVEN BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

8 p.m. Oct. 22, Village Hall, 33 Manorhaven Blvd.

**MANORHAVEN MAYOR'S OPEN MEETING**

10 a.m. Oct. 18, Village Hall, 33 Manorhaven Blvd.

**MANORHAVEN TRAFFIC COURT**

7 p.m. Oct. 28, Village Hall, 33 Manorhaven Blvd.

**MANORHAVEN ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

8 p.m. Oct. 14, Village Hall, 33 Manorhaven Blvd.

**MINEOLA BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Public meeting, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Village Hall, 155 Washington Ave.

**NEW HYDE PARK BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS**

8 p.m. Oct. 7, headquarters, 1555 Jericho Tpke.

COMPILED BY GENE SULLIVAN