

## PLACES/SPACES

## city song



COVER

**W**hen I feel stuck, I head for the city. I jump in the car or hop on the train and head downtown. Like so many, I'm creatively fueled by the sights and sounds of the city, the endlessness of people, the mess of concrete, metal and marble. But travels to cities different than my own that seem to crack things wide open. In this way, New York is my mecca. The crowding of so many colours and cultures into one place sends me into a creative spiral like no other. Throngs of people make for carnivals of overheard conversation. Architecture wordlessly narrates a thousand different stories while layers of found patterns and colours speak a rainbow of languages. The city sings the kind of song I could spend the rest of my life listening to.

But I'm only able to visit every couple of years or so. Which means that my time in New York often feels like the inside of a tiny glass game show booth. The minute I hit the streets, the buzzer sounds and a cash blizzard commences. In the metaphorical thirty seconds I'm given, I grab at whatever I can. Wildly, deliriously. And when my time is up I stumble out of the booth, fistfuls of fortune spilling out of every pocket. Because the kind of inspiration I find on the streets of New York is as good as gold. And while my time there is often spent in fast and furious ways, I've learned to take what I can and let the rest go. I take what I can and walk away happy. For me, there's no other way. And I make out like a bandit. Every single time. —ANDREA JENKINS

country  
retreat

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

ANDREA JENKINS

squam art  
workshops

**H**ere is a surprising bit of trivia; the 1981 classic film, *On Golden Pond*, which stars the gracefully aged Katherine Hepburn and a cranky Henry Fonda, was actually filmed on Squam Lake in Holderness, New Hampshire. This small New England town takes its brush with fame quite seriously. In fact, local residents still reminisce about their contributions to the film, fondly recalling the days when Ms. Hepburn bought coffee at their diner and Mr. Fonda stopped them to ask for directions. Perhaps with the arrival of Squam Art Workshops (SAW), the locals will have something new to buzz about. Years from now, their reminiscing will turn to the time they served pie to Derek and Lauren of The Curiosity Shoppe, or helped Andrea Jenkins unload her photography equipment. With the stir that SAW is causing, it could very well happen. »



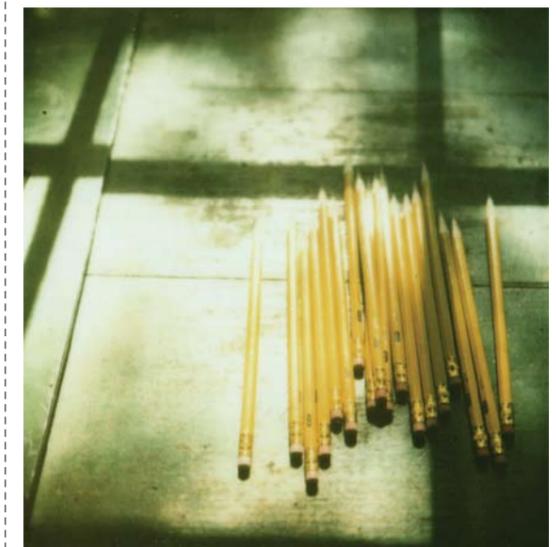
Elizabeth MacCrellish founded SAW in 2008 with the mission of bringing together creative-minded people looking to explore new mediums, meet other artists and crafters and enjoy long stretches of time to create away from the stresses of daily life. "The purpose of SAW," explains Elizabeth, "is to provide a safe, nurturing place where people can simply explore their creativity without judgment or criticism." The first retreat was held in September '08 and drew participants from across the States and all over the world, including Switzerland, Mexico, Canada and the U.K. Now in its second year, SAW has expanded to offer two sessions, a textile-focused retreat in June and a writing, photography and mixed-media focused retreat in September. While June welcomed teachers such as fabric designer Lizzy House and knitting guru Sally Melville, September had a decidedly different roster, ranging from mixed-media artist Judy Wise to author and columnist Lizzie Skurnick.

Participants arrive by trains, shuttles, cars and planes to the historic Rockywold Deephaven Camp, set on the breathtaking shores of Squam Lake. After a night of welcome festivities, workshops begin the following morning. September's workshops touched upon topics and projects such as mixed media collage, mold making, poetry, outdoor



*SAW is about so much more than the classes. It is about being in this space, being a part of this welcoming community. A place like this is surprising to find in the art world.*

sculpture, bookmaking, storytelling, textured photography techniques, wax transfers, jewellery design and song-writing. Whether taking "Text & Image: Explorations in Mixed Media" by Sarah Ahearn or "Story Weaving" with Jen Lee, everyone found something that appealed to their creative curiosities and interests. But as instructor Christopher Frost noticed, "SAW is about so much more than the classes. It is about being in this space, being a part of this welcoming community. A place like this is surprising to find in the art world." Lisa Occhipinti, who taught several mixed media classes, wholeheartedly agreed, "As an artist, you often feel like an island, working alone in your studio. Here you feel like you are part of a greater creative community." The unique sense of community at SAW can be credited directly to its creator. Elizabeth has successfully cultivated an atmosphere where individuality is celebrated and egos





*...everyone is free to do what they want at their own pace in their own way. The intention is to create a space where judgments are left at the door and respect is given to each of our own ways of interacting, creating...*



are laid to rest. "I was drawn to teach here because of the community aspect," explains Jen Lee. "This is not a critical environment, rather an incredibly nurturing, accepting, positive environment. It is a place where artists truly support one another." The intensity of the SAW experience leads to lasting connections. Without the stresses of daily life causing distraction, surprisingly strong friendships form after just a few short days. These creative companionships serve as constant reminders of the ability art has to transcend differences.

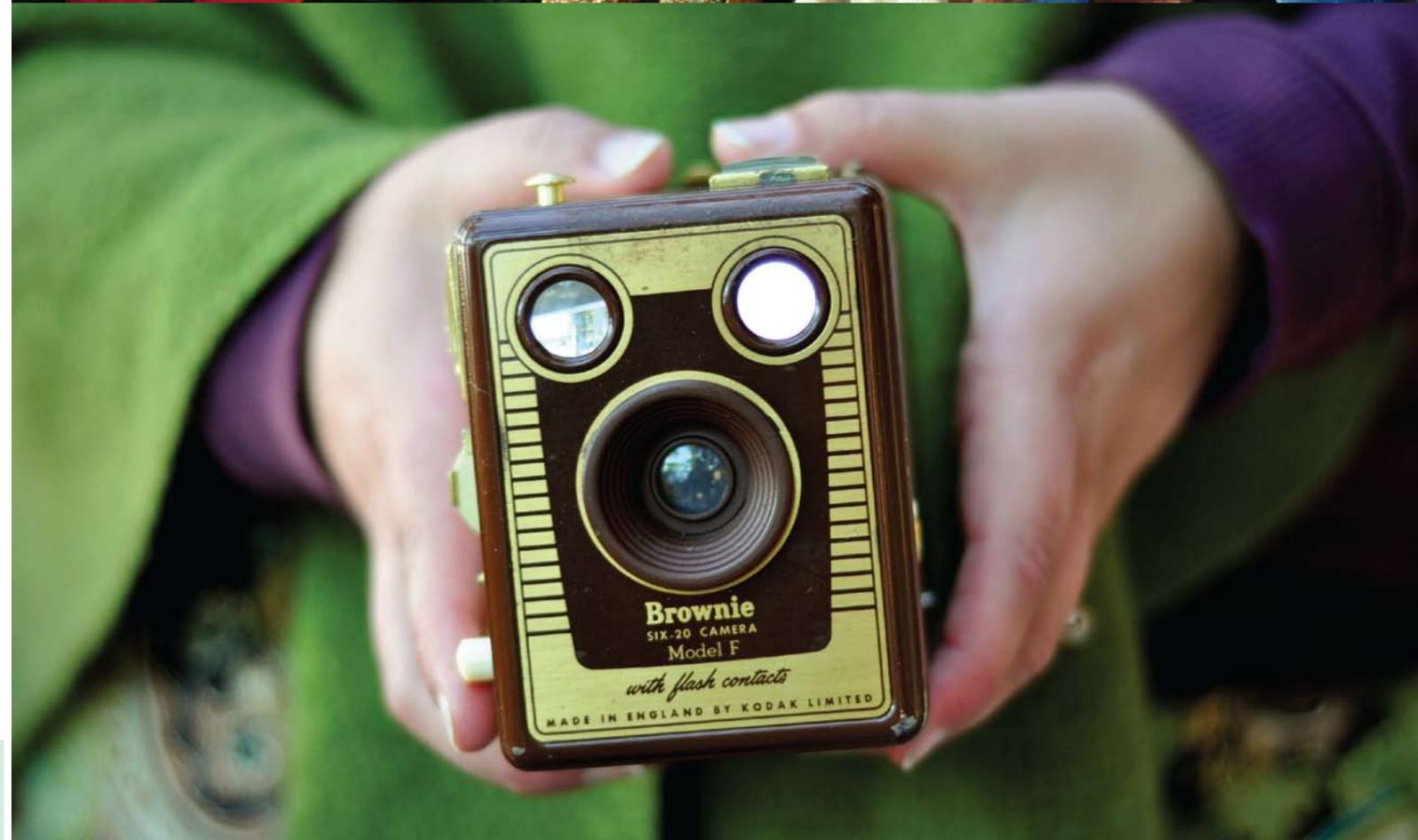
The uniqueness of SAW lies not only in its strong sense of community, but also in the diversity of its participants. From big-name bloggers and full-time artists to crafting newbies, there is room for everyone to thrive. It can be a great thrill to share workshops with star participants such as Denise Andrade, the talent behind Boho Photography, Ravelry.com founders Casey and Jessica Forbes, Susannah Conway of Ink on My Fingers, and the many other talents present. Whether attending as teachers, students or volunteers, their abilities serve to inspire and encourage those whose creative journeys are only just beginning.

While the days are filled with workshops, nights are reserved for special guests and performances. September's retreat opened with a memorable talk by Editor-in-Chief and Director of Publishing for Somerset Studio, Jenny Doh. Her words set the tone for the retreat by stressing the importance of celebrating art and creativity in daily life. "To me, the things we learn to do with our hands, our voices, our souls, our bodies, and our imagination... the arts, if you will, are what get us through life. It's what gets us through flights, through motherhood, through sisterhood, through parenthood, through friendships, through marriages, through divorces, through sicknesses. Art gets us through it all, doesn't it?"

Following Jenny's moving talk, acclaimed singer/song-

writer Jonatha Brooke rocked out around a blazing bonfire. Although opening night was hard to top, the second night's film screening of "Who Does She Think She Is?" directed by Pamela Tanner Boll was equally inspiring. The film explored the lives of female artists and the sacrifices that they had to make in order to continue creating their art. The third night gave everyone a chance to cut loose, with light-hearted improv skits and plenty of crowd participation. The final night, teachers and selected students put their wares up for sale at the Squam Art Fair. Free beer, a Polaroid photo booth, coveted raffle prizes and plenty of crafty loot made for a perfect party.

As the retreat drew to a close, it became clear that SAW's impact was powerful, yet unique to each individual. As mixed-media artist and returning teacher Christine Mason Miller so eloquently summed it up, "What is wonderful about SAW is that everyone is free to do what they want at their own pace in their own way. The intention is to create a space where judgments are left at the door and respect is given to each of our own ways of interacting, creating, and being while we are there. We are all different, and this is what SAW aims to nurture and celebrate." SAW is, in a nutshell, a summer camp for grownups, where participants are encouraged to get their clothes covered in splatters of paint, where tutus and tiaras are acceptable apparel, where techniques are discussed over homemade waffles in the morning and breakthroughs are shared over glasses of wine at sunset. It is a place where many people took their very first art class, met their tribe and discovered another layer to their artistic being. It is an event that many participants will return to year after year, seeking greater learning and connections, filling their creative wells for the following year. So while the memories of Ms. Hepburn and Mr. Fonda will forever linger like the morning fog on Squam Lake, SAW is adding its own layer of beauty to the environment... one painting, one story, one breakthrough, at a time. ①



### Squam Art Workshops

Registration for the upcoming season begins in February. For workshop details please visit [squamartworkshops.com](http://squamartworkshops.com)