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Global scavenger hunt puts small works of art throughout Morganton and the rest of the world



ANGELA KUPER COPELAND PHOTOS / THE PAPER

Keep an eye out for tiny works of art, like this, tucked away in parks and public spaces in Morganton. The idea of Game of Shrooms is to make original artwork available for anyone to have.

Game of Shrooms



A life-changing loss compelled Laura Bill to reevaluate her life and devote more attention to her art.

By ANGELA KUPER COPELAND
Arts & Entertainment Reporter
THE PAPER

Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi" sold at Christie's auction house in 2017 for \$450.3 million.

As they say, this ain't that. And that suits Laura Bill just fine.

"Art should be accessible to everyone," she said. "It's vital for life."

Bill is one of many artists around the world participating in Game of Shrooms on Saturday, June 10. She and the other artists will hide their original mushroom-themed artworks in public places. The artists will give hints (often on social media) for others to find the art and take it home. About 50 North Carolina artists are participating, but she is the only one to date in Burke County.

Art Scavenger Hunt Details

Game of Shrooms

When: Saturday, June 10

What: Look for mushroom-themed small art pieces in public places and parks in downtown Morganton and the surrounding area. Keep what you find!

Who: Get clues about where to find the artwork by following Laura Bill on Instagram @laurabill. Take photos and tag her when you successfully discover one of the artworks.

More: Check out the Game of Shrooms website, yumfactory.com/gameofshrooms/.

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"Some artists are giving verbal clues, but I'll give visual clues. I'll post photos of the art in its location," she said. "There will be close-up shots and wide shots."

She hopes the photos provide enough of the surroundings that those playing can figure out the location. Whoever finds the art then posts a photo of their artistic find on Instagram and tags @laurabill with #shroom drop and #gameofshrooms2023. Bill will retrieve any unfound art. The idea is to be a "mushroom ninja" and leave no trace, according to the game's webpage.

Richmond, Calif.-based artist Daniel "Attaboy" Seifert inadvertently created the annual international underground holiday in 2019. His Game of Shrooms Shroomdrop scavenger hunt led artists to create and hide original art for people to find. The event went viral on Instagram.

Anyone can search for the hidden gems. Bill said she will place most of her 15 art pieces in parks and public places in downtown Morganton. Her small, acrylic paintings on

wood or canvas measure only a few inches with some having a magnet on the back.

"I live in an RV, so I'm used to working on small pieces," she joked.

She only became aware of the scavenger art event a few months ago from a fellow artist she follows on Instagram. Having only lived in the area since this past November, she sees Game of Shrooms as another way to get her art into the community she is learning to love.

"I love bringing artwork into the world. Look, I'm not making any money," she said, "but that's not going to stop me from creating art. I have a spiritual impetus to put art in the world. I want my artwork out there now, to see the light of day."

She stressed that other would-be artists should come out of the shadows and also participate in the event, calling it "such a tiny threshold" to get involved.

A DEATH, A PANDEMIC, AND A SHIFT IN PRIORITIES

Art in some form has long been a part of her life. Her work was more along the lines of arts and crafts, she said. She made jewelry, home décor, and other creative works by repurposing other items. The crys-



ANGELA KUPER COPELAND / THE PAPER

Examples of the small paintings by Laura Bill that you can find in public spaces in and around downtown Morganton on June 10. Bill is a participating artist in the global scavenger hunt Game of Shrooms.

tals in the earrings she was wearing, for example, were from an old chandelier.

"I have a very practical mindset," she explained.

But her artwork began to veer more into fine art when she lost her Aunt Martha to breast cancer. Martha was a banker in Monroe, N.Y. who painted on the side. She always assumed she could devote herself to her artistic passions once she no longer worked full time. Martha died about three months after retiring from her banking job.

"There was all of this unfulfilled artistic potential," she said, her voice seeming to reflect the regret her aunt might have felt in the end.

Losing her beloved Martha shook her. When she inherited her aunt's art supplies, she took that like a baton that had been passed to her. She was to get serious about her art.

It was also around the same time that COVID took away her job as a Senior Medicare Patrol, the person who would provide workshops to seniors about how to avoid falling vic-

tim to Medicare scams. The pandemic shut down her work.

"So here I am having an early mid-life crisis and a lot of time on my hands. I did a lot of soul searching," she said.

She decided to stop denying the artist inside her. She also realized it was time for a change in scenery. She and her partner had been living in Vermont since 2019 after having lived in Maryland. Vermont has tremendous natural beauty and the sweet smells from the white clouds of maple steam evaporating out of sugar houses. But she always felt like an outsider.

Morganton was a happy accident. The couple decided to relocate to North Carolina. She had lived in Lincolnton for about five years as a child and her sister lives in the Raleigh area. What was once thought to be a snowbird location is now where she calls home.

"I loved the mountains of Vermont and here we get to enjoy the outdoors more," she said. "And Morganton is so welcoming. People give you a chance here."

Speaking of chances, she encourages everyone to take a chance on their dreams.

"If you don't appreciate the world around you, you lose it. You have to fight for the life you want to live."

Angela Kuper Copeland covers arts and entertainment for The Paper. She may be reached at angela@thepaper.media or 828-445-8595, ext. 2003.

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LAURA BILL, ARTIST