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Paint and pour-overs: art and coffee return to Falls Village



By **Natalia Zukerman**

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When the Furnace – Art on Paper Archive opens “Passages,” Erick Johnson’s first solo exhibition at the Falls Village gallery, it won’t just be the art that beckons. The coffee will once again be flowing from the café next door.

“There’s a door right into the café,” said gallery director and artist Kathleen Kucka, walking into the adjoining room. “The opening will spill in there. It always does.” The Falls Village Café closed in October, much to Kucka’s dismay, but is set to reopen as Off the Trail Café.

“Without the café,” Kucka said, “it just didn’t work. Not to mention my own hunger. So I just closed for the winter, which actually worked out really well.” With the reopening, there is a revived enthusiasm fueled by art and caffeine.

Johnson’s paintings and works on paper that ripple with color mark a bold step forward for the artist. While his abstractions have long played a quiet presence in group shows and the gallery’s flat files, “Passages” offers the first full spotlight with all eyes on the shifting geometries, the softened edges, the negative space that Kucka called “meandering.”

Johnson, who splits his time between Tribeca and Hillsdale, is steeped in the art world. He was the assistant for landscape painter Wolf Kahn for over a decade. He knew de Kooning. “And the work has only gotten more inventive,” said Kucka. “The stacking. The shapes. Even the way he’s using the brush. It’s like woven fabric.”

Two of the works in the show are paintings in the formal sense — paint on stretched canvas — while the rest are pigment-rich explorations on thick paper. “There really is a distinction,” Kucka explained, and a difference in the impact from the smaller to the larger pieces. And yet, the through-line is unmistakable: color as a portal, form as an exploration.

So come for the conversation, stay for the coffee. But mostly, come for the work — vibrant, unfolding, and, as Kucka put it, “just beautiful.”

The opening reception is Saturday, June 7, from 4 to 6 p.m. The show will be on view through July 6 at Furnace – Art on Paper Archive at 107 Main St., Falls Village.

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