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Local artist's studio is a dream come true

By Nan Lincoln
The Bar Harbor Times Reporter

BAR HARBOR (June 11): When artist Linda Rowell Kelley's husband, Terry, suggested that they move from the "urban" delights of downtown Bar Harbor to the bucolic atmosphere of the Emery district with its fields, forests and dairy farms, she had one condition.

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"I really liked living in Bar Harbor," she says. "So I told him I'd make the move. but

only if I could have a studio.”

Not only did she get her art studio — her husband fulfilled the bargain by building her the kind of studio any artist would dream of.

The studio is reached by a sea glass and pot shard-strewn path from the main house,



Linda Rowell Kelley at her studio in the Emery District of Bar Harbor. (Photo by Nan Lincoln)

which overlooks the rolling meadows and orchard of the old Fogg Farm (now the Smith Family Farm) on the Crooked Road. A tall, narrow, shingled building with a gracefully peaked roof, plenty of windows and skylights, it kind of looks like a life-size Victorian doll house, set on the edge of the woods.



Kelley's paintings of hay rolls in a meadow.

Going to work here would just have to be fun, one thinks — and the work done here must be fun, too.

It is. If the exterior of Kelley's studio is enchanting and playful, the interior is an absolute carnival of color, texture, shapes and figures.

Lining the eaves of the ceiling like the audience of an

Elizabethan theater are a gallery of women's portraits — some clothed, some unabashedly nude and looking down, approvingly it seems, at what's going on below.

What's going on is a lot of painting — on dozens of large and small canvases, on furniture, on pots, and even on a collection of clothespins that Kelley has festooned with whimsical figures and designs. This suggests someone that's not only crazy for art, but a little crazed as well, but actually, there is a method to her madness.

"I wanted to give up my dryer," she says, "and I was hanging out my laundry one day and thinking, 'this is pretty boring,' and then I looked at the pins I was using and thinking I could do something with them to make the chore a little more more fun."



Kelley is well known for her exuberant paintings of poppies and other flowers.

Fun indeed; in fact, one imagines if these neat clothespins were passed out to every household there'd probably be a lot fewer dryers used and a lot less energy used, and glaciers would stop melting and the polar bears would ... well, who knows?

This, not so say that amid all the fun of her art works (did I mention the fat naked ladies lining her driveway?) that a serious artist is not at work here.

Kelley was trained at the Portland Fine Arts School

where she majored in sculpture. But before she could establish a career in the arts she met and married her husband, moved to Bar Harbor, raised a family, managed a household and got a steady paying job.



"Apples" by Linda Rowell Kelley.

Although sculpting was pretty much out of the question for her during all those busy years, she did keep painting and did keep dreaming of having her own studio and gallery one day.



Now with that dream a reality with her kids grown and, despite a job with the MDI Housing Authority, she does have more time for her art. She has, in the past several years, been showing her work in occasional shows and exhibits.

She is perhaps best known for her exuberant images of scarlet poppies and other flowers that capture all the color, form, movement and, yes, fun of her subjects. But she is adept at other subjects as well. Her painting of hay rolls in a meadow says everything one needs to know about such a scene without being fussy about it; an aerial view of the coast line is quite elegant; and a series of paintings of the Crooked Road stone barn show an artist constantly discovering new ways to express herself and her perspective.

Clothespins are also a canvas for Linda Kelley.

Linda Rowell Kelley is

currently exhibiting

a small collection

of her work in The

Bar Harbor Times

office window at 174

Cottage St. One can

also call to arrange

a visit to her

studio at 288-4311

or visit her website

at [www.](http://www.lindarowellkelley.com)

[lindarowellkelley.com](http://www.lindarowellkelley.com).

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