

# BBHS student's artwork featured in SoHo gallery

By CLAIRE K. RACINE

Rye Brook resident Alexa Maizes' artwork, photographs of her hands painted to look like animals and buildings, is being featured in a gallery display in SoHo. While this alone would be impressive for a local artist, what makes Alexa's accomplishment so notable is that she is not just a Rye Brook resident, she is, in fact, a freshman at Blind Brook High School.

Seventeen of Alexa's pieces are on display until Feb. 15 at Citibabes, a family-membership club in SoHo that offers children's classes as well as other services and amenities.

"Alexa is our debut artist for our CitiGallery," said Sarah Rinaldi, the new CitiGallery curator as well as a CitiSchool teacher and the children's programming assistant for Citibabes.

The idea behind CitiGallery is to showcase young artists, said Rinaldi, who taught Alexa at the Rye Arts Center, and when Citibabes decided to start CitiGallery, Rinaldi said she immediately thought of Alexa.

Alexa started painting her hands last May after her grandfather introduced her to some work by Guido Daniele, an Italian artist who pioneered the body painting technique in the 1990's. In the beginning, Alexa mimicked Daniele's artwork, she said.

"Once I got comfortable with it, I started doing my own," Alexa said.

Alexa's artwork usually takes between 45 minutes and 3½ hours to execute with very little preparation beforehand, and she uses organic face paints to do it.

"I don't want to say they're good for my skin, but they're not bad," she said with a smile. "At least they're not toxic."

Sometimes her artwork either requires her to borrow her sister's or a neighbor's limb to complete or she has to Photoshop her hands together after the



Fourteen-year-old Alexa Maizes of Heritage Court shows off the giraffe/panda she painted on her hands. Photographs of the Blind Brook freshman's artwork are on display at Citibabes in SoHo until Feb. 15.

four years, said her mother, Robin Maizes.

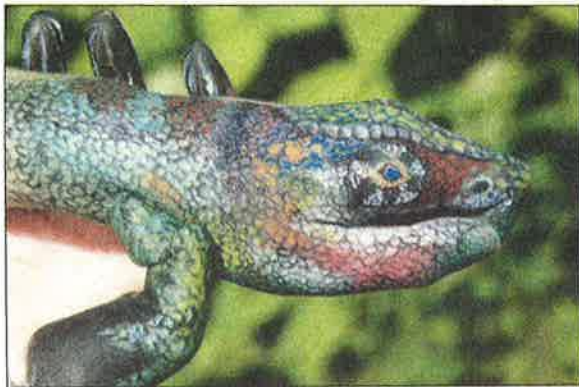
Currently, Alexa is selling sets of notecards and oversized postcards and 60% of the proceeds will go towards the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America and the other 40% will go to the Pediatric Cancer Foundation.

"She has a soft spot for young kids," said Robin, explaining why they decided to include the Pediatric Cancer Foundation in their charitable donations.

"It seemed like a worthy cause," Alexa added.

While the framed artwork on display at Citibabes is also for sale, the proceeds will not go to charity.

Alexa's artwork will be on display until Feb. 15 at Citibabes at 52 Mercer St. The gallery is open Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m., Saturday, 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Interested persons should just let the front desk know they are there to see Alexa's artwork. The notecards and oversized postcards are available there or by contacting Robin at [rlmaizes@aol.com](mailto:rlmaizes@aol.com).



This picture of Alexa's hands painted to look like an iguana was one of her first attempts using her new organic face paints.

fact. For example, when she painted St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, she had to paint her arm several times and then Photoshop them together to make the various spires.

While Alexa is not ambidextrous, she does sometimes need to paint her right hand as well and is working on getting the technique down, she said.

Alexa started drawing when she was five years old, and when she was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease, a chronic disorder that affects the gastrointestinal tract, art became a way for Alexa to escape from life for a little while and also to raise money for research into a cure for the disease.

"I like [art] because it helps me express myself and it's a good way to forget everything else," she said.

By selling illustrated notecards, shirts and other items, Alexa has been able to raise approximately \$5,000 for the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation of America in the past



Sometimes Alexa uses Photoshop to edit her pictures, sometimes to merge pictures of her hands together, or in the case of the rare tropical cassowary bird, she edited out her other arm.