

## Center City Artist Leroy Forney Paints Beijing in Spring

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

For two months last spring, Center City resident Leroy Forney lived and worked in Beijing as an artist-in-residence sponsored by the Red Gate Gallery in the Feijiacun village, where he painted portraits, mountain landscapes, and city scenes. Along with seven other artists, he exhibited his work in the “Ba-Da-Bing Open Studio,” which in Mandarin means, “Eight Big Egg Sandwiches.”

Forney describes his experiences in China on his blog: [www.LeroyForney.com/blog](http://www.LeroyForney.com/blog). Here is one short clip: “The open studios in Feijiacun are often casual and congenial affairs. Red Gate Gallery’s open studio in Feijiacun last month included not just art but also a vendor making tasty jianbing pancakes. In part, the open studios are a celebration of the arrival of warmer weather.”

Later, back in Philadelphia, Forney created an oil painting of the First Unitarian Church at 2125 Chestnut Street. This painting was one of an exhibition of 44 artworks depicting sites on the Philadelphia Historic Places list, chosen by The Athenaeum to commemorate their 200th anniversary.

Recently Forney has begun exploring different materials and techniques, such as painting unframed wall hangings on both Tyvek and canvas, and experimenting with dioramas and other constructions using recycled materials and other found objects. Three of his artworks were chosen by a jury to be in the “On the Grid” exhibit at the Off The Wall Gallery at Dirty Frank’s in December. Other paintings were selected for exhibitions at the Janssen Library in



Leroy Forney among his paintings in his Center City studio.

Reading (sponsored by the Berks County Historical Society), the Plastic Club, and the Philadelphia Sketch Club.

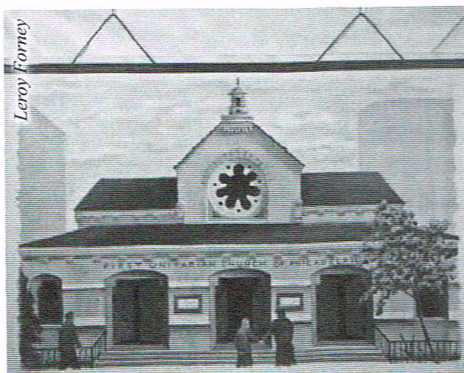
The bulk of Forney’s artwork ranges from portraits to landscapes, cityscapes, and seascapes, painted in oils with muted colors in a soft, realistic style. To create his portraits, Forney incorporates his knowledge of the subject gained through conversation, observation, and research.

“My portraits probe the unique character and humanity of the model as I perceive him or her,” Forney explains. In 2011, Forney painted a series of portraits of participants in the Occupy Philadelphia movement, and captured their stories. The following year, he had a solo show, “The Many Faces of Occupy Philadelphia,” at the American Friends Center and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County in Media. The Occupiers’ portraits, along with their stories, are reproduced in a book, available for sale at his studio.

Now residing and painting in a Center City high-rise building, Forney traces the roots of his art career to doodling in class as a youngster in Central Pennsylvania. He took a long road from there to here,

spanning five continents and seven careers – among them industrial chemical research, medical device development, quality-control management, microchip manufacturing, electronic engineering management, and inventor/entrepreneur. He lived in various places in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Then, upon retiring, he taught with the Peace Corps in Tanzania, Mexico and Guatemala. He now travels to visit family in Paris, Vicenza, Beijing, and Seattle.

When Forney moved to Philadelphia in 2007, he immediately began to study oil painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), and continued to study there and, since 2008, at the Fleisher Art Memorial, Main Line Art Center, Woodmere Art Center, and Studio Incamminati. His work has been exhibited at PAFA, the Schuylkill Heritage Foundation, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, Fairmount Arts Crawl, Off the Wall Gallery, the Kimmel Center, and the Cosmopolitan Club, as well as two clubs of which he is a member, the Philadelphia Sketch Club and the Philadelphia Plastic Club. He is a member of the American Portrait Society, the Center for Emerging Visuals Artists, and InLiquid. His portrait



Forney’s painting of First Unitarian Church.

of Frances E.W. Harper, commissioned by the First Unitarian Church, is on display there. His other accomplishments include a live painting demonstration at the Wallingford Community Art Center, and three appearances in the Philadelphia Open Studio Tour.

Forney holds a Ph.D. in organic chemistry from Syracuse University and a B.S. from Juniata College in Huntingdon, PA. His other talents include choral singing and

photography. He sang with the Choral Arts Society, sponsored a recorder group, and now sings with the choir at First Unitarian.

Forney's artwork adorns the walls of his studio and is stacked neatly in his large storage closet. When asked why he holds on to so much of his work, Forney replies, "I like to paint more than I like to market my work." Leroy Forney's artwork is available to view by appointment. [www.LeroyForney.com](http://www.LeroyForney.com).

Currently, there is a ready opportunity to view the artist's work without an appointment. Leroy Forney is one of three artists invited to exhibit at the 11th Annual Mary Liz Memorial Masters Exhibition at Off The Wall Gallery at Dirty Frank's, 13th and Pine, March 1 to April 17. Forney is going in a new direction and will be showing all new work, featuring drawings and multiple images.

## Author and Greenfield Alum Sue Eisenfeld to Speak at Athenaeum

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Sue Eisenfeld, a former Center City resident and graduate of the Albert M. Greenfield School, will speak about her new book, *Shenandoah: A Story of Conservation and Betrayal*, at the Athenaeum on Washington Square, Wednesday, March 25 at 5:30 p.m. (Free for members; \$10 for non-members.)

Eisenfeld traces her off-trail hiking adventures and discoveries of old cemeteries, house foundations, and artifacts in the backwoods, and tells the true story of the American settlers who were forced to leave their homes in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains during the FDR administration's creation of Shenandoah National Park.

Eisenfeld has been hiking the park for more than 20 years, initially for the scenery, but then became fascinated with the history of the dispossessed mountain residents, who she feels were treated unfairly. As a child growing up in Philadelphia, Eisenfeld first became interested in American history when her mother (this writer) took her to visit historic cemeteries such as Old Pine, Christ Church, and Laurel Hill, as well as historic homes such as the Todd House and those on Elfreth's Alley. Her interests included not just famous historic figures but also the lives of ordinary people.

Eisenfeld attended the Philadelphia High School for Girls and the University of Pennsylvania. She developed an interest in the global environment, which led to an internship at the Clean Air Council. After two years at Penn, she transferred to Cornell University, where she earned a B.S. in Natural Resources in 1992. While at Cornell, she became a hiker and an activist in protests against the use of pesticides on the college lawns.

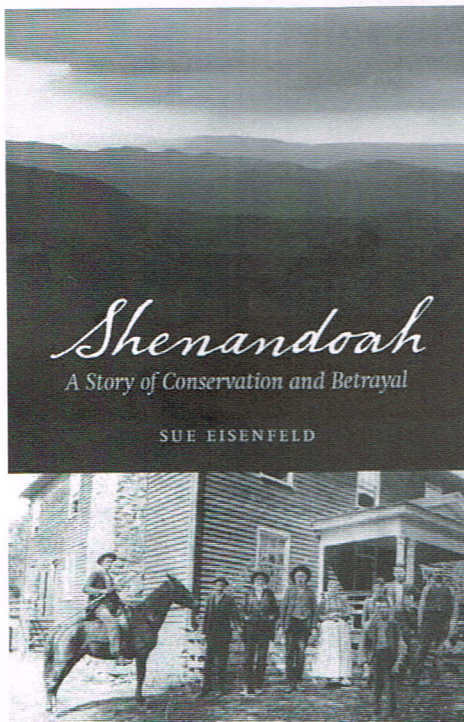
Upon graduation, Eisenfeld was hired as an environmental policy consultant at ICF International in Virginia, followed by more than 15 years as an environmental communications consultant at Eastern Research Group, working primarily for federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency. She produced nationally distributed educational materials and campaigns about various issues, including a documentary about environmental injustice in a small, poor, minority community in South Carolina and its subsequent transformation and recovery. Fellow Philadelphian Elinor Bacon, daughter of renowned planner Ed Bacon, was also involved in the project.



Author Sue Eisenfeld.

In addition to her consulting career, Eisenfeld has been a freelance writer since the 1990s. Her articles and essays about history, hiking, travel, nature, food, health, the environment, and personal experiences have been published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Washingtonian*, as well as numerous literary journals and regional travel magazines.

In 2009, Eisenfeld earned a Master of Arts in Writing from Johns Hopkins University, where she is now on the faculty in both the M.A. in Writing and M.A. in Science Writing Programs, the only online science-writing program in the nation, for which she created the first online science-writing workshop. Her essays have been listed among the Notable Essays of the Year in *The Best American Essays* (2009, 2010, 2013). She is a four-time Fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. [www.sueeisenfeld.com](http://www.sueeisenfeld.com)



Eisenfeld's book.