

Local artist's skills get her into Harvard

Susan Swartz's paintings on display at Divinity School

By **MATT JAMES**

Of the Record staff

Last August, Park City artist and Deer Valley-area resident Susan Swartz had an exhibition on Martha's Vineyard. In and of itself, the exhibition was not extraordinary, Swartz splits her time between the Vineyard and Park City, and she is affiliated with the Carol Craven Gallery there.

But over the course of the exhibition, a retired ethics professor from the Harvard Divinity School, Dr. Preston Williams, happened to see Swartz's paintings.

After reading an article about her published in The Park Record last April (which was posted with the exhibit), Williams began to see about bringing Swartz to Harvard.

"This was something which just came into being this year," said Laurie Westberg, commercial director at Swartz's studio.

The fortuitous visit by Williams culminated in an exhibition of Swartz's works at the school's Andover Hall, in Cambridge, Mass. The showing runs from April 12 through 20 and features Swartz's

paintings from throughout her past year of work.

Westberg said the paintings were a sight to see, set underneath the building's 40-foot ceilings and against its dark, historic wood paneling.

Much like the contrasts between Park City and Cambridge, the works, with their naturalistic subject matter; loose, modern style, and bright colors, provided a sharp complement to Harvard's most-Ivy League of appearances.

"The works have really illuminated the whole building," Westberg said.

"It's just an amazing experience," said Swartz. "When you dream about stuff, it's one of those things you never thought would happen."

The Divinity School exhibition acknowledges the prominence of spirituality in Swartz's works. Along with her signature, each painting bears a small, "GTG." It means, "Glory to God."

Swartz says she works to paint her landscapes as God intended them, and she hopes people can see Him within the works as a calming presence.

"When people look at my work, maybe they'll feel a little bit of God's peace," Swartz said.

With that philosophy, she was the perfect person to introduce



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSAN SWARTZ

Susan Swartz splits her time between homes and studios in Deer Valley and Martha's Vineyard. Harvard professor Preston Williams discovered her work at a show on the Vineyard.

some new art to the Divinity School. Swartz will be taking part in a variety of events in conjunction with the exhibit. Her schedule began on Tuesday as she participated in a discussion group with students at the school, talking about the types of art they would like to see there.

"They say this is the start of something, and they want to continue," said Swartz about the students' views of her exhibit.

Talking to the students at the show reminded her of her earlier career as the head of a high school art department in Princeton, N.J.

"I used to teach, so it's sort of coming back," she noted, "as an educator."

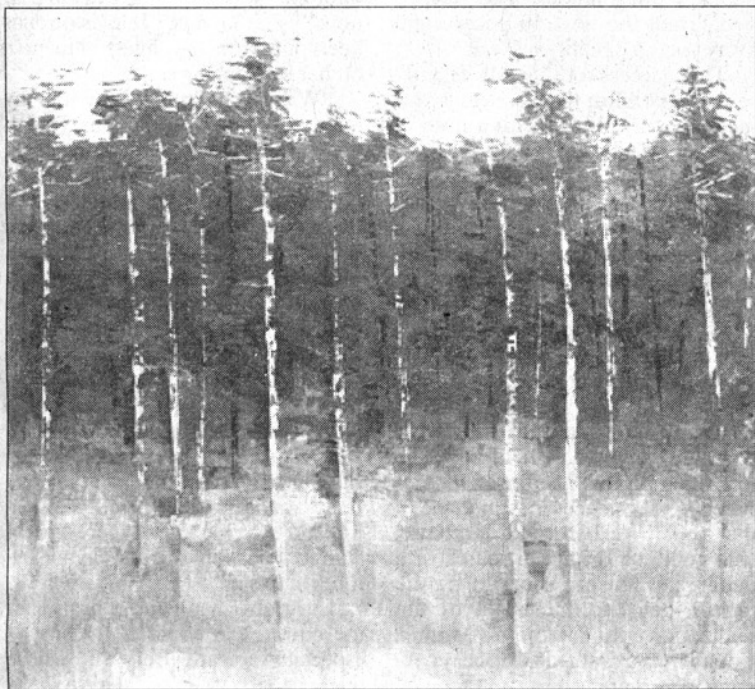
Between Princeton and her latest exhibition, Swartz moved to Utah and was honored with the Utah Mansion Artist of the Year Award from Governor Mike Leavitt, and she was also chosen as an Olympic artist for the 2002 Winter Olympics

in Salt Lake City, for that assignment creating a series of paintings to commemorate the games. So, her reputation has steadily grown.

After the exhibit at the Divinity School, Swartz said she wasn't sure whether or how her involvement with the Divinity School would continue, but she did say the exhibit had been a wonderful experience. She simply seemed grateful the experience could come her way, seemingly out of the blue from one show on Martha's Vineyard.

"It's one of those things I that I never even thought of," said Swartz. "You just never know what will happen."

Susan Swartz's works are available through the Phoenix Gallery on Main Street in Park City for more information about the gallery, call 649-1006. For more information about Swartz, her works or her exhibit, visit www.susanswartz.com or the Divinity School website at www.hds.harvard.edu/artexhibit.



MORNING CALM BY SUSAN SWARTZ

Swartz signs her paintings, "GTG," which means, "Glory to God." She hopes they show a landscape's natural beauty and its beauty as God's creation.