



IN EVERY ISSUE

REAL WOMEN • REAL STORIES • REAL LIFE

On the Town

Celebrations in our area | p11

My Thoughts

A letter from the associate publisher | p12

Letters from our Readers

Bucks County women share their thoughts | p15

Artist Corner

Val Sivilli, fabric is her canvas | p14

Real Beauty

The battle of the bulge | p18

Wellness

Art therapy employs creativity to improve life | p22

Fashionable Bucks County

Artistic fashions | p26

Making a Difference

The Community Conservatory brings music, drama and art to Bucks County | p42

A Greener Bucks

No thread left behind | p44

Dining & Destinations

Jamison Grill | p48

Finance Matters

Retirement savings and dealing with investment losses | p52

Save the Date

Calendar of events in and around Bucks County | p60

Final Thought

The definition of a Bucks County woman | p66



ARTIST CORNER



“ what we wear on our bodies says something about ourselves, expresses who we are and what we want to say in the world, says Val Sivilli, founder of *Short Sleeve Stories* by *Civilian*. The artful life of a tee shirt is that it is a huge mode of self-expression. ”

Fabric is her CANVAS

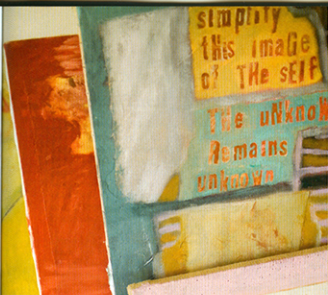
Short Sleeve Stories by *Civilian* is a unique clothing company that creates art on hand-printed shirts and other products. What makes these shirts works of art is the creative use of symbols. The power of these signs, according to Val, is that they offer the same meaning throughout different cultures and have a common root that affects people on a subconscious level. The symbols provide visual proof that all people deal with the same basic issues. The ancient symbols possess the power to take someone to an emotional place that provides inspiration, motivation, peace or humor. “The ones I use seem alive, and allow us to communicate on a universal level,” she says. “Since so many people are transient these days and our roots are so challenged, our bodies are what we take with us, and what we put on them can be grounding for who we are in the world.”

Val Sivilli grew up in New York, playing classical piano and guitar while pursuing her passion for art. Around the age of 17, she chose art as her foremost mode of expression and studied at schools in New York before obtaining her MSA from Rutgers. “Although music is a great passion of mine, I chose the visual arts to fit my need for a solitary road of working alone,” Sivilli says. Music still plays a part in her life; in fact, the name *Civilian* in her company comes from her big brother’s former band *The Civilians* – a subtle word play on the family’s last name.

Wanting a slower pace in which to raise her two children, Val moved from New York to Frenchtown in the 1990’s and operated a cooperative art gallery called *Steamroller*. At the gallery her hand-printed shirts were tremendously popular and the idea of running her own business was born. “As a painter, I didn’t always see the connection between art and fashion,” explains Val. “I would have preferred people to be wearing my paintings, but that would have been silly. I see the connection much more now, especially because of accessibility of wearing art on a shirt.”

Val saw the opportunity to work solo again and started the business of hand printing tee shirts along with accessories, and now operates from her studio in Milford, NJ. The

Continued on page 17



inspiration for Sivilli's designs comes from many cultural and historical contexts. Yet within the visual structure of each symbol resides a familiar, recognizable meaning. The tee shirt graphics are conceived by use of a variety of mediums — charcoal, ink, pencil, computer, oil, photography — before being transformed into designs which include: *Hobo Signs*, embracing the free-spirit of the wanderer; *Signs of Civilization*, representing a sense-driven awareness of the self; sex *Symbols*, inspired by ancient signs of fertility and sexuality; and *Civilian Basics*, a collection of Val's creative images exploring a concept or expressing an idea. Other products created by the company are greeting cards, silkscreen, digital prints, and pillows. Val plans on extending her line to window treatments and scarves soon.

Short Sleeve Stories by Civilian are distributed to wholesalers around the county and can be found locally at Alchemy Clothing, Frenchtown Mercantile and Clinton Book Shop. They can also be purchased online at www.shortsleevestories.com or at her studio in Milford by appointment. The company also designs custom lines for businesses and community events such as Riverfest.

In addition to running her business, Sivilli teaches screen-printing, color theory, and drawing classes at Bucks County Community College and Raritan Valley Community College. She supports the local community by using her tee shirts for fundraisers benefiting causes that range from the PTA to environmental groups. Val also has worked with teenagers in artistic projects in the area, encouraging them to express themselves through the creative arts. ●

Story by Maureen Keyte

“The role of the artist in the community is very important to me, comments Val. The artist community is unique in this area because we all really help each other. It is vital to support other artists and neighborhood businesses in order for all of us to thrive, she says.

It's like a circle.”

She sees the world through her eyes as a reluctant benefactor aware that

At the heart of all beings is a child trying to make sense of a chaotic universe.



hobo symbols universal code for the

hobo sign for

"THE CAT SEEMED MORE THAN A CAT, SHE REMEMBERED THE PAST."

COLLECTING MEMORIES FROM DIFFERENT PLACES FOR ALL OF HUMANS THAT TAKE CARE OF HER MAKES THIS CAT THE LEGACY OF THE FAMILY

Sometimes, her family becomes caught up in a bunch of crazy details.

More of than not, big picture become really mu

