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by **Steve Kastner**

ELLISON BAY, WI - Jim Maronek's Silver Poplar Studios and Gallery opens for the season today. On Saturday, June 17 you are also invited to experience an open house tour of the Maronek's latest addition to their "Ellison Wonderland" suite of unique architectural expressions - the masterpiece buildings they have created in Ellison Bay. Their newest work is named the "Firebird"

A Russian fairytale cottage opens at "Ellison Wonderland"

Silver Poplar Studios features gallery of works by artist Jim Maronek

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Guest Cottage," and it strictly adheres to the wildly expressive design dictates of Jim and his wife Carole, a couple bent on paying continuous respect to Russian folk traditions.

The Maronek's 15-acre estate sets one of Wisconsin's high water marks for the creative re-use of historic salvaged building remnants. In this instance, the Firebird was constructed from beams, logs and siding taken from a barn that stood for over a hundred years in Francis Creek.

In Russian folklore, Firebird (zhar-ptitsa) literally means ember bird, derived from the word for ember, flameless fire - a magical glowing bird that comes from a faraway land, which is both blessing and curse to its captors. The Maronek's Firebird tale is true to form...



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Remains of the original cabin (foreground) have been restored to serve as a patio...

When one of the Maronek's historic log cabins burned to the ground in 2004, Jim and Carole set out to replace it, on the same spot, with another structure. Russian fairytale tradition provided them with the story of the Firebird, rising out of the ashes. Jim researched, designed and oversaw the construction

of another of his fanciful buildings - an effort that is gracefully distilled from a lifetime spent designing theatrical stage sets for the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, the Peninsula Players and American Folklore Theatre of late.

Carole's Byelorussian heritage provides the legend of a magical bird that sheds glowing feathers of light. The Maronek's Gallery provides visitors with the opportunity to capture one. Located in a very unique and eclectic barn that Jim recreated from several pre-existing structures, it features a silo with a glass roof. "Ellison Wonderland" provides visitors with an opportunity to see a history of the design projects and the latest fine art paintings which have been created by the multi-talented artist, Jim Maronek.

His latest stage set designs on display include plans, drawings and models for the [Peninsula Players](#) upcoming musical "Cabaret," running from August 2 - 20. In addition, there is a display of his current designs for "See Jane Vote" at [American Folklore Theatre](#), as well as other recent stage designs.

Jim Maronek has been connected with The Peninsula Players since 1950, as both a designer and as a member of their Board of Directors. He currently chairs the Theatre Renovation Committee. The Boldt Company recently completed the new stage and pavilion at The Peninsula Players, with architectural services by Scott Georgeson of Holabird and Root. Maronek says that among the many new amenities, The Players theatre will feature comfortable seats for the first time in seventy years! He provides a reminder of the old, uncomfortable seating on display in his Gallery - along with an opportunity for donors to place their name on new chairs.



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The "Firebird" cottage was built by Ellison Bay Construction, LLC and a number of other talented individuals. Maronek's spectacular wall mural paintings grace the interior rooms.



Silver Poplar Studios was established as an artists' retreat in the 1940's. The log portion of the main house was one of northern Door County's first buildings, dating from the 1850's. With several guest cottages converted from turn-of-the-century farm buildings, the heritage of hosting artists and their friends continues.

There are acres of woods and meadows to enjoy with Garrett Bay and the Door Bluff Headlands County Park within walking distance. Since peaceful nature is the main attraction, you will find a refreshing absence of radios and TV's. There is no

smoking in the buildings and pets are not permitted. In keeping with a sensible Door County cottage tradition, guests are expected to furnish their own towels, pillowcases and bed sheets. Blankets and pillows are provided. Guests, who are sympathetic to the rustic, quiet, artistic quality of the area, and their responsible children, are always welcome. The Maronek's eclectic estate at "Ellison Wonderland" is often used to host memorable and distinctive weddings.

*Regular gallery hours are from 1 to 4 PM on Fridays and Saturdays from June 23 through late September or by appointment... or by good luck. The gallery is located at 1519 E Door Bluff Road in Ellison Bay. Open house hours on Saturday, June 17 are from 1 to 6 PM. Find out more on-line at www.SilverPoplar.com or call **920.854.2106**.*

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