

Artist will exhibit at town's Train Station

By Diane Lilli
Staff Writer

Glen Ridge artist Lori Loebelsohn will open her first solo show at the rotating gallery located in the train station on Tuesday. The free show will run through April 30, and is open to the public.

The artist has titled her show "Life Cycle Portraits," and hopes to offer viewers an intriguing new way to perceive major life events.

"Mostly, this is a focus of my current work, which is on major life-cycle events in a person's life," she said. "I document them in a creative way."

Loebelsohn reaches deep into her own history to create unusual and provocative pieces of art, which she believes are very relevant to her own small town.

Although Loebelsohn is a native of Brooklyn, she fell in love with Glen Ridge after falling out of love with the Lone Star State. And it all started on a blind date.

"A friend from Brooklyn, who is now godparent to our children, introduced us," she said. "We both knew right away. This was it."

After their marriage, it wasn't long before Loebelsohn found herself packing up and moving.

"I never wanted to leave Brooklyn," she said. "But David, my husband, did, and he got a professorship job in Houston. We went there, and I really didn't like it very much. That's how my husband took me to the suburbs. He took me to Texas first, and then New Jersey really looked good to me."

Loebelsohn found herself immediately attracted to Glen Ridge due to

its charming homes and gas-lit streets.

"I love the houses here," she said. "They are wonderful. I like the schools. And, I've met some really nice people. It's funny. A lot of them are ex-patriots from Brooklyn."

Working as both an illustrator for books and as a learning specialist at Montclair Kimberly Academy, Loebelsohn still found time for her great passion: art.

It was through her work as an illustrator that the artist created one of her favorite pieces, in 1994.

"This was the very first one I did of this type," she said. "I had just illustrated this woman's book. She has a beautiful apartment on the Upper East Side, and it's all decorated in early American traditional furniture. There was this big air-conditioning unit in the window. It was ugly. So, I created a screen to cover it."

Loebelsohn not only covered the ugly appliance, but also painted a personalized portrait of the subject with her husband. She incorporated parts of their unique personalities as a quilter might, stitching together squares through the medium of paint.

"They are a funny couple," she said. "He was challenged to run the marathon, and had never run before, ever. Within a year, he ran the marathon, so that was one of his squares. I also painted an image of big shoes and another of small shoes. This represents the secret symbols of who they are. Shoes represent the fact not only that he has really big feet, and she has small feet. It also shows how they are opposites."

Loebelsohn expects to present 15 to 20 works of art in the show. Her



Glen Ridge artist Lori Loebelsohn will present a display of her work in a solo exhibit to open on Tuesday at the Glen Ridge Train Station. She is shown here with one of her creations.

life-cycle theme will include birth announcements, bar mitzvahs, and wedding ketubah, the Jewish wedding contract.

"I am matting and framing the works as we speak," she said. "Taking personal and universal symbols, and sort of commingling them in a very decorative way is my style."

"My medium is rag board, or illustration board. I use a wash, a water-based opaque water color. It is very highly pigmented, so the colors are very vivid, luminous and beautiful."

As well as her work as an artist, Loebelsohn has become involved in local charitable events in Glen Ridge.

"I've donated art work for our community causes," she said. "I

donated for the Susan B. Koman in Glen Ridge, and the ambulance. Glen Ridge needed a new ambulance, so I helped raise money by donating a piece of art, and they sold it. I feel like it's a nice thing to do something for the town."

Erica Bleiberg, a Glen Ridge client and friend of Loebelsohn's, finds the artwork moving and personal.

"I think she is so unique," Bleiberg said. "What attracted me to her work is the story she tells. Her work is really celebratory of whoever she is representing. She has a style that made me envision what I was looking for at the time. I wanted something to commemorate my daughter's bat mitzvah. Her piece hangs in my dining room.

On the day of the bat mitzvah itself, we had it displayed outside the sanctuary on an easel."

Loebelsohn looks at her gift as part talent, part genetics. The artist has a twin sister who is a successful decorative painter and mural artist. Even her mother worked in a highly creative field.

"My mother had been a successful fashion illustrator for Vogue magazine and Bergdorf Goodman," she said. "She was also a teacher at Parsons. She worked when I was little. She had a studio in the city."

Asked if her father had also been an artist, Loebelsohn laughed and said, "Oh no, he was a police officer."