

The pandemic has wrought many challenges, and for Italian artist Vittoria Chierici, who ended up having to stay in Eastport during the winter and spring rather than return to her country, that challenge became an opportunity for her to explore her art in new ways.

Chierici has been dividing her time between Eastport, New York City and Milan, Italy, for the last two years. She had planned to return to Italy in March. The pandemic changed everything. "I had an appointment in Rome, but I couldn't go. Everything fell apart," Chierici says. In the middle of February Italy was considered the hot spot of the health crisis. "I was very concerned about my sisters, my niece and nephew, my aunt." She talked with them on the phone every day. "But at the same time I felt a certain kind of joy at the challenge of having to rethink my work."

While Chierici had lost her "triangle" of work and social life among the three places, she felt lucky to be in Eastport where she had the space to think, to create and to be safe. "I felt more free," she says. "There were no more borders in my work despite the real borders closed."

Chierici works on multiple projects at a time, taking breaks from one to focus on another. While in Eastport during 2018 she began her Leonardo drawing that is now the focus of a pop-up show being held in downtown Eastport for the month of August. It's part of a larger project she created to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death in 2019, a marker that was celebrated around the world by artists, cultural institutions

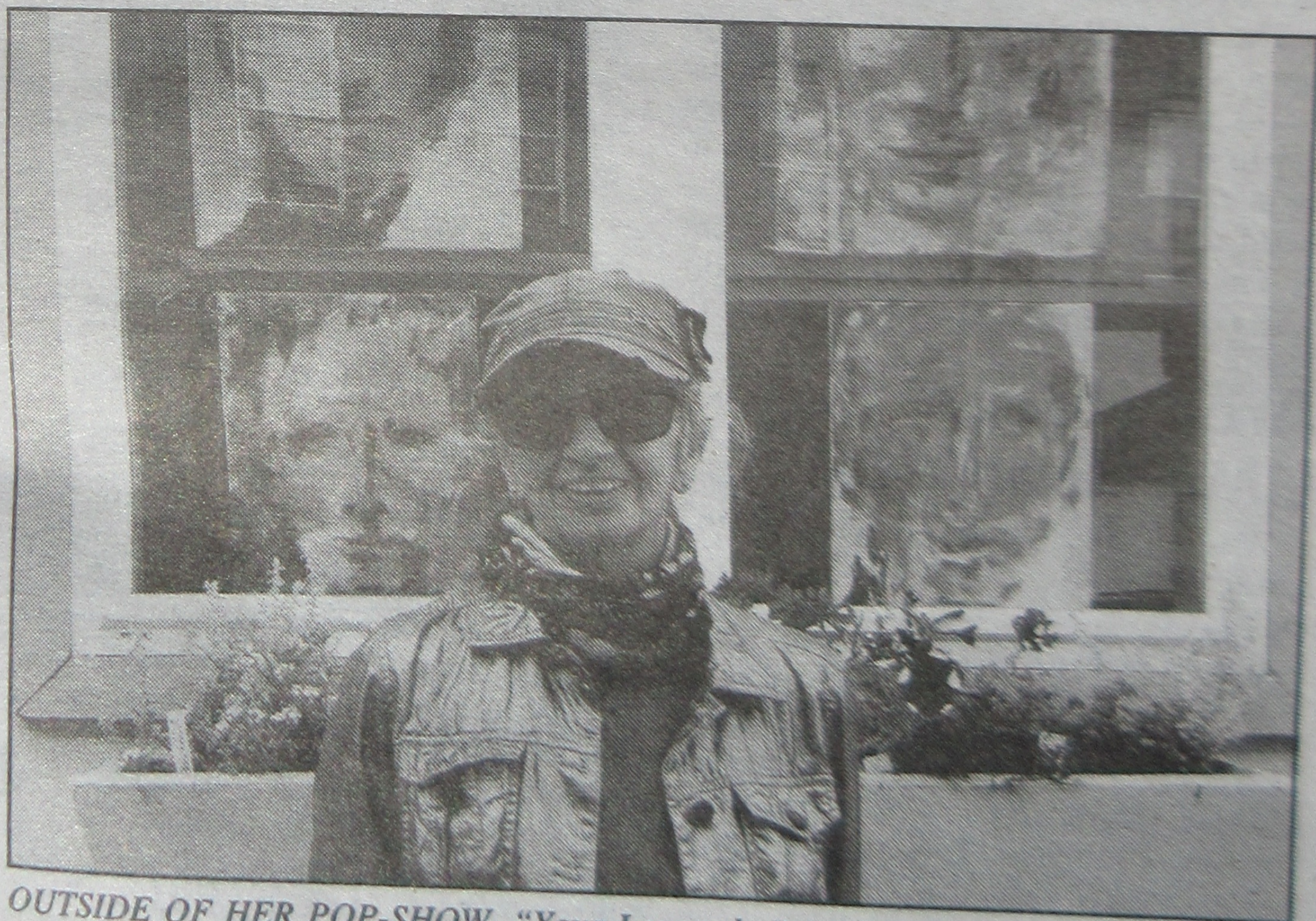
Her art project was shown in New York City and in Italy, and there are plans for it to go to England in the future. But for the Eastport pop-up, with work started during the early months of the pandemic and finished in May, she returned to her 2018 drawing imagining da Vinci as a young man.

Using her portable projector, Chierici made 16 small paintings based on that first portrait. Each is different, with varying colors, highlights and tones of light and dark. Chierici is known as a colorist and works to a degree in abstractions. With the Leonardo work for Eastport she thought, "Why not paint in the so-called traditional way, but also experiment because we've found out [with the pandemic] that there is no such thing as a traditional way. That belongs to the 20th century. The 21st century has to be wide open."

She adds, "In a way I couldn't have had this thought if I hadn't been in Eastport during the pandemic."

"Your Leonardo" is open on Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 2-4 p.m. at 49 Water Street, the former site of the Eat Local Eastport shop at The Commons. To visit, masks, physical distancing and a limited number of people at one time are required. Chierici is finding the experience a revelation. Usually her works hang in galleries and she rarely interacts with the public. "People are coming in. They like it." She adds, "It's really fun."

For more information visit <<http://www.vittoriachierici.com>> and look under proposals with a click on the Leonardo image.



**OUTSIDE OF HER POP-SHOW, "Your Leonardo,"** in downtown Eastport is Italian artist Vittoria Chierici, who was unable to return to Italy during the winter and spring because of the pandemic and turned her time in Eastport into an exploration of her art. (Lora Whelan photo)