



ECCENTRIC PORTRAITS

September 9 - October 16, 2011

BYRDCLIFFE Kleinert/James Center for the Arts

Gallery Hours / Friday - Sunday, 12 - 6pm

Opening Reception / Saturday, Sept. 10, 4 - 6pm

Curators Talk / Sunday, October 9, 3pm

Curated by Nancy Azara and Sylvia Leonard Wolf.

www.byrdcliffe.org | 845.679.2079 | 36 Tinker Street, Woodstock

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Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild, Woodstock, NY

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ECCENTRIC PORTRAITS STATEMENTS

Barbara Bachner

From my beginnings as a portrait and figure artist, color has been my primary source, the first decision I make as a painter. Whether translating a present visual image or letting my method and process develop the work, as here in "Geisha and Mr. X," it continues to be an unfailing muse. The result often contains both elements, strong enough reference to realism, abstract enough to mediate between the two practices.

Elizabeth Bisbing

My work addresses the concepts of the domestic and identity. These paper dolls also include the element of play. The medium of painted paper collage has a childlike aspect to it, in this way; it suits my work that comes from the position of myself as a child. These paper dolls are based on that little girl. The doll – Little Betty Jane – has several outfits all based on family photographs of me. She is ready for the Easter parade and a trip to the beach. The myth created by the family photograph of me as a little girl has limited reach. We never see her (me) digging in the mud and eating mud meatballs.

Bette Blank

Bette Blank's exuberant and often humorous work reflects her unique vision of the world, drawing images and inspiration from popular culture and her own life. Her inventive use of words in many of the paintings adds a fresh perspective to the often familiar subject matter.

Didier Civil

The Haitian writer and journalist Aubelin Jolicoeur wrote extensively on French Caribbean art and literature, he was best known as the gossip columnist "Petit Pierre" in Graham Greene's novel of broken-down lives in 1960s Haiti, *The Comedians* (1966). He passionately loved Haiti and its people. "When Aubelin dies," Haitians used to say, "a part of Haiti will die too."

I was commissioned by the sponsoring organization to do a portrait of Aubelin Jolicoeur and I re-used the mold on commission by Arnaud Robert, a journalist and a filmmaker who visited my studio in Haiti and then brought it here to New York.

Lulu Ekiert

This portrait of a close friend is meant to commemorate a brief visit between the two of us and serve as a diagnostic tool of her mind-body state in that moment. Working quickly to outrun any trying, judgment, or projection on my part, what emerges is a unique expression of unconditional love, truth, and freedom.

Laura Elkins

Following a tour of the White House, soon after moving to Washington in 2000, I began *The White House Collection*, a series of self-portraits as First Ladies. Use of these international icons as a device for the self-portrait provides an inherent historical and political twist, which can be exploited to incorporate current, political, and even catastrophic events. In addition, the work maintains the personal, everywoman quality of the self-portrait by reflecting the quotidian, while questioning our notions of femininity, sexuality, and aging.

Rob van Erve

Rob van Erve's work has been described as a walk through a children's book or as a look at the planet from above.

Peter Franceschetti

A "Whiter Shade of Pale" depicts the pallor of one who has seen a ghost - a foreshadowing of what he is to become coupled with the realization of what he will never be. A nihilistic rendering of "self" reaching into the cosmic void - only to hear the echo of his own cry.

Brenda Goodman

In this body of work *Self-portraits 2003-2007*, my desire is to address concerns I'm facing as a 64 year old woman and artist, and through the process of painting myself, extend the parameters of my specific personal issues to tap basic universal emotions and conditions. I want to remove the veils between myself and the viewer, and communicate the palpability of needs met, of needs unmet, of needs never met, of rage, of fear, of vulnerability, of aging, and finally of mortality. My work is not about irony.

Martha Hughes

What is eccentric to some is not necessarily to others; many meanings can be read in a face, or none at all, which is the pleasure of painting them.

Jason Lujan

At a rehearsal for a Native American dance performance, I asked a friend to try wearing a piece of Japanese Samurai armor. I was interested in transposing Western and Eastern traditional visualities, and in this case crossing gender lines by equipping a female with armor customarily worn by males.

Eva Melas

Open to interpretation by the viewer, the portrait is inspired by Surrealism. The main themes I see are: political censorship, negative sexual relations, and the woman's voice, unheard. The fruit is symbolic and celebratory of the inner power women hold.

Ann Pachner

My intention for the work "For Kali", which is a variable grouping of 14 falling heads, was to embody a process and truth that is very layered and paradoxical. In acting out, instead of following an intuitive process that would be translated through the physicality of making, I was able to access an energy that unfolded a process of letting go or purification.

Michelle Stone

My portraits have layers of textured, acrylic skin that symbolize the depth and complexity inherent in our nature. Our inner self is at times hidden under a façade and controlled, but sometimes with or without our permission erupts and is exposed. I search for, play with, twist and reveal some of the mystery.

Virginia Tyler

Nana Safo lives in Bu'oho village (also called Stone Village) in Ghana, West Africa. His parents cannot afford the shoes, uniform, and book bag required for him to go to school, so he goes to work. At 8 years old, he uses a small sledgehammer to break about 2 pans full of gravel per day. The gravel is used for construction. Nana makes about \$1.20 per day. If boys and girls in his village cannot afford to go to school, they start pounding gravel at 8-14 years old.

SMART ART / Paul Smart

Art as a healing force

We've got one of those big cultural weekends coming, reminiscent of the old Arts Consortium bashes of a few years back, with a host of major gallery openings all around Woodstock and the area on Saturday, September 10. And somehow, the idea of art's role as a healing force seems to have played a role in many of the curatorial choices that will be on view. Talk about an appropriate way of drawing folks out after the damned rains and wind of recent weeks.

The Byrdcliffe Kleinert/James Center has what's promising to be a delightfully eclectic demonstration of art's vast interpretive ability, as well as the whole range of emotions and self-images that see us through often difficult lives, in its new *Eccentric Portraits* show. It's been put together by artist Nancy Azara, long head of The Guild's exhibitions committee, and noted appraiser Sylvia Leonard Wolf, a major component behind the ascendancy of the Woodstock Artists Association and Museum's Permanent Collection in the past decade. As a result of both women's deep roots in the region's cultural scene, and high aesthetic standards, the quality of what's being shown, and those showing, is a tonic.

The goal of *Eccentric Portraits* is to match the



Eccentric Portraits at the Kleinert.

ways in which the Woodstock community "exalts independent, non-conformist, outside-the-box thinking" with 32 artists "who have created works that deviate from the norm and illustrate a variety of imaginative interpretations of 'portraiture'." Among those showing are many well-known local artists, and some new "faces": Barbara Bachner, Elizabeth Bisbing, Bette Blank, Yale Epstein, Lulu Ekiert, Laura Elkins, Peter Franceschetti, Reiko Fujinami, Verna Gillis, Bo Gehring, Brenda Goodman, Arthur

Hammer, Amy Hill, Martha Hughes, Nicole Jeffords, Lenny Kislin, Polly Law, Jason Lujan, Mari Lyons, David Marrell, Eva Melas, Ann Pachner, Alan Siegel, Eleanor Steffen, Melinda Stickney-Gibson, Michelle Stone, John Tomlinson, Virginia Tyler, Carl Van Brunt, Rob Van Erve, and Catherine Welshman. Expect a crowded, invigorated opening crowd... as well as a bit of fun as audiences try to match each other

to portraits, and figure out what's autobiographical or not. The exhibit stays up, on weekends, through October 16.

Over at WAAM, the main juried show this month is being overseen, and selected, by Brian Wallace, Curator at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Fine Art at SUNY New Paltz and arguably the best



Artwork by Joseph Arthur at Varga.

authority on world-class contemporary art working in the region these days. A downstairs show of small works is being juried by Henrietta Mantooh, a former journalist with an eye for adventurous work, while other exhibits throughout the building will include a Youth Exhibition Space (YES!) collection of works by area homeschoolers, a Member's Wall show of works by Lucette Runsdorf, and a solo show of fabulous new paintings, colorfully abstract and layered, by C. Michael Hunt of New York and New Kingston, whose wife Ruth Hardinger had a fantastic solo show of her sculpture at WAAM earlier this year.

C. Michael Norton's work, showing in the solo gallery of the Woodstock Artists Association & Museum for the coming month, has long mixed elements of the decorative, hints of the figurative, and an abstract painter's love for pure explosive shapes and color. But there's something about his latest works of the past few years that seems brighter, more hopeful than all that came before. Could it be his use of yellows? The hint of three-dimensionality at play in his use of various acrylic planes on his sumptuous linen surfaces, which critics suggest is a reference to his many years as a renowned sculptor? AS with so many of WAAM's solo shows this year, we expect it to reach beyond its middle gallery confines and suffuse the Main Gallery selections being made by Brian Wallace with an added edge. And knowing Wallace, some points of reference for his own work jurying. It all stays up, for such contemplation, through October 9.

Similarly colorful and ecstatic, Christina Varga will be showing a series of new paintings by Joseph Arthur, a graffiti-like painter and renowned singer/songwriter whose art works have been touted on his own Museum of Modern Arthur website, and who's presently touring in support of his acclaimed new album, *The Graduation Ceremony*. Arthur will be performing an acoustic set of his music with a plate passed for donations to aid the current "Helping Hands of NY" effort to benefit Phoenicia victims of Hurricane Irene.

Arthur first gained fame as a Peter Gabriel musical discovery in the mid-1990s, after which he became known for his soundtrack contributions to the likes of *Dawson's Creek*, *The OC*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Scrubs*, *Shrek 2*, *The Bourne Identity* and *The American Pie* trilogy. But he's always seen himself as a painter first...albeit one whose aesthetic is entirely self-taught. "I was struck by the strength and visceral quality of Jo's paintings," Gabriel has said of his protégé. "They seem to connect to Expressionism, Art Brut, Basquiat and the Graffiti movement. I remember encouraging him to take the painting seriously and it has been great to watch its evolution." Andy Warhol's approach to art is an ideal for me," Arthur has said of his own drive. "Make art, and while people are deciding whether they like it or not, make more art."