



# LINES *from the* LEAGUE

Student and Alumni Newsletter

Winter 2011-2012



# Letter from the Executive Director

From the first day I came to the League back in September 1979, and sat down to draw in Studio 1 & 2, I knew it was a special place. At that time it was difficult to define exactly what it was that attracted me, but there was an aura, a sense of comfort, of being welcome and at the same time a feeling of excitement and the awareness of the journey ahead. I was going to learn how to draw and paint. I had suddenly found my life's purpose in one brief moment of absolute clarity.

I've always believed that the League has sustained an environment where moments like that can occur for anyone to experience. It invites fellow classmates to share in the struggles and triumphs that people outside the realm of art don't normally lend too much sympathy to. Art seems to erase the usual awkward communication that precedes the establishment of most social relationships. At the League, we are all comrades in arms, and in spite of the differences we have in the aesthetic philosophies that have directed our paths, there is a much stronger common cause: to become artists—and it's easier to bond with those who share such a noble ambition.

I truly believe that if a genealogist did a thorough study of couples that met at the Art Students League, it would turn into a multi-volume set. Passionate people are naturally attracted to each other, and who is more passionate than an artist? It makes sense. I myself met my wife, Silvia Franco, here at the League. Silvia is from Spain and she's a brilliant carver. We actually met before I was appointed Executive Director of the League. I was invited by a longtime sculpture student, and someone very much part of the League, Joe Puglisi, to attend Jonathan Shahn's class holiday party back in 1999. I was introduced to Silvia and well, as they say, the rest is history. We've been very happily married for six years.

With all this talk about romance, one might think the League is the best place to go to get stung by Cupid's arrow, but it's important to note that nothing could be further from the truth. The relationships that have occurred at the League happened because there was a desire from each partner to support a commitment to making art that is not easily understood by those not fully engaged in that process. The rewards of learning the process of creating art can lead almost anywhere.



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## Commentary Welcome

*Lines from the League:*

*Student and Alumni Newsletter*

welcomes letters to the editor

as well as comments, suggestions,

and corrections. Send correspondence

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## 2011–12 Winter & Spring Exhibitions

### Gallery

*Holiday Show & Sale*

December 5–23

*Class Concours*

January 2–May 18

**Grants Competition Week**

May 21–25

**Gallery closed**

May 28–June 1

*Red Dot Exhibit*

June 4–15

*Merit Scholarships*

June 25–July 13

### Office

*Selected Works from Studio 6 Workshops*

January & May

*Model to Monument 2011–12: Maquettes*

February 6–March 14

*Cross Currents at the League, c. 1930*

March 14–April 15

### Cover images, clockwise from top left:

David Newton, *Found Balls*

John A. Varriano, *Francesca*

Elizabeth Torak, *Feast of Venus* (detail)

Melesio Mendoza, *The Mask*

David A. Leffel, *Love for Three Oranges*

Diane Leon, *Hot Sand*



# I Look to the League Itself as a Mentor

by Emmet Barak

*At age 21, Emmet is one of the youngest League students ever (along with Norman Rockwell) to have work purchased for the Permanent Collection.*

Whether it was kid's classes at the Met or making crafts with my mother, art has always been the part of me that made sense. It was around the time I attended Edward R. Murrow High School when I started thinking about art as a possible profession. Since then I don't think I've gone without some sort of art class, including a stint at SUNY Purchase.

I consider myself blessed that at a young age I struggled to master classical drawing. While I'm far from saying I've mastered it, I've come to a place where I can say I no longer fear it, and that benefitted me so greatly when I found the medium that speaks the most to me—sculpture.

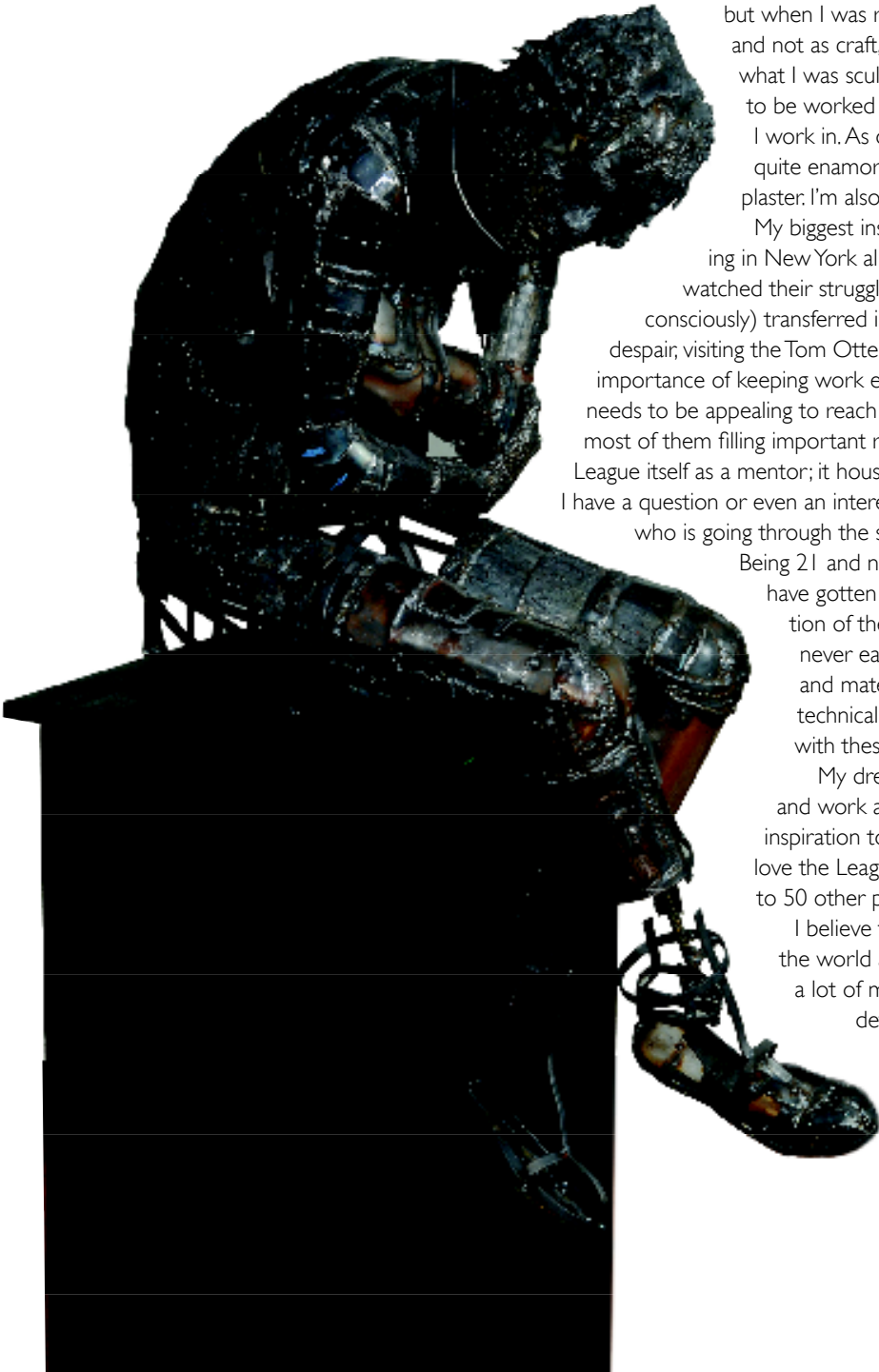
For many years I had all these ideas without the talent to represent them, but when I was reintroduced to clay and plaster as a classical medium and not as craft, it truly invigorated me. If there was a problem with what I was sculpting, I could touch it and feel that something needed to be worked more. And this had a positive effect on the other media I work in. As of right now, welding steel is all I can think about. I'm quite enamored, but I can never forget my roots in sculpture: clay and plaster. I'm also eager to start wood carving.

My biggest inspirations are the things around me. For example, living in New York all my life I have always been around the homeless and watched their struggle. That pain and anguish was easily (maybe even subconsciously) transferred into my life-size steel homeless man. As a balance to the despair, visiting the Tom Otterness sculpture garden in Battery Park has taught me the importance of keeping work enjoyable. No matter how strong the message, your work needs to be appealing to reach the viewer. I have had many mentors over the years, most of them filling important roles in a short amount of time. Nowadays I look to the League itself as a mentor; it houses so many amazingly smart and talented people that if I have a question or even an interest, there is someone who can help me out or someone who is going through the same process who I can collaborate with.

Being 21 and not in college, I believe I'm doing pretty well for myself. I have gotten my first life-size sculpture into the Permanent Collection of the Art Students League—no small task. That said, life is never easy for an artist and a lot of my money goes to supplies and materials (rent is another story). Work-study, working as a technical instructor, and working security jobs at the League help with these expenses.

My dream would be to have a studio where I could weld and work as big as any project felt it should be—even if I got the inspiration to work on a figure that was two stories tall. As much as I love the League, it's hard working big while sharing the space with up to 50 other people.

I believe that art has given me the patience and the eye to see the world around me. Being part of the internet generation, I think a lot of my age group skips past nature and misses the smaller details that contain such beauty. As an artist I have learned to slow down and hunt these treasures out to inspire my work. I think it's most important to look at my work first from an aesthetic standpoint, decide whether the visuals pull you in or speak to you at some basic core emotion, then break it down and pull out meanings and metaphors. 🌱



*Left: Emmet Barak, *Sleeping Vagrant*, PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THE ART STUDENTS LEAGUE OF NEW YORK*



# Abstractions Based On Academic Drawings; Community Service Based On Dreams

by João Henrique Brandão

Art has been part of my life ever since I can remember. My first art training came from my parents. My family runs an art and antiques restoration business so I grew up looking at artwork. Imagine a house and studio together with paintings everywhere. Some of my earliest and most vivid memories are of colorful paintings and oil paint tubes. It was very much like living inside a museum.

Coming from a family of artists, I eagerly absorbed paintings, statuary, books on art, palettes and tubes of paint and gradually learned the commitment and discipline essential to art making. My father, whose intellect and passion for writing has shaped my life, inspired and sparked my interest in art, and taught me to always steadily pursue my goals. Living in this environment, learning art was a natural process of assimilation and absorption. I think I can say I have always been an artist.

In 2007, I earned a degree in Painting from EMBAP (School of Music and Fine Arts of Paraná) in Curitiba, Brazil. While an undergraduate student I interned at the Oscar Niemeyer Museum in Curitiba, Brazil. One day the president of the museum walked into our office, saw one of my works that I had leaned against the wall and told my supervisor she liked it. She eventually bought three of my paintings and recommended me to an art residency at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation in Bethany, Connecticut. It was 2008 when I got a phone call from the Chief Curator at the Albers Foundation to invite me for the residency. My artistic journey was about to have a new destination: the United States.

For me, the human figure is the basis of visual expression. Working the figure from life is the vehicle through which one develops his understanding of design, composition, line and color. Within my artistic repertoire are mixed media paintings that, although seemingly abstract, are rooted in academic drawings. I think it's also important to keep your mind open to new techniques and explore different interpretations of the same subject. To expand your vocabulary is to create a more cohesive paint discourse. An artist is like a one-person orchestra; learning about all the instruments, or at least having an appreciation for them, will enrich your visual music.



João Henrique Brandão, *Look Good*, PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THE ART STUDENTS LEAGUE OF NEW YORK

My preferred medium first and foremost is painting, because that's what I like to do. Some of my interests include abstract work and figurative or representational work, collage and assemblage, watercolor, mixed media sculpture, drawing, printmaking—anything I can get my hands on. Art is something I have always done, it's part of me. I don't feel that I have a choice to not do it.

Money is an issue for emerging artists and I'm no exception. Art fairs are a great way for unknown and non-represented artists to

produce income but it is imperative to keep in mind the inherent risks that are involved. Some venues take advantage of artists by not making investments towards efficient marketing. I sold work at the Copenhagen Art Fair and have a friend who has successfully sold work at the Oslo Art Fair. Europe tends to be a good niche but I believe that the emerging market nations are a better bet at the moment. The economic growth has ignited new initiatives, accelerated the art business and created a new breed of buyers.

I have always been engaged in volunteer projects and community work. While a student at EMBAP I participated in several volunteer projects throughout Curitiba. In 2005, I was a drawing instructor in the state prison in Curitiba. And in 2006, I created Colorilha, a workshop with the fishing community of Ilha do Mel (Honey Island) aimed at using art to generate income for an ex-fisherman community. This served as the seeds to catalyze the low-income population's handcraft techniques, so they could later produce handmade souvenirs for sale. Last summer I was in Detroit with the Brooklyn based non-profit organization Artefacting to participate in one of their missions. My dream project is to gather people together to create an art school where children can experience art and low income students can have access to art education.

Art has taught me that life is more important than art. Everything can be art, but art can't be everything. 🌱

## Artefacting

Artefacting is a global social arts project dedicated to stimulating community cohesion, dialogue and social justice. Collective members Alex White-Mazzarella and Arne De Knecht, and supporting artist João Henrique Brandão, participated in a six-week immersion into Detroit's Motor City in the summer of 2011. White-Mazzarella and De Knecht combined their urban planning backgrounds with arts and a desire to use storytelling to connect peoples and cultures. Artefacting went to Detroit to bolster community-led revitalization through inclusive public art, and promote social justice by holding workshops and recording the pulse of the people of Detroit's East Side.

De Knecht and visual artist White-Mazzarella have been processing and articulating the Detroit Black Bottom neighborhood's current state and the local community's efforts to transition to a new future. The project included the public art SPIRE: Beacon of Hope, in which Detroit residents contributed their own personal flags (any material, size, or color) as a peaceful act of regeneration at an abandoned and charred house with recent history of murder. Further artwork, photography and video documentation was exhibited at Local Project in Long Island City, Queens in November 2011.

[www.brandaostudio.com](http://www.brandaostudio.com)

# It Was a Good Sell: Conversations with a Pastel Artist

by Rudy Sagastume

“What should I wear to this thing?” asks Sam Goodsell, established pastel artist, long-time League student and member, and the subject of articles in periodicals like *The Pastel Journal* and *American Artist Magazine*.

Sam has been studying at the League since his teenage years, as he candidly revealed in his May 2010 interview in the SundayArts profile of the League on Channel 13. His pastel *Evelyn* is in the League’s Permanent Collection. On this day he’s setting up his new website, redesigning his business cards, and figuring out how to dress for an upcoming reception. Sam has earned numerous awards and honors throughout his career, but there’s something a bit more special about this show.

“Oh man, I haven’t been in a suit in over 15 years!” he exclaims, wryly smiling at this realization. Sam has good reason to be overthinking his outfit; within a few days he’ll be attending an event to which fine artists aspire—the opening reception for his first acquisitions by a museum. Beginning in October 2011, the University of Southern California’s Fisher Museum of Art is exhibiting three pastel works purchased for its permanent collection. The pieces, *Andrea*, *Lost In Thought*, and *Tyrone*, perfectly demonstrate Sam’s mastery of pastel, an elusive medium that is richly intertwined with the history of the Art Students League.

William Merritt Chase used pastels during his tenure as instructor at the League at the turn of the 20th century and that choice was carried on by his students, most notably Georgia O’Keeffe. Other instructors like Robert Brackman and Robert Phillip used pastels to develop studies. Current instructor Harvey Dinnerstein has used pastels to create works of art that are as “serious” as his oil paintings. It’s no coincidence that Sam, longtime class monitor for Mr. Dinnerstein, took up pastels.

I look at the images of his work as he uploads them to the web. Each is equally distinct and evokes not only an appreciation of the artist’s skill involved but also a sense of curiosity about the subjects. “When can I meet these people?” I find myself wondering.

Sizing up Sam, I realize that his sense of style is similar to that of his subjects. Some wear clothing that match his—cool jeans, leather boots or shoes that shine—but overall there is a common feeling that unifies them. Whether standing or seated, the models have a certain soulful attitude to their pose,



Above (Sam Goodsell’s pastels, from top): *Tyrone*; *Andrea*  
Right: Sam Goodsell at the USC Fisher Museum with his painting, *Andrea*

enhanced by Sam’s palette. Colors are used in a blazingly high key, sometimes as part of the subject’s clothing. Other times the backgrounds are alive with vibrant colors like in *Threshold*, a piece that was featured on the cover of *American Artist Magazine* in 2008.

“This couldn’t have come at a better time for me.” Sam’s eyebrows arch in relief, thinking about the last few months that led up to the Fisher Museum purchase. It began last Christmastime at the *Holiday Show* that turns the League’s Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery into a hot spot for art buyers. Sam sold a number of his works at the show. I remember visits to the gallery and always seeing yet another new pastel hanging on the wall.

One buyer ended up hanging her Goodsell, *Kennitta*, in her Los Angeles apartment. At a dinner party, one of the guests was drawn to the work. “Who did this?” she asked. The guest was Selma Holo, director of the USC Fisher Museum of Art. The museum soon acquired Goodsell’s work. According to museum curator Ariadni A. Liokatis:

“We are delighted with the USC Fisher Museum of Art’s latest acquisition of three compelling and beautifully rendered pastel drawings by talented New York artist Sam Goodsell. We came across Goodsell’s work shortly before opening our current exhibition *Posing Beauty* in African American Culture, curated by Deborah Willis, and we were struck by the fact that Goodsell’s works memorialize the idea of beauty and resonate with the concepts of the show. The artist’s works are currently on display in a small gallery adjacent to the main exhibition, and bring gravitas to the *Posing Beauty* show. The acquisition of these three new works also strengthens the museum’s collection of portraiture, which range from 16th century European to American contemporary works.”

“God bless wthe *Holiday Show*!” Sam exclaims. “I mean it’s all come full circle. Right before this happened I was



wondering how to get extra hours at my job. I mean the landlord was knocking on my door just a few days before this came through. He wasn’t banging the door, but he was knocking!”

But then, Sam made some good sells. 🎨

[www.samgoodsell.com](http://www.samgoodsell.com)

# Painting the Universe, Starting with Japanese History

by Satoshi Okada

For the artist profiles in this issue of *Lines*, artists answered a series of questions from the editors. In his responses, international student Satoshi Okada cited his friends and family as inspirations, and expressed thanks to Frank Harrison and instructor Harvey Dinnerstein for helping him gain admission to the international students program on Satoshi's fourth attempt.

Satoshi explained that "more than becoming an 'artist,' I simply want to be able to draw and paint" so that he can render subjects from Japanese history. "That has been my interest since I was a kid," Satoshi wrote.

Satoshi's simple desire to draw and paint led to his *Self Portrait of Janitor at the Art Students League* being purchased by the League in 2010.

As mentors, Satoshi named Diego Catalan Amilivia, Harvey Dinnerstein, Dan Gheno, Michael Grimaldi, Frank Harrison, Akiko Hoshino, Yuka Imata, Akihiro Ito, Beñat Iglesias Lopes, Perez Maximo, Kazuya Morimoto, Laurence Pinckney, Marcelo Pablo Pittari, Brandon Soloff, Takashi Uesugi and Costa Vavagiakis.

It was, however, Satoshi's expansive answer to the question, "If money were not an issue, what would be your dream?" that really provided a look into the heart of this contemplative artist.

"This is the question I thought about all these four years at the ASL. But I didn't have enough money. If I had money I would start tomorrow.

"We international students who are taking the certificate program attend class at least 25 hours in a week. We have to sign in and out every single day. If we miss many, we will be

kicked out of the U.S. Taking just one major means we cannot apply for some scholarships in ASL. After four years of study, we just get one piece of paper when we graduate. No show. No ceremony. Nothing.

"If I had money: I would want to have a place to do a show for international students who graduate every year.

"I would go back to my country to meet my friends and family.

"I would study in Europe, especially in Italy, England, Russia, Spain and France. I would travel, paint, sketch, draw, do copying at museums, and visit every friend who already went back to Europe. I have checked schools in Italy, so I'd go there first.

"Last summer I went to Italy and made about 60 pages of pen sketches in 12 days. This summer I participated in the Hudson River Fellowship to do landscapes. I made 80 small paintings, 17 drawings, 25 pen sketches, and many thumbnails in 25 days. I want to spend at least a year doing this. I want to keep traveling around the world, and try to make at least 1,000 paintings in a year.

"My main subject is Japanese history, especially the age of Civil Wars in Japan. So, I would buy Japanese armor and weapons from that age, hire models and horses, as much as I need. I would go to each battlefield with models that wear period armor and paint almost the same historical situation from life.

"I would also make a school like the ASL



in Japan, where all people could study without going for a degree or paying a lot for tuition, and with no discrimination against race, age, and disability. Art school in Japan is too expensive without support from somebody, and colleges cost more than art schools. Then I would make a foundation for exchange students. I hope I would be able to send students to the ASL

and send my instructors and my friends to another country as exchange students. Even if it would be for a short time, they would meet a lot of people from different countries, and cultures, and learn a lot.

"I would buy an island and build a huge studio and regular house. Eat meals three times a day.

"I would buy paint and brushes. Do paintings. Grow trees, cut down branches and carve wood. Paint sunsets.

"I would go to the moon, look at the earth, and paint the universe."

Satoshi concluded his submission this way: "My work is not cool or funny and doesn't have difficult concepts. But if you feel what I feel from my work without any words, that is what I want. Thanks for reading." 🌟

*Above: Satoshi Okada, Self Portrait of Janitor at the Art Students League, PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THE ART STUDENTS LEAGUE OF NEW YORK*  
*Below from left, Satoshi Okada's paintings: Coming, Self Portrait as a Farmer; Maria; John*





# Meriting the Nabeela George Scholarship

by Celia B. Rabinowitz

*"Not a person who ever met Nabeela George, however briefly, could not be touched by her warmth, beauty, kindness, and her incredible courage under such great physical and emotional odds. Her struggles are almost too painful to imagine [at one year of age, Nabeela's right leg and left arm became paralyzed, leaving her unable to walk], yet we all found such strength in her friendship. She took on our burdens and gave us confidence and wisdom to deal with the small dilemmas of our lives. By knowing her, it put the trivialities of our own lives in perspective, yet to her they were not trivial at all."* —Susan Steeg, Nabeela's friend

Growing up in New Jersey, I was always encouraged to pursue my talents by my mother. She studied at the Art Students League in the late 1940s and early 1950s and was a fashion illustrator and designer for Oleg Cassini. Her early death from breast cancer (she was 53; I was 17) left me with vivid memories and the fighting spirit to further my career. When I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2005, I saw my own ordeal as a sign from above that I was destined to relate and understand her situation on a much closer level. I create not only out of my own need and desire but as a tribute and honor to her. Her fight is now my fight. I simply refuse to give up, no matter how bad my situation gets.

After my mother's passing, I traveled to Israel for 4 years and studied at the Avni Institute of Fine Art. Once I returned to America I spent some time at the New York Academy of Fine Art, Cooper Union, F.I.T. School of Visual Arts, and Hunter College. In 1991, I began my studies here at the Art Students League, where I have devoted the majority of the past 20 years.

Even though I am currently studying sculpture with Anthony Antונים, an opportunity and experience that I will cherish forever, I am just

as connected with my new medium of clay as I am with any painting medium, whether it be gouache, watercolor, pastel, or oil.

Lately, I have been enjoying the art of Prismacolor markers. I express myself and my innate talents best through color. I am passionate about big, bold hues and high chroma. I try to do this even with what I choose to wear, including make-up. I must admit, fashion is one of my guilty pleasures. I am also, without a doubt, passionate about drawing, and love to use graphite and charcoal as well as ink. Some of my best nudes are in pen and ink. As long as I am engrossed in the arts, I find I have a voice that needs to be heard; and regardless of the medium I use, I feel connected.

The realities of choosing one area of the arts over another were just too complicated for me so I ended up doing many things, including working in an art gallery near Rockefeller Plaza, researching 19th and 20th century artists, and connecting the gallery to dealers, curators, and buyers. I also worked as an art instructor for a number of years in senior centers and communities. Later on I worked as an associate art director for an agency on Park Avenue.

I have always admired excellence in all of the arts—whether it's singing, dancing, painting, or just living. When I witness such excellence, I am more motivated than ever. This, by the way, was the real "drug" that helped me overcome my life-long depression.

Creating art, for me, has always been a reflection of inner determination and perseverance, transcending my own personal struggles and sufferings. I've learned that being an artist is all encompassing, and that one must truly live, and love, without fear or limitations, in order to create anything of real importance or significance. 🌟



*Above: Celia B. Rabinowitz  
Left: Celia B. Rabinowitz,  
Self Portrait: Survival 101*



# From Science Class Doodles to a Life in Art

by Bernard Zalon

I always liked the idea of being an artist, but never thought I could really be one because I didn't think that I had any talent. One day, in some science lecture hall, I started doodling abstract isometric perspective drawings in the margins of my notebook with the backside of a Parker 45 fountain pen, so I could get finer lines. Across the aisle I saw this guy taking notes with a black pen with a needle-like point. This was one of the first Rapidograph technical pens. I got one and went home to start doing more of these drawings with a T-Square and triangle. I remember thinking that if someone would just pay me to do this I'd be happy.

I didn't see this as a realistic possibility, so I went to architecture school. In the summer of 1971 my mother wanted me to get a job. I spent a day walking into every architecture office up and down Fifth and Madison Avenues. This was the last time I ever looked for a job. When I couldn't find one, I went out on the street and asked this girl selling plastic flowers how I could do that. She told me and that's what I did that summer. I really liked selling on the street. On Sunday afternoons I would run into this guy named Delbart outside of Central Park selling offset prints of his pen and ink drawings. He kind of impressed me and I kept running into him, even after I got my degree and got hired by one of my architecture professors. After three years I got sick of the job and of architecture. I sat myself down and decided that I'd be like Delbart. I'll make some more drawings, have them printed and sell them on the street. I figured I'd make my stand as an artist.

My style kind of developed over the years. Probably my biggest

inspiration was a combination of *Mad Magazine* and *The Twilight Zone*. After six years of selling offset prints I felt like I should find a more reputable medium. I thought maybe I'd do lithography since that's what an offset print kind of is. In July of 1981, I went to the Art Students League and they showed me some lithographs. I didn't think their look suited me, so I went across the hall into the etching studio. I had taken an etching course several years earlier at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, but I didn't get into it at the time. I did this time though. After all, an etching needle is kind of like a Rapidograph.

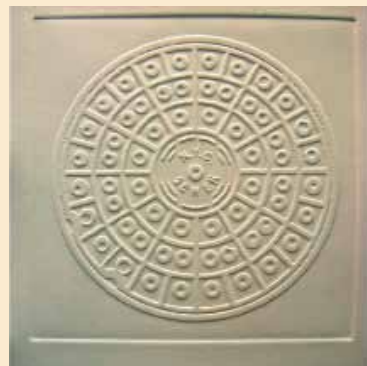
I make my living doing art shows around the country, and in-between I sell on the street in New York City. I like supporting myself like this. I make something and then I sell it. It's simple. It makes sense to me. And, I talk to dozens of people every day and I get compliments and money.

Oh yeah, I have a great John Lennon story. I plan on telling it at the reception for my one-man show at the Art Students League's Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery, if they ever decide to let me have one. 🙌



*Above:* Bernard Zalon

*Below, clockwise from left, Bernard Zalon's prints: Bicycle 3; Pebbles; The NYC Mandala; Tabula Rasa; Speed*





## Love at the League

*In our summer issue of Lines, we invited readers to submit their stories of “Love at the League.” The seven profiles that follow are the result of those submissions and other requests to known League lovers.*

*A recurring theme seems to be Frank Mason as Cupid. The profiles include current and former students, instructors, models, staff, and a former Board member—but everyone is an artist and lover.*

*Above: Antonio Canova, Cupid and Psyche, Musée du Louvre, Paris*

## A Brief History of the Courtship of Elizabeth Lichtenstein & Thomas Torak, *Thomas’s Version*



*Left: Thomas Torak, Cantaloupes and Grapes*

*Above, from left: Tomas (center) with students; Elizabeth*

I first met Elizabeth in Frank Mason’s class at the League. She was in her senior year of high school and I in my second year at the League. Although she went on to college, we would see each other every summer for the next four years at Mason’s landscape class in Vermont, then go our separate ways.

After college Elizabeth came back to the League and everything changed. We were already friends and I, being one of the seasoned members of the class, would offer advice to the younger student. Each lesson would become a little longer and a bit more flirtatious. I thought

this was great fun, but Elizabeth had other ideas. She was convinced I was the one and, unbeknownst to me, had a plan.

We were friends, not dating, but she found a dating loophole. Whenever she saw that I was about to leave class she would stop painting and ask where I was going. Oddly enough she was always about to go in the same direction, would I mind if she joined me? I preferred to walk as much as possible, so we spent many hours together over the next few days, weeks. . . months. This went on for two years (there were no stalking laws back then). Gradually the walks ended in dinner or a movie and I came to realize that we were more than friends, and were in fact dating.

We kept attending Mason’s class at the League and his landscape class every June in Vermont. It was there, at a landscape class party, that we shared our first kiss. We recently celebrated our 26th anniversary at our home in Vermont. . . after I returned from teaching my class at the League. 🍷

## On An Artistic Journey, John Doyle & Mitsue Komoriya

by John Doyle

We first met at the League office where I work. Since Mitsue was a foreign student from Japan she needed to sign in and out each day. So I got to see her. We were married in 2011.

I had the good fortune to study and work as a studio assistant with Frank Mason. I have been working on my own for several years, maintaining a studio in Union City. Mitsue continues her studies at the ASL and also paints in her home studio.

My biggest passion in art is early Renaissance Italian painting and sculpture, with a deep appreciation of the old masters and the Hudson River School of painting. Since she was a teenager, Mitsue has been

strongly influenced by Matisse, Picasso and many other modern masters.

We paint landscapes outdoors together through the summer and fall, sharing our love for nature in upstate New York. We look forward to traveling together in the near future and continuing together our artistic journey that began at the Art Students League.



John and Mitsue

# California Painter Meets Alabama Dancer

## David Christopher Newton & Suzanne McBride Newton

by Suzanne McBride Newton

In 1978 two artists moved to New York City. One, a painter from California, and the other, a dancer from Alabama, settled into apartments just a few blocks from the new center of their lives, the Art Students League.

The painter was David Newton. He was on an artistic pilgrimage to study with his teacher's teacher, Frank Mason. In fact, his painting teacher in San Francisco, Scott Haleme and other friends, sent money to David every month to help him get established in Manhattan. David was thrilled to be on this adventure and determined to become a well-trained artist.

I, the dancer, needed a part-time job that wouldn't interfere with my quest to dance in New York City. I had modeled for artists in the past, so doing this at the League seemed like a logical solution. In a few weeks' time, I was assigned to model for the Mason class.

Sitting there on a stool on the model stand, holding the pose in the dark studio at 4 pm, I looked out to see a roomful of handsome men and women. Of all the classes that I had modeled for at that point, this one attracted a unique collection of beautiful people who were very serious about painting. Just after making this observation, I noticed one of them, an especially handsome young man making a funny face at me, scrunching up his nose and mouth, winking one eye and then the other. "What is he doing?" I thought. I shifted on the stool a little, looked at him directly, and assessed his sanity. This would be our first contact.

Recalling our 'first glance' two years later when we were dating, David told me that he had simply wanted to get me to move; that I was sitting so still, I seemed like a statue and he wanted me to be real and relax a little. We would tell this story over the years to people who asked, "How did you two meet?"

We were married for twenty-eight years. David continued to paint,



Above: David and Suzanne  
Left: David Newton, *Birdcliffe #5*  
Bottom right: David Newton, *Found Balls*

make prints, and broaden his artistic world by earning an MFA in sculpture from Bard College. From there, he became a tenured art professor, chair of the department, and an award-winning academic advisor at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina.

As his wife, I never ceased to admire his efforts to make art, to learn as many techniques as he could, and to be a reliable source of support for his many friends and students.

Sadly, in April 2011, at age 57, David passed away after a brave attempt to resist an undetected cancer that had been slowly undermining one of his many dreams: to return to New York City and study at the League for a summer of classes. 🍷



Mitsue Komoriya, *untitled*



John Doyle, *Seascape*



# A Road Trip in Search of a Teacher Finds a Kindred Spirit

## Sherrie McGraw & David A. Leffel

David A. Leffel taught at the League throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Sherrie McGraw studied with him at the League.



### ASL: How did you meet?

**Sherrie:** I heard about the Art Students League from several teachers in Oklahoma. The first was from an amateur still life painter, C.L. Mount, who told me that anyone who was ever anyone in the art world studied at the League, taught there, or both. After studying Impressionism with Richard and Edith Goetz, they recommended that

I study with either Frank Mason or David A. Leffel at the ASL. Without any hesitation, my new-found friend Dennis Parker and I set out from Oklahoma City in 1977 on a tour to find a teacher. Our four-month trip took us as far north as the American Academy in Chicago and all up and down the East Coast to schools, galleries and museums, finally culminating at the League. We signed up for classes with David, Frank Mason, and Daniel Greene. When I saw David's paintings in person, no question remained: this was the kind of painting that I was looking for. David's and my connections were multi-leveled and undeniable—we were kindred spirits artistically and personally. I decided to leave the doctor I was slated to marry and to settle in New York, to study with David and begin my new life as a serious artist.

**David:** I met Sherrie when she entered my class at the League. She stayed for two weeks, the time she had allotted for herself, and returned to Oklahoma. I was surprised and pleased when she appeared again the following year in the doorway of Studio 7.

### Does your spouse's work influence your art?

**S:** I have the unusual privilege of being with my favorite artist in all of art history. This has been a blessing in many ways, but because the bar has always been so high, it has taken some of the blissful ignorance out of my student days and my continuing development. Not a day passes that I am not reminded of the daunting task ahead. Like Brahms felt about Beethoven, I hear the heavy footsteps of David behind me.

### When did you know you wanted to be an artist?

**S:** I knew it at the age of four, even before I knew what a fine artist really was, or if they even existed anymore.

**D:** I saw my first Rembrandt at the Met

at age 19 or 20. I was captivated. My naïveté because of my familial and social background, led me to believe this way of painting was unattainable. It was not until I was almost thirty years of age that I fortuitously came in contact with contemporaries who were painting in this manner. It was a shock to my psyche. Even so, shortly thereafter, when I entered the League, the thought of being an artist as a living was not part of any conscious thought. It was just "learning to paint" that seemed to hold great fascination.

### Who was your mentor?

**S:** It was David A. Leffel undeniably. However, while working as a guard at the Met, I had the unique privilege of studying my favorite artists' work every night, in between sets of ping-pong.

**D:** At Parsons School of Design, I studied painting with E.V. Biel-Bienne.

Though I had no realization of it at the time, he was one of the most important teachers in my life. He opened my eyes to what painting is: using paint. At Parsons, I had one year of anatomy with Stephen Rogers Peck. At the League I studied with Frank Mason for a year. Frank enabled me to understand the chiaroscuro form of painting. Privately, whenever possible, I took classes with Dmitri Romanovsky, an outspoken character, teacher, artist, a fun person to hang out with.

### Talk about your medium and the artists who influence you.

**S:** I use oils. Though pastel is a part of what I do—most especially because it is so similar to drawing—oil and its infinite possibilities of paint texture is most appealing. It allows a translation of reality that defies common sense—that three-dimension can come alive on a flat surface. I use Maroger, which is a thixotropic medium. It makes the paint fluid when working with it, and solid when the brush stops. I am drawn to artists that do a lot with a little. So, besides David, I am particularly drawn to Rembrandt for his unusual understanding and intelligence; Velazquez for his elegant economy of brushwork; Hovsep Pushman for his judicious use of color and his extraordinary visual ideas; Emil Carlsen for his unusual paint quality and simple ideas; the daring use of paint by Antonio Mancini; and the wondrous watercolors by Turner.

**D:** Oil is my medium. As someone once said, "If God could or would paint, he would paint in oil." Velazquez, Pushman, Turner, Moroni, of course Rembrandt are



Clockwise from top left: David and Sherrie; Sherrie McGraw, *Silk Cloth, Grapes*; David A. Leffel, *Emma*



some of perhaps a dozen artists since the sixteenth hundreds that used paint in a beautiful abstract manner. My mentor has been Rembrandt. For understanding paint as paint and paint as light, there is no one else. He is by himself. His intelligence as evidenced by his work is so beautiful, it is truly breathtaking.

**What was the turning point or significant event in your artistic life or life in general?**

**S:** The first big change occurred when I was able to separate “Sherrie” from “Sherrie the Artist.” When one’s identity is inextricably tied to what one does, painting becomes burdensome as one’s entire self worth rests on how well painting or drawing went that day. Talk about the onus on each stroke! The second big change is happening now. I am finally able to see how I have something possibly equal yet different to say from David. I continue to learn and appreciate David’s extraordinary understanding of painting, but realize that the differences in artists can be subtle, as subtle as differences in personality.

**D:** My first major insight was in Biel’s class at Parsons, after almost two years of his haranguing me to “make brushstrokes.” I did and as I wrote in my book *Self-Portrait, A Visual Journey of Insight* it was the first in a series of transforming moments. The second took place in Frank Mason’s class. I turned to the still life I was about to paint that day and I saw the light! I had never seen anything like that before. The nearest I can describe it, it was like water flowing in, around, over everything and against it, the shadow places keeping it contained in place. I was afraid to breathe, to move; I was transfixed.



It was it. Since that instance, there have taken place other insights, life, painting—as I’ve said, if it’s true in painting, it must have its counterpart in life.

**What life lessons has being an artist taught you?**

**S:** Through painting and drawing I have learned about myself, learned that relationships are more important than career. . . or money, or fame. Life is short; if you do what you love, what more could anyone want?

**D:** In painting, as in life, anything that is gone into deeply ultimately turns into a journey into oneself. Understanding relationships is at the heart of painting. It is as true in life; life is relationship.

**Is there anything else you would like people to know?**

**S:** In my development, I have gotten a lot of advice. Though much of this guidance was well meaning and sage for a young artist wanting to “make a career,” this was never my focus. I followed my own instincts and stayed true to what my heart told me because all I ever wanted—my only focus—was to gain the understanding and insights that great artists have had in the past. I felt that what I had to say would flourish with that foundation. And though I have probably been foolish from a “career-building” perspective, I have no regrets. Money was always the nuisance, never the primary motivation for painting or learning to draw. Now, when friends urge me to go on a vacation, I say, “From what?”

**D:** I am a work in progress. 🌱



*Above: Sherrie McGraw, Hoof-biting Horse*  
*Left: David A. Leffel, Enigma (Self-Portrait)*

# Realizing a Plan To Be Full-Time Painters

*Diane Leon & John Ferdico*

by Diane Leon

*John's and Diane's work has been featured in galleries and private collections in New York and Spain. Diane's work is also in the US Embassy in Lima, Peru. John's work has twice been chosen by the Art in Embassies Program.*

Both of us began doing art as children. By the time I was a teenager, I knew that art would always be a vital part of my life. John always was creative but did not realize the importance of creating until his mid- to late-twenties. I had training in printmaking at Pratt, the Printmaking Workshop and the National Academy of Design, where I was inspired by Wolf Kahn's course in color theory. I also studied art history at New York University. John studied for a time at F.I.T., creating jewelry in wax and metal.

John and I studied at the League from 1974 to 1978. I studied with Gregory d'Alessio and Barbara Adrian; and John with Robert Hale, Hughie Lee-Smith, Gustav Rehberger and David Leffel. After meeting in 1978, we got married in 1979, and have shared more than 30 years of love, painting, and life together.

We work independently in a small studio space we share in our two bedroom apartment in Elmhurst, Queens. We work in an abstract style, but John's work is more structured in how he uses his space. My work is more organic in style. Both of us began painting with oils. John now prefers oils over acrylics because of the way they can blend and move on the linen canvas. I moved to acrylic paint because I work very fast and



change the composition as I paint.

My inspiration comes mainly from Spain. I bought an apartment in Spain in the 1970s, and also studied at the Painting School in Huesca. The vast openness of the sky, sea, and light has had a profound effect upon me. John's inspiration comes from travel, film, jazz and ancient cultures. His art is in response to images and the history of prehistoric cultures. This shows in the way he handles form, color, and space.

This year we are finally retired and can enjoy more time in Spain. Being focused and committed to the lifestyle we created for ourselves was worth having to hold full-time jobs. However, "day jobs" did not stop us from our painting, exhibiting, selling and balancing a full life together. It was a significant decision to maintain a place in Spain, but it became the source of inspiration and a place to clear our heads from daily life in New York. I spent five weeks a year there, for 40 years, 32 of them with John. We are

native New Yorkers and love the city, but also need the time to reflect and absorb another culture.

I have taught as an adjunct associate professor of arts at New York University (School of Continuing and Professional Studies degree division) for the past 16 years, in addition to holding a full-time administrative job. Now I only teach from January to May, one night a week. It is extra money, but more than that it is giving back to students and sharing my enthusiasm and love for the creative process. John is enjoying painting full-time and going to jazz clubs during the week. For decades we used to say that someday, we would do exactly what we are doing now.

Art has taught me to always be true to myself. Even though I was not a full-time painter earlier in life, that never made me feel I was denied what other artists were able to do. I think young artists must deal with the cards they are dealt and do what they can to create. Don't look at what other people are doing and wish it were you. Look inside of yourself and create the life you want. Look at the great art that came before us and take from that. Being an artist opens you up to the universe. We see and feel in an intense way. Even with the frustrations of painting, the process is what counts.

We owe so much to the League. If not for that special place on West 57th Street, we would never have met—let alone change our way of seeing and understanding the world around us. 🎨

*Above: John Ferdico, Deluge  
Below: Diane Leon, Night Spirit*



# A 20-Year Love Stretch

by Melesio Mendoza & Susanne Klier

*In the heights of both our creativity, life provided the ground for not what we'd call a "chance-meeting," but rather a "how and where else could it have been but at the Art Students League?"*

*There, in January 1993, a female German art model was sent to the basement studio of stone sculptors to strike her poses. There, a Mexican painter had just set his hands on experimenting with a new medium, Carrara marble. In that basement studio, Cupid just couldn't help interfering!*

**Susanne Klier:** I'd just taken up modeling at the League late September the year before. Melesio remained an non-interfering presence in my life until I got really bothered by his ignorance of my presence—which had seemed to stir everyone else into conversational efforts! Eventually I walked up to him and admired his artistic efforts and from that first communicative evening we were no longer single entities. We always say that we were meant to meet in New York, since neither of us would have travelled to Mexico or Germany to find our other halves. The League inspires artistic creation, but let's not forget it's also a place where lasting bonds, which wouldn't have formed in any other place, are formed. We work on our individual artistic projects together in the same studio, which actually creates great energy. I feel a very intense influence from Melesio's cultural and historical traditions in my work, yet I have always been fascinated by Mayan, Aztec and South American artifacts and creations.

**Melesio Mendoza:** I knew since I was a small child that I needed to create with my hands, and studied with a private painting teacher in Mexico City for some years before coming to the League. However, I've never had a mentor but always looked up to my parents as the greatest teachers of my life because their goal was my happiness and that is exactly what my artistic path is bringing me. I couldn't pinpoint and say that I have a favorite medium since I want to experience my creativity in all of them. When I return from printmaking to stone carving there are always new discoveries to be made. I believe that all the different media I am working



*From top: Melesio Mendoza, untitled; Susanne Klier, Birth of Venus; Melesio Mendoza, untitled  
Top right: Melesio and Susanne*



with are interconnected. I started out with pastels, drawings and oil painting in both realistic and abstract expressions. After 15 years of painting I went to explore stone carving, printmaking and ceramics. My belief is that regardless of what medium I am creating in, it always connects me to a previous exploration and deepens my present experience.

**SK:** I used to make two-dimensional sculptural creations out of found objects around my home back in Germany when I was as young as 8 years old. During my early college years in the states, I took up photography. My first exposure to stone carving happened during my time as a model there. I just couldn't help being challenged by rocks transforming into sculptures! I never was too much into life drawing, but when I discovered manually sculpting stone, it was like pushing oneself over the edge with no point of return. At first it seemed impossible, yet because of that impossibility I decided to go for it. I was 19 years old when I experimented with my first piece of alabaster. What I know about carving has been a process of applied observation, experimentation, trial and error, and patience. If I had to put in a nutshell in what way stone, as a medium, speaks to me, I would say that it is a continuous communication, the acceptance of limitation and the surprise between the natural material and the artist that paves the way for any sculpture from birth to finish line. Stone carving is like a dance, where rhythm and movement are as important as the marks of one's tools.

**MM:** The major turning point in my artistic career occurred when I made the decision of no longer having to commit to one single chosen medium. I gave in to letting my creativity flow in whichever medium pulled me on a given day, and to the unexpected that lies within artistic pursuit, its challenges and surprises.

**SK:** For me there were several turning points: one, when I discovered how to



## Melesio Mendoza & Susanne Klier *continued*

unleash the secrets sleeping within a piece of rock; another when drastic life events influence and change one's approach to creating; the ebbs and flows of extreme productivity or its flip side, stagnation of artistic expression. Yet art and life for me never seem to disconnect. Creating art changes my life from moment to moment, even if its nuances are ever so subtle, there is a shift within one's core.

**MM:** I support myself as an artist by teaching my versatile craft and experience to younger generations, and by working in the maintenance

department at the League. Money simply cannot become an issue because if it does one becomes detached from one's art. When we are focusing on "creation," the challenges we face everyday become true and valuable lessons of life. My goal for my life is to live long enough to be able to give birth to all the creations that I visualize.

**SK:** To support my art I've taken on a variety of different jobs: teaching, research, assistantships, case work, marketing, customer service, mentoring. If money wasn't an issue, I would

have my very own studio space, travel to the heritages I would love to explore, incorporate a lot more experiences into my work, and simply breathe creation into everything I could possibly get my hands on. I believe if I were sculpting to make a living, the thrill, pleasure and strong pulls that drive me into connection with my stones would become extinct. My dream is to bring artistic possibility to places where there seems to be no calling for it: to the public school system, the corporate world, into prisons and areas driven by poverty. Each and everyone should receive the thrill of art.

## Partners In Art John Varriano & Marsha Massih

by Marsha Massih

In our mid-twenties, after having endured the numbing experience of working in the professional world, and realizing that John and I had to stop avoiding what we fundamentally were—artists—we discovered the League and all of its possibilities. It was like an adrenalin rush and a fully life-affirming experience. I felt as if I had found my *raison d'être*.

In 1991, I was taking an evening painting class with Ron Sherr. I would often arrive at 5:30 pm from my day job so that I could decompress in the lunch room with a cup of tea. I noticed a handsome curly-haired guy always talking to various people. Friends from ASL were gathering one spring evening at Ye Ol' Triple Inn, a scruffy Irish pub on West 53rd Street; by coincidence it was my birthday. I left class early to join the group, and dragged a friend along for company since I was relatively

new to the League. During lots of laughter and drinking, I overheard John having an intense talk with a fellow student in a corner about "orange value" and painting. I had no idea what orange value was, and could never have predicted that in one year, I would be ensconced in this "painting language" with John in Frank Mason's class.

Our first date was in the summer of 1991, when we went around the corner to have a beer at Carney's after an evening drawing class. I immediately sensed John's deep perception and passion for art, for craft, and his reverence toward the great painting and drawing masters of the past. It wasn't until I saw his own work that I fully comprehended his connection and sensitivity to the human form and nature.

By 1992, John's infectious art spirit helped convince me to enroll full time in Frank Mason's painting class and Gustave Rehberger's drawing class. We were co-monitors in both classes for a few years, and John was Frank Mason's monitor during the June landscape workshops in Vermont for several years. Our circle of artists and their aesthetic influence became more expansive throughout the 1990s. This sphere of influence included nonrepresentational painters as



well as "modernists," such as Frank O'Cain, Ira Goldberg, and Knox Martin. John and I shared the invaluable experience of being taught by two master artists and of exchanging visual ideas with other great painters. We had this amazing access to all kinds of art from various art camps, and a stimulating art discourse (which weaved in lots of art history). This atmosphere is one of the unique treasures that the League offers to those who are open to a visual exchange of ideas. These were pivotal growth years in our art education. Those years shared at the League deepened our connection to one another and informed our approach to looking at and making art.

In our thirties, besides classes at the League, and part time jobs (John was the League store's manager while I worked as an usher at Carnegie Hall) our time was spent in a Jersey City painting studio: a 3,000 square foot loft space on the fourth floor of a Civil War era industrial building, with a view of the World Trade Center across the river. We shared the space with artists John Doyle, James Prater, Nick Oberlin and Jennifer Li, while Ira Goldberg and Bob Telenick were just down the hall. Thanks to a relaxed management style at the building, we were allowed







*Pictured on previous page, from left: Marsha Massih, Study for 'Reading Series'; John, Marsha, and their daughters Above, from left: John A. Varriano, Isabella; John A. Varriano, Summer Zinneas; Marsha Massih, Rain Date. Below: Marsha Massih, Yellow Dress*

to cut gigantic holes in our studio roof and build two huge north-light skylights (modeled after the skylight in Studio 7 at the League). John was the principal architect, engineer and laborer(!). We had annual open studio shows and started exhibiting work at "emerging artists" galleries in Jersey City and Manhattan.

In our late thirties, John and I decided to start a family. Isabella was born 10 years ago, and Francesca came a year later. We have spent our forties building a life in the Hudson Valley region near New Paltz. Moving an hour-and-a-half north of Manhattan to raise two children has allowed us to have studio space on our seven-acre property, a rental cottage, and our own 200-year-old stone house that John worked long and hard to renovate. Although much of this decade has centered round family and projects, it has also been one of artistic growth. Sometimes when you take time out from a regular painting routine to pursue other life-affirming activities, an imperceptible change takes place that will show up in your artwork later. We have both experienced this evolution.

Currently, we show at a thriving local art gallery in New Paltz. John has had three two-person shows over the past five years, and continues to win awards for his oil paintings in juried exhibits. I've also shown at several places recently, including the National Association of Women Artists Small Works Exhibit, Allied Artists Association, and the National Art League. John teaches a painting class, a drawing class at the Art Center of Northern New Jersey, workshops, and private lessons; he also subs for Thomas Torak at the League. I teach art classes to school-aged children out of my studio at home. We execute commissioned

work when it comes, and I've been busy working on a series of drawings and paintings entitled *The Reading Series*.

We have always had similar artistic taste and inspiration, ranging from ancient Greek and Asian art, through the European Quattrocento and Renaissance periods, up to the Impressionists and the Modernists. For me, oil painting is singular in its power to convey light, texture, color, movement and emotion; although great art can be created using any variety of materials.

I feel extremely grateful to the League for

having introduced me to my life-long work and my life-long partner: someone who knows when to offer inspiration, when to offer advice, and when to hang back and just be silently supportive. I try to do the same. We continue to commit time, passion and vision toward our life as artists, and meet the challenges that all artists face. Art making is not easy, yet we both feel that our best work is ahead of us. 🌟

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# Get to Know...The Registrars

In their own words

## Monica "Joey" Arneman

My name is Joey. First and foremost, I am an artist. I experiment with all media but have developed an intimate affiliation with black and white darkrooms. The other half of me is dedicated to protecting our ecosystems and biodiversity. I hope to dedicate my life to protecting all living creatures. Peace & Love.



## John Doyle



**The registrars in the front office are the first contact many people have with the League. They help students find the classes that are right for them.**

## Angelika Ferguson

My name is Angelika Ferguson and I have been a registrar at the League since the summer of 2010. I speak Japanese and spent eight months studying abroad in Kyoto during my junior year of college a few years ago.



## Phylise Purdie

My name is Phylise Purdie. My position at the Art Students League is that of Information Desk Associate/Phone Registrar. I have been affiliated with the Art Students League since 1985. I was first employed as an artist model until 1999, and then as part of the administrative staff since April 2004.



## Rhaiza Padilla

Hello my name is "Pinky." I'm an assistant videographer and a clerk at the League. I also do makeup and modeling in my free time.





### James Prater

I came to study painting at the Art Students League with Frank Mason on September 8, 1987. I left my Paducah, Texas home for a two-hour drive to the Lubbock, Texas airport through the predawn fog, and all I was thinking was, "What if this is a big mistake?" I dropped my luggage off at the Salisbury Hotel, walked past Merit Farms and Uncle Sam Umbrellas in the misting rain, and for the first time I walked into the Art Students League. I was so afraid when I entered the office. Valerie, my registrar, was patient, thorough, caring, and for my first ten minutes at the League she was my angel. I still remember her face, and I remember her name twenty-four years later: Merit Farms, Uncle Sam Umbrellas,

and Valerie have all moved on since then, but the Art Students League of New York is still welcoming artists—even from small towns like Paducah, Texas.

I was hired as a registrar in 1990. I studied with Mr. Mason at the Art Students League from 1987 to 1996. I have shared artist studios in Jersey City and Union City, New Jersey from 1990 to present. I paint landscapes, still life, figures and portraits in oils.

**They assist with lockers, membership and whatever else students and members need. They come from exotic places like Turkey, Texas, and Georgia.**



**Michael Bloom**



**Eda Erdik**

My name is Eda. I am from Istanbul, Turkey. I have been at the Art Students League studying printmaking for about three years while at the same time working for the League's office.

### Jamie Emerson

Hi, I'm Jamie E. You are most likely to catch me at the info desk helping with class counseling and registration on the phones. I am a native of downtown Atlanta, Georgia. I moved up to New York in November of last year, just in time for the wonderful snow. I am studying life drawing and oil painting here at the Art Students League. I enjoy Georges Braque, Van Gogh, and long walks through New York City.



# A Year of Reaching Out

## The League's 136th Year in Brief

by Ken Park

Last May, as the Art Students League's 136th year was drawing to a close, League student-artists were installing monumental sculptures in city parks, teaching free public "Sketch in the Park" sessions near Times Square, showing their art in public spaces throughout New York, developing their work at the newly expanded Vytlacil Artist-in-Residence program, and celebrating the end of the school year with diverse and powerful class exhibitions at the League's Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery.

Our mission to cultivate an artistic community and train artists seeking to become professionals was spread not only among the League's students, but also to resident international artists, public school students, tens of thousands of fans online, and countless art enthusiasts throughout Metropolitan New York.

The successes described below would not have been possible without the generous donations from our supporters.

**Learning the Language of Art:** The League's essence remains the studio classes in drawing, painting, sculpture, and printmaking that fill the studios from morning to night. In the year gone by, 3,390 students took classes or intensive workshops at the League, representing an 8% increase from a year earlier.

League students range in age from 8 to 80 (and older), and represent the economic and cultural spectrum of New York. Sculptor Emmet Barak, 21, became one of the youngest students ever to have his work purchased by the League for its Permanent Collection. (See page 4.) Selva Sanjines, a former pediatric endocrinologist from Chile, saw her monumental sculpture, *Flight: From Past to Present*, installed along the Hudson as part of the League's Model to Monument program.

**Model to Monument Program:** The Model to Monument Program (M2M), a five-year partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, was launched in 2011.

Led by Greg Wyatt, League instructor and resident artist at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, M2M immerses students in every phase of creating an original work of public art. By May 2011, eight works were in the process of being installed in Riverside Park South in Manhattan, and Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. The works were unveiled in a public ceremony in June 2011 amid public acclaim and press coverage that reached more than 5 mil-

lion readers and viewers.

**Centennial Exhibition of Will Barnet:** October 2010 brought a blockbuster exhibition, Will Barnet and the Art Students League, to the Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery. The New York Times said the exhibition "honor[ed] [Barnet's] centennial year and his influence on generations of artists." An estimated 3,200 people saw the show at the Mason Gallery and more than 4,000 visited online.

**Vytlacil Residency:** The Vytlacil Campus Artist-in-Residence Program (Vyt AIR) provides an environment that allows artists to focus on their art for an extended period of time.

Residency-months grew by 40% in 2011. There were a dozen international artists from eight nations. The November 2010 opening of a new fully-accessible residence and studio building boosted monthly capacity from three to seven. Under Vytlacil Campus Director Gary Sussman, Vyt AIR hosts monthly open studios for resident-artists. Vyt AIR also earned the League's first grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Gallery Lecture Series:** In addition to mounting two dozen exhibitions each year, the League's Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery also hosts a popular lecture series.

A major highlight was the February panel discussion, "The Role of Classical Life Drawing In Twenty-First Century Pedagogy." The event, which was held in conjunction with the centennial of the founding of the College Art Association (CAA), drew a standing-room-only crowd of more than 200 that blended members of the League community and art academics from around the country.

Curator Pam N. Koob also launched a new contemporary artists lecture series. Art critic Grady T. Turner interviewed Kate Gilmore, Inka Essenhigh, and Nayland Blake.

**Exhibition Outreach Program:** The League's Exhibition Outreach Program (EOP) provides emerging artists with experience entering their work in competitions, preparing their work for public display, and marketing their work for sale. Since its inception in 2006, EOP (which is led by artist and former League student Leah McCloskey) has placed works by more than 500 artists in 100 exhibitions at more than a dozen venues.

EOP has also represented League artists at the 2008 through 2011 *Affordable Art Fairs* and



From top: John Balsamo's M2M sculpture, *The New Age*; Drawing panel in the League gallery, February 2011; Seeds of the League program with New York City Dept. of Parks & Recreation, summer 2010; New Vytlacil Residency studio



other major New York City fairs. The 2011 fair in June helped student and realist painter Ekaterina Smirnova earn gallery representation.

In 2011, EOP also launched "Sketch in the Park," a series of public sketch sessions in the Time Square area in partnership with a leading New York real estate firm (Stonehenge) and art supply store (Lee's Art Shop).

**Seeds of the League:** Seeds of the League, a program launched in 2010, seeks to expand the League's art instruction further into the community, by placing League artists in New York City Schools and Parks & Recreation locations to teach underserved youth, and by granting scholarships for students to study at the League.

This year, Seeds outreach efforts included programs that placed top League students in local recreation centers to teach public school students ranging in age from 6 to 18. Venues included the J. Hood Wright Recreation Center in Washington Heights, Marcus Garvey Park's Pelham Fritz Recreation Center in Harlem, and the Asser Levy Recreation Center on East 23rd Street. Thirty-six public school students earned Seeds scholarships.

**Outreach Online:** In 2011, the League launched its own YouTube Channel, which now hosts more than 20 informative videos that extend the reach of the League to tens of thousands of viewers around the world. The League also launched a new website in September 2010. More than 125,000 unique visitors came to the site in 2011.

Even Google understands that the Art Students League teaches the language of art: [www.artstudentsleague.org](http://www.artstudentsleague.org) consistently ranks first in Google searches for the phrase "New York City Art Classes."

**Extending the League's Commitments:** The League's success over 136 years results from the rigorous training that takes place from 9 am to 10 pm five days a week (plus weekend classes), 50 weeks a year, in the League's 20 studio classrooms

Today, the League is taking that commitment to teach the language of art outside the League's studio walls. Through the initiatives described above, the League and its supporters are spreading ever-wider the challenges, passions, and joys of learning and making art. We thank all our supporters for making this happen. 🎨



*Above, left:* Elisabeth Page Purcell, *Unity*, 2010, onyx, 19 ½ x 8 x 18 in. PURCHASED FOR THE PERMANENT COLLECTION FROM THE 30/30 EXHIBITION, 2011



*Above, right:* Harry Sternberg (1904-2001), *Pablo Picasso*, 1944, silkscreen, 16 ¾ x 11 ¼ in. For his *Artist Series*, printmaking instructor Harry Sternberg incorporated an artist's style and favorite subject matter in 14 artist portraits. Other artists included are Raphael Soyer, Abraham Walkowitz, and Robert Gwathmey.

## The League's Permanent Collection

The League's Permanent Collection is a living history of art at the League, and indeed art in America. The Collection's 2,000 works provide a learning resource for the League's students, instructors, and other scholars, and showcase the League at other art museums.

Recently, Heather Coyle, curator of American art of the Delaware Art Museum studied the League's Fakir works for her doctoral dissertation. (The original Fakir group was founded in the 1890s by League students who raised scholarship money by putting on art exhibitions of "fakes," or parodies of well known works.) Georgia O'Keeffe's *Dead Rabbit and Copper Pot* was recently reproduced in the *Dove/O'Keeffe: Circles of Influence* exhibition catalog at the Clark Institute (Williamstown, Massachusetts). Another wonderful painting in the League's collection, Jan Matulka's *Still Life with Horse Head and Phonograph*, will be featured in a 2012-13 traveling exhibition organized by the Addison Gallery of American Art (Andover, Massachusetts). Closer to home, League instructor Dan Thompson took advantage of the

League's Permanent Collection, borrowing early academic drawings for close inspection by his students. An October exhibition in the cafeteria of surrealist works from the League collection included paintings by Morris Kantor and Xavier Gonzalez.

### Support the Permanent Collection

The school's permanent collection reflects art movements of the last 125 years, from figure drawings of the late nineteenth century, to the social realist prints of the 1930s, to the contemporary paintings of today.

Preserving these significant works and making them available to others involves conservation, framing, effective storage and transportation to the League. By becoming a Friend of the League, you can help us preserve this art and history for future generations. Friends can also learn more about the collection through special programs with Curator Pam N. Koob. 🎨

To become a Friend, contact Denise L. Greene at 212-247-4510, ext. 130 or [denise@artstudentsleague.org](mailto:denise@artstudentsleague.org).

# What's Happening Out There

## Life After the League

Compiled by  
Julia Montepagani

The Art Students League takes great pride in the achievements of our former students. Recently the League has been reaching out to alumni we see in the news. Here's what some of those alumni had to say:

**"I would be thrilled to...reconnect with the ASL community. I recently sat in on Max Ginsburg's painting class at [the League] and was thrilled to be back in those hallowed halls, where I fondly remember having studied for so many years, long ago."**

—Garin Baker

An award-winning illustrator and prolific painter, Garin Baker studied at the League with David A. Leffel and Ted Seth Jacobs. He was recently featured in a show at Highland Art Gallery.  
[www.garinbakerart.com](http://www.garinbakerart.com)

**"I actually have not even been back to visit [the League] since I studied there about 10 years ago (still feels like yesterday!)... My time there still stands out as one of the most significant experiences of my artistic life, and I often speak very highly of the League. In fact, I just gave an artist lecture... and glowingly mentioned the League many times during my talk!"**

—Abbey Ryan

Abbey Ryan credits her painting style to former League instructor, David A. Leffel. She has an upcoming workshop at the Sedona Arts Center in Arizona, January 9-13, 2012.  
[www.AbbeyRyan.com](http://www.AbbeyRyan.com)



**"How exciting to be found by you. I started going to the Art Students League when I was 13—even though I was underage, they let me in because I am tall...As far as the League goes, it was the seminal force in my art education."**

—Victor Stabin

Eco-surrealist painter Victor Stabin was recently honored for his artwork and originally illustrated book, *Daedle Doodle*, at an exhibition at the High School of Art & Design. He was also featured in the September issue of *ICON*.  
[www.victorstabinprints.com](http://www.victorstabinprints.com)

**"What a great surprise to hear from [the League]! I am very proud to have been a student at the Art Students League of New York. It was a wonderful experience and an important key in my artistic development as a stone sculptor. I was inspired by fellow students and instructors, especially José De Creeft and Lorrie Goulet De Creeft."**

—Richard H. Bailey

Sculptor Richard H. Bailey's recent exhibits include those at the Dover Art League and at Wilmington's Gallery 919 Market.  
[www.richardhbailey.com](http://www.richardhbailey.com)

### Other News

This past spring, League alumna Judy Taylor was much in the news after new Maine Governor Paul LaPage (R) ordered her mural removed from the Maine Department of Labor building. Taylor painted the 36-foot-wide mural after winning a 2007 competition overseen by the Maine Arts Commission. For the most recent updates on Taylor's art, visit her website:  
[www.judytaylorstudio.com](http://www.judytaylorstudio.com)

*Below: Images from Judy Taylor's mural for the Maine Department of Labor, 2008*



Knox Martin with a cartoon for *The Whaling Wall Mural Project*. © Knox Martin/VAGA New York NY

## A Call for a Giant Cause

By Julia Montepagani

In 1971, Knox Martin was scuba diving in the Bay of Cortez when a chance encounter with a titan of the sea inspired a similarly sized artistic project that has been called a "Universal Guernica."

Martin writes: "I thought I was sinking or that the ocean floor was rising. It was a whale rising up and I was at the eye level of the whale...I was certain I was viewing an intelligence. When I moved to the surface the whale had vanished—the impression indelible. I still see this at point: the great eye regarding me."

Forty years later, Martin is still seeking ways to raise attention to the plight of the whales. Martin describes his current mural, *The Whaling Wall*, as depicting "in a narrative manner men setting out with harpoons to harpoon the whales. There is a great screaming whale in the upper left as he is struck by the harpoon, [and] blood in the water from the whales...My prime concern was the plight of the whales."

Many others have reached out to support Martin's project: Greenpeace has endorsed the mural; the Woodward Gallery is curating the project; Golden Artists Colors is supplying the paint; and Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Downey have donated the exterior wall at 334 Grand Street. However, funds are still needed to finish the project.

*The Whaling Wall* is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a non-profit arts service organization. Contributions for the purposes of *The Whaling Wall* must be made payable to Fractured Atlas and are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by the law. For more information or to make a donation, please visit [www.fracturedatlas.org](http://www.fracturedatlas.org).



# Lost and Found:

*A place for people to connect with people*

# Found!

In our most recent issue, we posted a letter requesting information on former instructor Daniel Maloney from two authors working on his biography. We were able to connect the authors with former League students and several current instructors who were able to help.

League member Roxanne Lorch wrote in part: "Yes, I am one of those older, possibly retired but still living, students who knew Daniel Maloney!!!!!! I studied for two years or more with Maloney in the '80s at the Art Students League.

The class was in life drawing and the human figure. I loved his class and working with him. If you would like to explore



In costume: Daniel Maloney (center) with League instructor George Tooker (left) and William Christopher (right)

this further, I will be glad to tell you about my experience."

Member Alexandra Dell'Amore wrote with a list of current instructors who were Maloney's contemporaries.

We also came across this 1951 photo from the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, of Daniel Maloney with another League instructor George Tooker, and William Christopher, a painter and Tooker's partner.

Is there someone from the League that you'd like to connect with or learn more about? Write to

lines@artstudentsleague.org with your query and maybe you'll see it in the next issue!



Anne Richter, *The Couple # 1*, 2011, acrylic on paper, 50 by 56 inches

## Return to Summer

The work above is by Anne Richter, who wrote the article "In Celebration of Myself" for the summer issue of *Lines*. The image was received too late to be included in that issue, but we proudly reproduce it here.

## Stay in E-Touch

If you've enjoyed *Lines*, you'll want to keep up with League members and events online by

visiting our website [www.theartstudentsleague.org](http://www.theartstudentsleague.org).

From the "Contact" webpage you can:

- Join our email List
- Become a Facebook fan
- Subscribe to our YouTube channel







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