

# LINES *from the* League



## Letter from the Executive Director

It's always a pleasure to share with *Lines* readers what's going on at the League. Over the last six months we've been taking a hard look at our operations and programs, and listening carefully to our community. From the news below, I hope you'll agree that the League is bringing ever more opportunities to those who truly aspire to develop as artists.

First, let's convey a warm welcome to our new Chief Financial Officer, Jennifer Solomon, who started at the end of January and to our new Director of Development, Jeanne Lunin, who began in late April. We are fortunate to have these proven professionals joining the League in these new and important roles. Jennifer and Jeanne will help ensure the League's financial health, enabling us to thrive for many years to come.

Starting in September we will be launching a Two-Year Certificate Program designed for aspiring artists who want a more structured learning experience and a shorter length of study than our long-standing Four-Year Certificate Program. That program (the four-year), currently has 50 students enrolled, more than 40 of them international, studying at the League on international student visas. We will be adding to our new sequential, time-limited classes which have been drawing (no pun intended) new students. This spring's classes included a 12-session study of The Art of Color in Theory & Practice. Constructive Figure Drawing starts June 6 for 11 weeks.

To make new students feel at home, and in an effort to recruit new students, we've been holding Information Meetings on the first Thursday evening of each month. We've made open sketch even more open by ending the requirement that members need a ticket. Students are painting and drawing on more than 250 new easels made by our maintenance team. Our successful Winter Lecture Series included an interactive January talk by artist Hank Willis Thomas that packed the Phyllis Harriman Mason gallery with a young and diverse crowd.

Exhibition Outreach represented seven League artists at the New York Affordable Art Fair in early April. Our June 2015 exhibition, *On the Front Lines: Military Veterans at the Art Students League*, is now on view at the University of Buffalo's Anderson Gallery. Seeds of the League teachers—in addition to their long-running work with kids—are now also conducting evenings of artmaking for Parks Arts and Culture adult programs. And of course, June means a new installation of eight sculptures from artists in the Model to Monument public art program in Riverside Park South and Van Cortlandt Park.

The League is accessible in the virtual world too. Don't forget to join the more than 40,000 people following the League on Facebook and other social media.

On a more solemn note, I'm sad to mark the passing of League instructor Kikuo Saito and former instructor Patricia Graham Arrott. Both were fine artists, and beloved by their students. They will be truly missed.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Lines from the League*. When you're reading these inspiring stories, I hope you'll pause to think about your own artistic development and how the League can guide you to your goals.



Ira Goldberg  
Executive Director

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Ira Goldberg

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**Cover image:** Zhang Hongtu, *Little Monkey*, 2013, ink and oil on rice paper mounted on panel, 48½ x 46 inches

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## Letter from the Editor

Many of the artists in this issue broke through physical and psychological walls through art. Zhang Hongtu, recently profiled in a *New York Times* article, echoes this experience when he states, “As an artist [who] once lived in China, I felt the Great Wall was built everywhere; as an artist living in the States, I don’t feel I am limited by the Wall.” Haksul Lee, one of our metal fabrication technical instructors, came to New York from Korea to gain the freedom to study and understand art without the authoritarian constrictions placed on learning in his country. Similarly, Anthony Pozsonyi’s education limited him to the “orthodox aesthetics of social realism, which was the only school of art sanctified by the system.” Basia Goldsmith, a displaced person during World War II, credits her survival to her “wonderful art and dance teachers. Painting and drawing were my escape to a fantasy world—a world of freedom.” Nina Kovalenko, a favorite model of many, shares her story: “. . . I was arrested and imprisoned multiple times. I also spent some time in mental institutions where I was injected to ‘correct my persuasions.’ Finally, I was exiled from the USSR.”

Our students’ willingness to share their deeply personal struggles speaks to the acceptance and safe environment created at the League. Sara Eileen and Daniel Tackney-DiGrazia contribute their stories about the importance of art as a means of survival. A former monk, Carlos Luis DeMedeiros, escaped the confines of society’s definition of god and religion “to a G-d that would truly embrace everyone and everything, inspiring peace and tolerance.” And Andres Hoyos, who finds satisfaction in creating beauty from discarded material, reflects on his recent exhibition, *Building Peace*, shown in March 2016 by the Consulate of Colombia. Haitian American artist Nadine Renazile who was awarded the Fantasy Fountain Fund Scholarship to Paris, viewed the city through her “own cultural lens, receiving ideas and information perhaps differently from the way they were intended.”

Dr. Mary F. Zawadzki examines the role of the plaster cast in art and aesthetic education in “Lines from the Past.” Dr. Zawadzki observes that “. . . in the twentieth century, casts were deemed worthless relics of bygone eras, merely reproductions and not real art.” Nicki Orbach continues her insightful examination of perception, quoting Henry Miller: “One’s destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things.”

Steven Walker, League instructor of Comics and Sequential Art, notes: “Telling stories is the oldest art form that humanity as a species has. It transcends cultures and religions and is the way we find our immortality.” And after a year in college, Walker’s current student Ian Gabriel escaped from a future career of designing air vent plans to pursue his love of graphic storytelling. After graduation, he credits Steven Walker with helping him get his first comic job.

As the “gardener” for the Seeds of the League program, I’m proud to introduce you to two of my “seedlings”—Jamie Santana and Maya Carino. Jamie is an extraordinary young woman who overcame obstacles that might make a Marine weep. Maya, at age 17, fulfilled a dream she’s had since she was 7. These artists represent a small section of the League community who have found freedom and connection through art. I hope you enjoy getting to know them as much as I have.



Denise L. Greene  
Editor

# ZHANG HONGTU

## A Melding of Cultures and a Genesis of a New Identity

Vanessa Hernandez  
Artunduaga

Zhang Hongtu, *A Walking Man*, 1984, acrylic on canvas; PERMANENT COLLECTION OF THE ART STUDENTS LEAGUE OF NEW YORK



Art and human expression cannot thrive in isolation. “As an artist [who] once lived in China, I felt the Great Wall was built everywhere; as an artist living in the States, I don’t feel I am limited by the Wall. I feel free to express myself,” confesses the contemporary artist Zhang Hongtu.

When Hongtu moved to the United States in 1982, at first seeking to rid himself of his past and carve a whole new identity, he sought asylum in an institution recommended to him by a friend—the Art

Students League. Here, Hongtu was taught by many, including a painting instructor who was soon his favorite: Richard Pousette-Dart (1916–1992), a prominent abstract expressionist painter, among other things. Pousette-Dart gave the artist the freedom in artmaking he had so desired. “Although he would never tell me in class that I ‘should do this’ or ‘should do that,’ he would neither tell me ‘Don’t do this’ or ‘Don’t do that!’” He always encouraged me to find myself,” Hongtu recalls. This cultivated a desire to build a style and voice that would be solely his own.

From October 2015 to February 2016, Zhang Hongtu had the first US survey of his work at the Queens Museum, located in the borough in which the artist currently resides. Hongtu admits that despite the vastness and diversity contained in this body of work, the pieces are interconnected, so much so it is as if they were always meant to be seen as merely the components of an amalgamated whole: “When almost 100 pieces of my work have been put together in the museum ... it might appear that I have different styles, skills, materials.... [However], what seemed





“...my artwork has always been about my life and the relationship between myself and society.”

apparent [to me] was the sense of myself as an artist who, over the past decades, has been working on a single artwork.”

There is, in fact, a single thread that unifies all of these individual pieces: a quest for identity. This pursuit, in Hongtu's case, was motivated by political and personal experiences in both mainland China and the United States. “In terms of attitude and content, since the very beginning until now,” Hongtu says, “my artwork has always been about my life and the relationship between myself and society.”

The student protests at Tiananmen Square in 1989, a manifestation of the political unrest and dissatisfaction in China at the time which was “eventually crushed by the Chinese government's tanks and soldiers, prompted me to create a group of works based on my own life experiences in China.” These include *Last Banquet*, *Bilingual Chart of Acupuncture Points and Meridians*, the *Chairmen Mao*, *Ping-Pong Mao*, and the *Material Mao* series. It is no coincidence that a large part of the artist's work focuses on the omnipresence of “Chairman Mao” and the power of his image. The “Cultural Revo-

lution” (1966–1976), a movement allegedly initiated to combat the capitalist elements of the Chinese bureaucracy, played an enormous role in further developing the cult of personality of Mao Zedong and, as a consequence, influenced Hongtu's own artistic expression. For instance, the *Ping-Pong Mao* piece appears to be a normal ping-pong table, except for the fact that Mao's silhouette is a hole that disrupts reality (in this case, the game being played) when the ping-pong ball inevitably falls through. The other pieces, such as *Quaker Oats Mao*, are additional examples of the ubiquity of Mao in Hongtu's life. In the trailer of the short documentary *Yellow Ox Mountain*, the artist expresses this sentiment: “You think you forget him, but his shadow is still following you. It becomes a psychological block.”

Throughout his life, and especially after leaving China, the artist sought out information in any books he was able to lay his hands on, including those about Europe and the Middle East; the latter region held a specifically spiritual and religious importance to Hongtu's family history. “Both my parents were very serious Muslims, but





because of Mao Zedong and the Communist Party's policy, any religious practice in people's daily lives was not allowed for as long as half a century." But when I recall my family's religious background, and compare it with those of other people in China, I know that besides Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, there are other different religions and cultures from outside of China that have opened my mind." The artist's general openness to other cultures and their respective art styles followed him to the States. "After I moved to Queens, I knew that my neighbors are from everywhere in the world, and they speak different languages. I'd like people to look at my work [and] think about communicating and creating dialogues between people from different backgrounds and cultures."

This genuine interest in other cultures is demonstrated in the artist's piece *Fan Kuan*, where Hongtu fuses content usually found in Chinese traditional paintings with brushwork similar to that of Van Gogh. "At first I used the methods of Van Gogh, Cezanne, and Monet to reinterpret famous landscape paintings in the Chinese tradition.... This series took me about eight or nine years. It

was to challenge people's idea of traditional painting. What is Chinese art, and what is Western art. I am somewhere in-between," Hongtu explains in a video about his 2014 show in the MOCA.

Hongtu's most recent work (such as the piece displayed on the cover of this publication) is very much inspired by the Dunhuang grottoes and the foreign styles and techniques, including those from Persia and India, which have been gradually infused in Chinese artmaking. Although Hongtu's initial exposure to a limited and isolated art education could have easily stifled his desire to make art, he learned to reconcile his past with his present and future as a contemporary artist, and use any knowledge he had gained to his advantage.

In the interview conducted by the Asia Art Archive about Chinese contemporary art in the 1980s, the artist confesses that identity was a completely new concept to him, as it was never associated with artmaking in China, so much so he had to look it up in the dictionary: "We never

considered any relationship between art and identity in China.... This had nothing to do with art." In a sense, he has dedicated his life to finding out what this word *identity* means to him and his work. The pieces in which Hongtu shows only the back of the head are indicative of this eternal search for an identity. As mentioned above, Hongtu himself is not tied to one label or culture, but rather, he is "somewhere in-between" and, like his reversed portraits, facing the limitless unknown.

For all those who struggle to remain inspired and creative on a day-to-day basis, Hongtu offers a few words of advice: "Keep being curious all the time in your life before you die." 🍌



Artwork by Zhang Hongtu

Previous page, from left: *Popcorn Mao* from *Material Mao* series, 1995, popcorn on plywood, 28 x 28 inches; *Quaker Oats Mao* from *Long Live Chairman Mao* series, 1987, acrylic on Quaker Oats box, 9.7 x 5 inches

This page, from left: *Little Monkey*, 2013, ink and oil on rice paper mounted on panel, 48½ x 46 inches; *Fan Kuan*—*Van Gogh*, 1998, oil on canvas, 64 x 32 inches



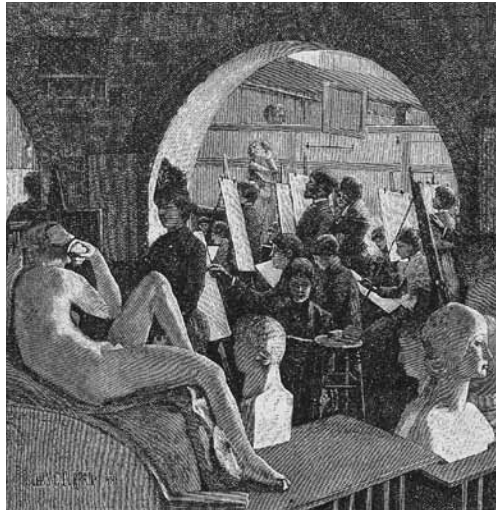
# Lines from the Past—

## *The Role of the Plaster Cast in Art and Aesthetic Education*

Dr. Mary F. Zawadzki

On the second floor of the Art Students League, one can find Frank L. Porcu's students drawing from plaster casts made from antique sculptures and fragments. Porcu, who teaches anatomical drawing and sculpture, is credited with reintroducing the traditional practice of studying from antique casts and for designing and installing the new second floor antique Cast Wall for this purpose.<sup>i</sup> While not a part of most art school curriculums today, drawing from the cast was a fundamental requirement for art students in Europe and America throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In schools like L'École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, producing a masterful and technically successful drawing from the cast was a requirement for a student's promotion to life drawing classes, which was essential for the success of anyone endeavoring to become an artist.<sup>ii</sup> Failure to place in life drawing classes meant that the student was required to remain in the antique class, or find an alternative way to study from the nude, or, ultimately, quit artistic pursuits altogether. Even the Art Students League, which offered life drawing classes every weekday for both men and women, required a successful study from life or from the antique cast for acceptance into its life drawing classes throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>iii</sup>

In a twenty-first century context, studying from the cast seems to be a novel exercise that is as antique as the sculptures used to produce them. Once found in art schools, museums, and private collections throughout Europe and America, in the twentieth century, casts were deemed worthless relics of bygone eras, merely reproductions and not *real art*.<sup>iv</sup> As modern art philosophies dismissed narrative and the importance of the human form, replacing both with personal expression, formal elements, and



a primacy on the unique and original, study from the antique cast lost its value in the fine arts curriculum. Furthermore, as museums and schools began to acquire “original art,” there was no longer any room for the hundreds of casts in their possession. In 2006, the Metropolitan Museum

*“... it was believed that these works embodied the ‘contemporary aesthetics of simplicity, grandeur, cleanness, and harmony.’”*

of Art sold 177 casts in their collection at an auction at Sotheby's.<sup>v</sup> Vassar College, which acquired large collections of casts of antique and Renaissance sculpture and architectural features for student education, began removal of its collection in the 1920s, which culminated in the 1940s during the tenure of Agnes Ringe Claflin, chair of the department of art. Claflin envisioned Vassar as a place to study contemporary art and not one stuck in outdated tradition.<sup>vi</sup>

Yet, collecting and displaying plaster casts for the cultivation of proper taste and

for educational purposes is part of the larger art historical record. Plaster casts played an important role in the dissemination of humanism, a preference for the idealism of classical models, and the assumed moral superiority of classical forms. Moreover, in countries bereft of museums or proper artistic training, casts provided examples of good and acceptable art to those interested in self-cultivation and artistic patronage, and those who aspired to become artists. Therefore, the dismissal and destruction of casts disregards their importance to the history of art and aesthetic education.

The history of collecting plaster casts can be traced to the cabinets of curiosities and princely collections that were developing during the fifteenth century. For many learned gentlemen, especially those who engaged in humanist pursuits, and connoisseurs of art, it was imperative to own examples of classical and contemporary art pieces. Not only would these pieces make the collection an obligatory destination for artists and peers, they would also provide proof of the collector's cultural prowess, taste, and education. When the original was not available for purchase, it was acceptable to buy good quality casts.<sup>vii</sup> Like modern casts, these were one-to-one, direct replicas taken from the original that maintained its size, shape, and composition. For artists who had access to these collections, antique casts provided a way to study from classical examples, propagating the Renaissance emphasis on the ideal human form.

Drawing from the cast became an integral component to artistic study in the academies of art throughout Europe, like the Accademia di San Luca (1593) and later, the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture (1648). Like many of the academies founded between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the French Royal





Previous page: Chas. C. Curran, *The Antique Class*, 1888. Engraved by L. Engberg. From Marchel E. Landgren, *Years of Art: The Story of the Art Students League of New York*. (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1940), 50.

This page: Frank Vincent DuMond in an antique drawing class at the Art Students League, c. 1892. Archives of the Art Students League of New York.

Academy stressed the study of works of art from Greek and Roman antiquity because it was believed that these works embodied the “contemporary aesthetics of simplicity, grandeur, cleanness, and harmony.”<sup>viii</sup> Study from antique casts was particularly important in the eighteenth century when the renewed vogue for the classical ideal, caused partly by the discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum and the impassioned writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, collided with critics’ appeal to artists to create art that was morally uplifting and that could inspire the masses with its narratives of historical greatness. Winckelmann, Étienne La Font de Saint-Yenne, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, among others, saw these qualities in classical examples.<sup>ix</sup> The emphasis on studying from antique casts continued throughout the nineteenth century in art schools like L’École des Beaux-Arts (1819), which set the standard for art instruction.

Americans would have to wait until the nineteenth century for the establishment of art schools and museums. Even though the curriculum of art schools like the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (1805) and the National Academy of Design (1825) were modeled after European examples, most American artists traveled abroad to continue their artistic training and prove their talent. America simply lacked examples of antique and Renaissance art from which to study, as illustrated by the sparse or provincial collections of early American museums. Travel to Europe was necessary for anyone who wanted exposure to the Western art traditions and who endeavored to broaden their cultural sophistication.<sup>x</sup> As a result, schools like the National Academy of Design, the Art Students League, and Vassar College, and museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, collected good plaster casts of antique

and Renaissance examples for the art and aesthetic education of their students and the public. By 1889, the Metropolitan Museum displayed a variety of casts, including reliefs from the Parthenon and of Renaissance sculptures.<sup>xi</sup> For those people who could not afford to travel abroad, but wanted to acquire the proper taste and cultural knowledge, these casts were an invaluable source of education. Likewise, casts provided young artists with the ability to study from antique or Renaissance examples without the expense of European travel.

Today, historians and artists are beginning to see the value of casts, as demonstrated by the installation of the second floor Antique Cast Wall. While no longer charged with didactic lessons of moral edification and proper taste, casts like those found at the Art Students League grant students access to direct copies of sculptures

found only in the great collections of Europe, just as they did when the League first opened. For instructors of art history and fine arts, study from the cast is preferable to that of textbooks or digital images projected on a flat wall, especially when the original is not available. With the loss of important buildings and artworks worldwide because of war and wholesale destruction, casts also fulfill an essential documentary function.<sup>xii</sup> Finally, it can be argued that there is a romantic value to studying from antique or Renaissance casts. It links contemporary artists to the foundational elements of art education as they learn from deconstructing previous artists’ techniques and methods. It is with sincere hope that more schools and museums follow the example of the Art Students League and find a cherished place for their cast collection. 🌐

#### NOTES:

<sup>i</sup> The Art Students League, “Frank L. Porcu: Anatomical Drawing,” *Instructor’s Biography*, [www.theartstudentsleague.org/Classes/Instructors.aspx](http://www.theartstudentsleague.org/Classes/Instructors.aspx) (accessed December 28, 2015).

<sup>ii</sup> Kathleen Adler, “We’ll Always Have Paris: Paris as Training Ground and Proving Ground,” *Americans in Paris, 1860–1900*. (London: National Gallery, 2006), 27–28; Henry Moore Institute, “Drawing from the Cast: Principles Underlying Late Nineteenth Century Art and Design Education,” [www.henry-moore.org/docs/microsoft\\_word\\_\\_romans\\_drawing\\_from\\_the\\_cast\\_0.pdf](http://www.henry-moore.org/docs/microsoft_word__romans_drawing_from_the_cast_0.pdf) (accessed December 28, 2015).

<sup>iii</sup> Marchel E. Landgren, *Years of Art: The Story of the Art Students League of New York*. (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1940), 34; Pam Koob, “Life Drawing in the Early Years of the Art Students League,” *LINEA: The Artist’s Voice*, April 28, 2015, [www.asllinea.org/life-drawing-art-students-league/](http://www.asllinea.org/life-drawing-art-students-league/). (Note: The League offered Antique classes until 1950; however, most instructors did not require proficiency in the Antique for entrance into life drawing classes by the early-twentieth century.)

<sup>iv</sup> Cornell Collection of Antiques, “A Short History of Plaster Casts,” <https://antiquities.library.cornell.edu/casts/a-short-history> (accessed December 28, 2015).

<sup>v</sup> Carol Vogel, “Going to Auction: Pieces of History,” *New York Times*, January 13, 2006.

<sup>vi</sup> Vassar Encyclopedia, “Plaster Casts,” [vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/collections-curiosities/plaster-casts.html](http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/collections-curiosities/plaster-casts.html) (accessed December 28, 2015).

<sup>vii</sup> Carole Paul, “Preface: Toward a Collective History,” *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th- and Early-19th-Century Europe*, edited by Carole Paul. (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012), x–xii.

<sup>viii</sup> “First Art Lesson,” [www.culture.gouv.fr/ENSA/first\\_art\\_lesson.html](http://www.culture.gouv.fr/ENSA/first_art_lesson.html) (accessed December 28, 2015)

<sup>ix</sup> Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art*, 3rd Edition, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2012), 38–43, 48–50.

<sup>x</sup> Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790–1860*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 124–144, 146–168, 284–298.

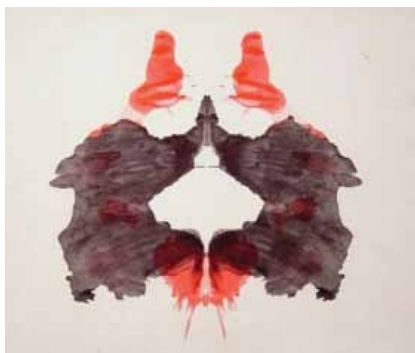
<sup>xi</sup> Vogel.

<sup>xii</sup> Cornell.

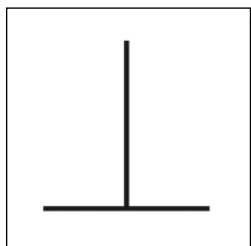
Nicki Orbach

# There Is More to Seeing

We take seeing for granted but, in fact, it is a complicated business, much of which occurs below our conscious awareness. Does everyone see the same way you do?



**Figure 1** Rorschach Test



**Figure 2** Vertical-Horizontal Illusion

For instance, look at the Rorschach test, **Figure 1**. What do you see?

There is no right or wrong answer. Human beings seek meaning and one has to interpret these ambiguous ink spots to do just that. How many meanings can you interpret and construct? We perceive in terms of pre-established categories. We

also perceive through our beliefs, concepts, feelings, personalities, expectations and intentions. As Anaïs Nin says, "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are." If that is the case, what are we actually seeing?

Leonardo da Vinci understood the value of looking at ambiguous stains as a way to creatively find meaning and then to use what he found there in his compositions. The shapes in the stain have no inherent meaning so we project meaning onto the stains, such as seeing a landscape. "You can even see different battle scenes and movements made up of unusual figures, faces with strange expressions and myriad things which you can transform into a complete and proper form constituting part of similar walls and rocks" (da Vinci, "Treatise on Painting").

Interpretation through who we are is an important factor that influences what we see. When drawing and painting, we are also influenced by various visual illusions. An illusion may be thought of as something that differs from physical reality. Is seeing believing? The following illusions may help guide one toward an answer.

Some illusions deal with comparing measurements. When looking at **Figure 2**, what appears longer, the vertical line or the horizontal line? In physical reality (using a ruler), we will find that they are the same size. When we compare the vertical to the horizontal something happens: a misperception. We judge the vertical line as being longer when we compare it

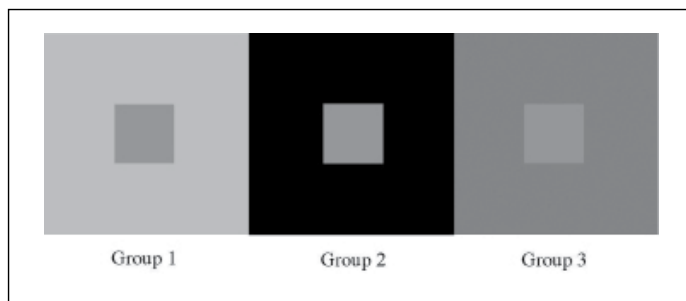
to the horizontal line. Think of the problems one encounters when drawing the model. By sight, without any measuring aids, try comparing the width of something to the length of something else. For instance, from a front view,

does the width of the clavicle appear the same or different from the length of the sternum?

There are also illusions that deal with brightness. Look at **Figure 3**. Which inner square appears brighter? If you use a photometer to measure the physical brightness of the inner squares, you will find they are all the same. The illusion depends on the darkness or brightness of the surrounding background. I have looked at this illusion many times and I still can't believe my eyes. This illusion directly applies to drawing and painting. If you paint the model on a dark-toned background, the painted image of the model may look lighter than if you had painted him/her on the white canvas. Not just that, but look at the edges between the inner square and its background. In Group 3 there is a soft edge and the inner square appears to be in a different place in space than Group 2. Group 2 has a harder edge, pushing the inner square forward. It also appears lighter than the other inner squares. It is important to note that, many times, things are not in isolation and their appearance depends on what is next to them. We judge things in their context and their interrelationship with other things.

In addition to the effects illusions have on visual perception, drawing, and painting, they also give us insight into how the brain constructs meaning. Sometimes the meaning of a work of art is open to many interpretations.

Jasper Johns is an artist who is interested in visual perception and the meaning we project onto images. Look at **Figure 4**. Not only is he dealing with an iconic image, the American flag, but the viewer must actively participate with the painting in terms of creating the real colors of the flag. He does this by using the afterimage of the green flag. The afterimage will continue to appear on the gray square, but in the complementary colors (red, white, and blue) to the flag above it.



**Figure 3** Simultaneous contrast

# Than Meets the Eye



**Figure 4** Flag, lithograph

This is how it's done. Stare at the white dot in the middle of the green flag for 30 seconds up to 1 minute. Do not move your eyes and try not to blink. When the time is up, blink and then focus on the black dot in the middle of the gray square. What happens? A very faint, red, white, and blue flag appears briefly. If you don't experience the afterimage, try it again. It works best if you see the original. Both MoMA and the Metropolitan Museum of Art own this lithograph.

In **Figure 5**, *Spring*, Johns pays homage to ambiguity in his use of figure/ground illusions. Looking at the right side of the image, we see the Rubin vase illusion. If you focus on the white, you see the vase. If you focus on the gray, its meaning changes and you see two profiles. Which is figure and which is ground? There is an equivocal or ambiguous relationship. Under the vase that looks three-dimen-

sional (due to the blue form shadow on the left side of the vase), there is a purple squarish shape. Within this shape is a faint image of the old woman/young woman illusion. It all depends on how your mind creates what it sees. At the left edge above the hand is a yellow squarish shape. Within the yellow shape is the duck/rabbit illusion. Depending on where you focus, you may see a duck or you may see a rabbit. Johns stated, "I am interested in the idea of sight, in the use of the eye. I am interested in how we see and why we see the way we do." These are just some of the complexities of vision of which most of us are unaware. They influence such things as taking measurements to find proportions or the right brightness or value of an object. 🌟



**Figure 5** The Seasons (Spring), etching and aquatint on paper

One thing to remember is that there is another aspect of seeing that relates to ideas other than measurable quantities, as the following quotes attest to:

*"We have five senses in which we glory and which we recognize and celebrate, senses that constitute the sensible world for us. But there are other senses—secret senses, sixth senses, if you will—equally vital, but unrecognized, and unlauded...unconscious, automatic."*

Oliver Sacks

*"The common eye sees only the outside of things, and judges by that, but the seeing eye pierces through and reads the heart and the soul, finding there capacities which the outside didn't indicate or promise, and which the other kind couldn't detect."*

Mark Twain

*"My spirit has ways of seeing that my eyes cannot comprehend."*

Philippe Benichou

*"I shut my eyes in order to see."*

Paul Gauguin

*"One's destination is never a place, but rather a new way of looking at things."*

Henry Miller

# Sovereignty by Metal Fabrication

Haksul Lee



Haksul Lee, *Proceeding Being*, stainless steel, aluminum, Kevlar, ball bearings, 8 x 9 x 9 feet

I was born to a middle-class family in a quiet residential area in Seoul. My father was the principal of a public elementary school and my mother was a piano teacher. I was the youngest of three with two older sisters. In my neighborhood, kids went to the same school and played together after school, most of the time without supervision of the parents. It was not a very small neighborhood, maybe the size of SoHo. Somehow everybody knew everybody, and there was a great sense of community where everybody looked after one another and where kids were raised and disciplined together.

When I was 16 or 17, I had a very vague and abstract idea about what I wanted to do. It had to have something to do with creativity. I had to have sovereignty. I thought being an artist would fulfill both of them. But I didn't have a clear concept about being an artist. I got a BFA in sculpture from Kwandong University in Korea, but I was very frustrated with the college art education I was getting. The professors were authoritarian. It was hard to argue constructively with them. If I didn't understand something, they seemed most concerned with defending the integrity of their authority. That kind of pressure and attitude from higher authority really suffocated me. However, I had one professor who had studied in New York City. His attitude was different. He encouraged questions and opposing ideas, and nurtured discussion. I started fantasizing about being in New York City because of him. I also thought, and still believe, that the prevalent authoritarianism in education was a sign of a lack of confidence in what they, the professors, knew and what they taught.

As in many East Asian countries, modernization in Korea didn't happen voluntarily.





Through the time of political and social structural change from a caste system to a more open modern system, Japanese occupation, and the Korean War, Koreans didn't have the luxury to take time to selectively choose, internalize, and integrate new ideas from the Western world with its own. Before we really understood the ideas, we just had to accept and use them. It created a huge collective inferiority complex that has been transferred through generations. I came to believe I had to get out of there to get a different perspective on myself and my country.

I had been studying the art theory of Shitao, a very influential Chinese painter and art theorist in the Qing Dynasty. Jumping from one to another major library to look for books about him and his theory, I couldn't understand why more books about him were in English than in Korean. I concluded that English was indeed the most powerful

**"I WAS STUDYING THE ART THEORY OF SHITAO, A VERY INFLUENTIAL CHINESE PAINTER AND ART THEORIST IN THE QING DYNASTY."**

language, especially in the academic world. I left my country for New York City to master the language, get firsthand experience of modern art in the center of it, and make my own judgment about it.

I have a BA in art history from Queens College, but it is impossible to talk about adjusting to living in New York City without talking about the Art Students League. I have been in New York for 14 years, and for more than 10 of these years, I have been coming to the League as a student, an employee, a monitor, a member, and an instructor. I have been coming here for my friends of all ages and ethnicities, in different stages in their careers, and with different ideas. We have one thing in common: we all love art. For me, the people are the Art Students League, not the building or the institution. Because of our shared love of art, I felt I was already accepted and that made it possible to make New York my second home. As I have gotten busier, I cannot spend as much time at the League as before, but the League is unquestionably my root and my home. Because of the League, I have successfully adjusted to living in New York.

Another thing I love about New York is the concentrated art scene. I think the city is for the arts, like Silicon Valley is for the high tech companies. I remember reading an article in *The New York Times* where a high tech developer said he can develop a product many times faster in Silicon Valley than anywhere else because of the concentration of infrastructure, communication, and inspiring experience. Museums and galleries in New York are many in number, diverse, and competitive. There are a lot of art residency programs, grants, and exhibition opportunities. There are many world-class fabrication shops that accommodate all different kinds of needs. On top of all this, you can meet people with similar interests and exchange knowledge and opinions with ease. As much

competition as the city poses, it also provides unbeatable resources for artists, both physically and inspirationally.

My own artwork involves welding. I don't particularly like welding itself. I like metal fabrication, which includes abrading, welding, soldering, forging, machining, etching, patination, and many more processes. For any one of these, one can spend a lifetime to study. I am far from mastering any of them. Welding is a part of the big picture. I think calling metal sculpture class welding class is misleading.

Using metal is appealing to me for the same reasons metal has been used for art since the Bronze Age—its plasticity and strength. How many materials known and available to us can be liquid or solid, can be soft or hard, and can be flexible or rigid in our hands? Its plasticity allows us to be able to change things in almost any stage of the production. You can make things as organic as a figure either by casting or by fabricating. You can make things as geometric and accurate as tools and machines. In fact, the technicians in metal sculpture class spend quite a lot of time making tools for the



students and for themselves. I think the potential usage of metal in artmaking is almost unlimited. It really gives me huge leverage in my artmaking, and I am so proud that I can share what I know about metal fabrication with my fellow artists.

I think there are artists who believe in art and those who don't. Professor Hwang, who taught me art history at Kwandong University, was a true believer in art. Not only did I learn art history in the clearest way without unnecessary jargon, but I also learned passion and love for art from it. Silya Kiese at the League gave me enough confidence to make me able to do more than just try not to make mistakes, and instead to trust more in my own judgment. It was Bruce Dorfman who really emphasized



clarity. He said anything that is not part of the statement shouldn't be there. I remember he talked about his "Gong" theory, that is, your artwork should make a visual sound like the sound of a big bell. I shouldn't make many small sounds that are not coherent. The "Gong" sound is not simple. It can be rich and complex. In fact, to simplify it, the "Gong" sound is made up of three parts: the initial sound of the strike, the reverberation that continues to sound, and the resonance that is heard as the vibration of the bell as it dies away. When you hear the sound, though, it comes to you as one big, deep, and clear sensation. Henry Finkelstein is also a very important instructor for me. He asserted the plastic visual statement. The plastic statement has much to do with the fluctuating space relationship among elements. Once you are aware of the plastic statement you are making, every element automatically falls into the right place in the statement. It seems like all of my mentors say the same thing in different words.

Mastering one medium can be a great thing to do when it is necessary, but I think your visual statement and the necessity for it have to come first. Then, according to that, you decide what medium to use and master. It might be metals or fabrics, but must be determined by a specific reason related to the purpose of the work. I have a plan to incorporate wood in my future projects. I used to use clay, wood, and stone that are so-called conventional materials. I don't know what will be my medium in the future.

Many artists, from old masters to contemporary artists, have inspired me, too many to mention here. The most direct influences on my current works are Lee Bontecou, Alexander Calder, George Rickey, Anish Kapoor, and Theo Jansen. I also get inspired by many well-known and unknown

artists I encounter, including my students. I know it sounds too general, but it is really true that everything that surrounds me in everyday life is my biggest inspiration.

Years ago I suddenly realized how important my own opinion and viewpoint on my art are. That was my eureka moment. I have never seen an artist who is not in love with his or her own art. All the good ones I personally know have a somewhat narcissistic view of their art. I always tell my students and artist friends that if they are not sure that their art is good, then it is probably not. You always try to find some kind of a stamp of approval from a higher authority, but that has to come after your self-approval. You yourself are, and should be, the biggest fan and the biggest and most authentic critic of your own work because nobody knows what you are trying to do until you succeed at it.

What motivates me to make art is prob-

ably a childlike desire to be recognized and loved. As a father, I see how much attention my son needs from me and people around him. He constantly tries to be better at what he thinks is great and tries to share the greatness with me and everybody else. I think my desire as an artist is not much different from that. The dialogue between the artist and audience begins both when and after the artist pleases himself or herself. Because I have a family to support, I have many jobs. I teach at the League, work for the maintenance department of the League, and I work as a fabricator for other artists. It is challenging to balance your own artwork and the work you do for a living. Sometimes, the work for a living takes over. Many artists are going through what I am going through. True happiness only comes when you have sovereignty in your life. 🌱



Artwork by Haksul Lee





*Gregg Kreutz's new book, Oil Painting Essentials: Mastering Portraits, Figures, Still Lives, Landscapes, and Interiors, is an essential guide demonstrating the universal oil painting techniques that allow artists to expand their horizons, break out of ruts, and master a variety of subjects.*



# Afterword: A Few Final Thoughts...

Gregg Kreutz

I remember, early on in my painting struggles, having a breakthrough and thinking, This is it! I've figured it out!—only to discover in the middle of the next painting that this wasn't it, that there was, in fact, no “it.”

While certain insights are invaluable for developing as a painter, every painting—at least every painting I've ever done—at some point becomes a battle zone. In my life, I've never painted along happily from glorious beginning to triumphant ending. There's always something. It might be a drawing problem, it might be a color issue, it might be not enough drama (it's almost never too much drama). But it's always something. And in a way, that's comforting to know. Thinking that the process of painting should run smoothly sets you up for disappointment. Accepting that trouble will eventually rear its head and snap at you makes for less trauma when it does.

To a nonpainter, the act of realistic oil painting might seem like just a pleasant diversion, a fairly harmless way to pass the time. To someone in the thick of getting a compelling image on the canvas, though, painting a picture can feel more like one of those juggling acts where candles, books, a bouquet of flowers, and a few chainsaws are flying through the air. For the painter to coordinate color coherence, meaningful brushwork, astute observation, design coherence, and drama calls upon a heroic amount of focus and concentration. And that concentration can sometimes have surprising results.

An example: I was once in the process

of painting a bouquet of flowers, and I was working on a single flower in the middle of the bouquet. In this intense moment, all my energies were focused on trying to get the flower's color right, trying to get the edges right, trying to get the flower to relate to the flower next to it, trying to situate it on the canvas correctly in terms of near/far space, trying to make it fit into the design arrangement of the bouquet, trying to keep my brushwork expressive, and most important—sometimes hardest of all—trying to remember which flower I was painting!


In the middle of this frenzy of intense concentration, my mind suddenly quit. I simply couldn't sustain that intense focus any longer. All at once, my mind decided the whole thing was way too hard. After grinding away intensely for a few hours trying to keep track of everything, my mind announced, basically, Enough! I'm outta here.

The weird thing is, right after I had that feeling—immediately after I said to myself, Enough!—my mind relaxed and painting suddenly got easier. Why? What's that about? I think it's that prior to my mind saying stop, I was working linearly, making lots of separate decisions and putting information together piece by piece. After I decided the whole thing was impossible, my mind relaxed. And by giving up, it stopped exerting effort. Then, all of a sudden, with no effort getting in the way, I was painting holistically.

I've often wished that I could go directly to that state—the holistic state where everything flows together—but as far as I can tell there's no easy access to that zone. You

can't just will yourself there and you can't get there through effort because, after all, the nature of what you're trying to achieve is effortlessness.

In that sense, of course, painting is a perfect metaphor for life. As a wise painter once pointed out, everything that happens on the canvas has its life equivalent. Which is why realistic painting is important—it has essential questions to explore: Why do things look the way they do? What is the underlying structure? What communicates—and what doesn't? What's harmonious? What's significant? These questions—in a sense, these philosophical questions—have been grappled with by artists for centuries and show no sign of fully yielding their answers. Since life is fluid—open, ever changing, mysterious—there can never be a solid formula to explain everything. The notion that the universe is reductive and that science has figured it all out disregards essential truths. Einstein said, “What can be measured isn't always important, and what's important can't always be measured.”

Developing as an oil painter, then, requires perseverance, sensitivity, intelligence, compassion, flexibility, and the ability to see the whole instead of parts. It's a lifelong journey, and I don't believe a real artist ever “arrives.” Since existence is ever changing, artists—both you and I—need to evolve and change with it. Only within that shifting, moving flow of reality can oil painting essentials lead to truth. 



# Comics and Sequential Art

Steven Walker

I am trying to pinpoint when I made the conscious decision to spend the rest of my life drawing. I've been told I was drawing as soon as I was old enough to hold a pencil. I was constantly surrounded by comics and science fiction novels and movies, and I wanted to depict the things I read about and saw. I remember being in grade school and looking at what careers would be available in the future. I must have been 10 or 11. There was a book that I looked at that said a commercial artist could make x amount of dollars a year, and I think that sealed it for me—just the thought that I could draw and get paid for it. I had wanted to draw comics, but I was under the impression that the people who drew comics did it because they loved it, and I was partially right. They loved it and they got paid to draw. Once that settled in, I made the decision that I was going to be an artist for the rest of my life.

Comics didn't just speak to me, they shouted. The medium clawed its way inside my head and set up camp like a squatter in an abandoned building. Comics came into my life when I was very young, so there weren't a lot of other things in my head at the time. Stories had always been there, but the juxtaposition of words and pictures that is comics just clicked in me. Comics aren't a passive medium like television or movies, nor is it voyeuristic, like prose. Comics are interactive in the way that other media are not, and that ability to connect with the reader as an active participant has always made comics appealing to me.

I started learning basic skills in middle school and high school. My high school had an excellent arts program that had everything, from basic drawing to photography. We even had a class about advertising design. It was like a foundation year of college.

I took every art class that the school offered, and in my senior year I was able to take mostly art classes, which were great. I also attended the Art Students League of Huntington, which offered a comics class. It was taught by John Tartaglione, a former artist for Marvel Comics. John gave me my first real lessons in human anatomy and panel-to-panel storytelling. After high school, I attended the School of Visual Arts, which at the time was the only school that offered a degree in cartooning illustration. It was an eye opener. I was in class sometimes nine hours a day, five days a week. My professors were all working professionals, like Joe Orlando and Carmine Infantino, and had helped shepherd the medium of comics. They treated our classes like an artist's bullpen where they were the editors. It was a complete immersion in what I wanted to do.

There are so many artists who have influenced me and whose work I admire, and not just comic book artists, but illustrators and surrealists as well. My earliest favorite is a guy named Ul De Rico. He wrote a children's book called *The Rainbow Goblins*. What made this book unique was that the illustrations were all painted in oil on oak panels in the style of the surrealists. Seeing those very lush images at such a young age left an indelible impression on me. John Romita Sr., who drew the definitive Spider-Man, was and is still a big influence for his work ethic. N.C. Wyeth, Howard Pyle, Arthur Rackham, Maxfield Parrish—all from the Golden Age of Illustration—are favorites because of their ability to depict a scene with their use of color and drawing technique. J. C. Leyendecker, who is also included in that era, is something a bit more to me. His draftsmanship and use of color is second to none. Then there are comic book artists like Walt Simonson, Mike Mignola, John Buscema, and my current personal favorite, Stuart Immonen. These gentlemen all have an understanding and mastery of their craft that puts them up, in my mind, with some of the greatest artists and storytellers of all time.

I admire some film directors, too. Film and comics have a bit of a symbiotic relation-

“*Telling stories is the oldest art form that humanity as a species has. It transcends cultures and religions and is the way we find our immortality.*”



ship; they have influenced each other heavily. Ultimately it comes down to storytelling and how to go about telling that story. George Lucas brought mythology into the modern era. He creates what he wants to create without bowing to what the public expects. Terry Gilliam has the ability to tell a story that crosses genre and styles of filmmaking. Ridley Scott is a master of composition and the look of a film. Others who inspire me are Jean-Pierre Jeunet, who can create a story of such whimsy with wonderfully surreal imagery, and Guillermo Del Toro, who has the ability to translate the things he sees in his head into the most beautiful stories.

I've been very lucky in that several people in my life have been mentors. Jamal Igle took me under his wing and helped me break into the industry. Walt Simonson helped to hone my skills and taught me about longevity in the comics industry and how to navigate through comics. Those two guys have had the biggest roles in my professional career. So it's all their fault.

A turning point came after a party at Jamal Igle's apartment in Brooklyn. I spent the night sleeping in the bathroom, on a tiny down bathmat. Prior to that night, I had finished a stand-alone comic story that I was trying to shop around and had been told the same thing about 200 times over—the takeaway was that I still needed training. Jamal had been working for DC Comics as the artist on *Firestorm*, and within a few years would build a significant reputation as an artist's artist in comics, doing a great run on *Supergirl* and putting out his creator-owned series, *Molly Danger*. Jamal and I were bleary-eyed, talking over coffee, and he mentioned that he needed an assistant. Without missing a beat, I said I would do it. I really want to say that at that moment a giant robot monster blew through the door and we fought it across the neighborhood, finally taking it down at the entrance of Prospect Park, but that would be a bold-faced lie. Our friend Keith came into the room and shouted, "Who wants Chinese?" which garnered groans and upset stomachs all around. But, I can wish for the murder bot.

Stories that blow my hair back are important to any project I want to work on. If the story hits that spot in the back of my head where the imagery starts to form and I can see how the story is going to look and play out, it's a good bet I'm going to want to work on it. I tend to lean toward science fiction and fantasy stories, stuff along the lines of Alfred Bester, H.P. Lovecraft, Frank Herbert, the Flash Gordon serials, Fritz Lieber, and Robert E. Howard. Those stories are wonderfully weird and appeal to me.

I'm a big fan of "the hero's journey"—type stories. Big epic stuff, and stuff that doesn't take itself too seriously. So stories like Walt Simonson's *Thor* run and his new book *Ragnarok*; Warren Ellis's and Darick Robertson's *Transmetropolitan*; Warren Ellis's and

“Stories that blow my hair back are important.... If the story hits that spot in the back of my head... it's a good bet I'm going to... work on it.”





Stuart Immonen's Nextwave series; Brian K. Vaughan's and Fiona Staples's Saga; Mike Mignola's Hellboy; Garth Ennis's and Steve Dillon's Preacher; Juanjo Guarnido's and Juan Diaz Canales's Blacksad; Moebius's Arzach; and the list goes on and on. These stories are the ones that get me going and make me want to tell stories. They also set the bar incredibly high.

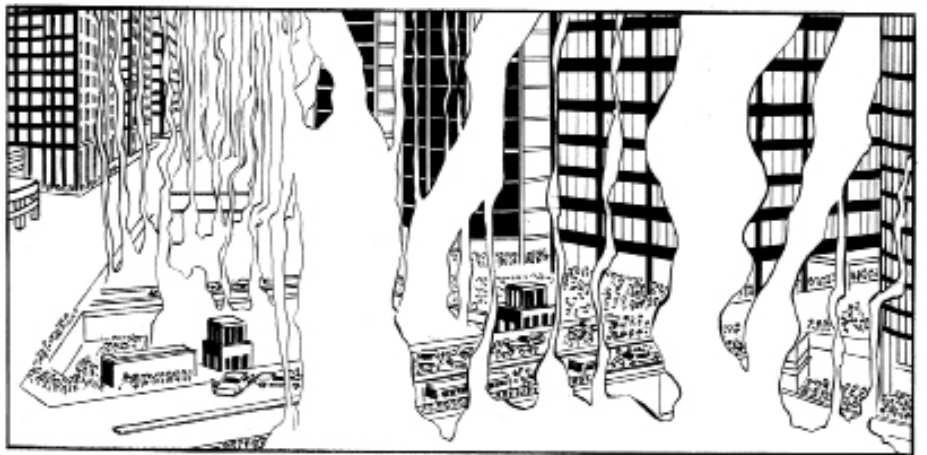
When it comes to scripting, I follow either the Marvel or the DC Comics way, depending on the story. Some of them need more of a written treatment, and some of them just need a plot synopsis. If I'm creating on my own, I'll do a sort of hybrid of the two, where I have a basic plot synopsis that I start sketching from, but if there is a part where the story needs a little more structure, I'll write some full script. If I'm working with a collaborator, I prefer full script. Collaboration is the melding of two separate creative individuals creating something greater than the sum of its parts, and both individuals need to be seen in the work.

The inspiration for stories can come from anywhere at anytime, and as long as I'm aware of it and receptive to it, I know stories will come. I'll be walking around New York or I'll see some people talking, and get story ideas. Story ideas will come when I'm brainstorming with students or about to fall asleep. The shower seems to be fertile for inspiration, which if I think about it, tends to be the place a lot of creative people have their "aha!" moments. Inspiration is just one of those indefinable things that can come from everything.

There's a quote from James Brown—"If I don't work, I don't eat"—and I live by that. Having a place to live, food to eat, clothes, those are all real good motivations to keep creating art. So that is part of my motivation for creating comics. The other part is that I like telling stories and talking about stories and having people read and enjoy those stories. Eating and telling stories, those are my motivations and I think they're pretty good.

Freelance has inherent feast or famine moments, when the work is abundant and then a bit scarce. But work will continue to come in if you look hard enough for it. Living as an artist is simple. Work. Work all the time. If you have a deadline, meet it. If you do and you come in under deadline and the client has a good experience working with you, there will be more work. Money is only an issue if you make it an issue. If you've got a story to tell, tell it—whatever that story is and however you can. My dream project would be working on a story written by George Lucas and Guillermo del Toro, penciled by me and Walt Simonson, and inked by Al Williamson. It'd be a glorious disaster, but I'd love to read it.

Telling stories is the oldest art form that humanity as a species has. It transcends cultures and religions and is the way we find our immortality. I'm proud to be a part of that tradition, humbled that some people find my stories enjoyable, and in awe of the students who call me their teacher. I look forward to the stories that they are going to tell. 🍷



Artwork by Steven Walker

# BUILDING PEACE



Artwork by Andres Hoyos  
Clockwise from top: *Paz*; *Soul of New York*; *Squares in Movement*; *Dawn New York City*

The Consulate of Colombia exhibited *Building Peace*, curated by Karina Grigoryeva, in March 2016.

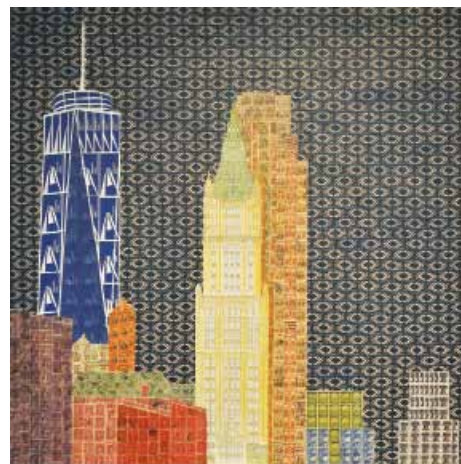
Peace is a right and an obligation for all of us. It is daily homework that all Colombians must take on. Our highly desired peace does not only depend on an agreement between the guerillas and the government, but also begins with each one of us and is based on the mutual respect between us.

It is not easy to forgive and to forget all the pain and damage caused by more than 50 years of armed conflict. But if we are able to put a little piece of ourselves into the peace process, we will soon be able to see the conflict as part of our past, a painful chapter of our history.

Everything in life is a process. If we are persistent, we will be able to achieve results. My work involves a long process of composition, but when I finish a piece it is good to see the result. With my latest work. I want to invite you to participate in a broader conversation of being part of the peace process. Only with the participation of all of us will we be able to achieve PAZ.



# Andres Hoyos



I have always admired art. Since I was a child I had an inclination toward modern art. My favorite thing to do was drawing and painting. There were a few times that I got caught by my math teacher during the class because I was sketching. But it wasn't until I finished my bachelor's degree in business and moved to New York 16 years ago that I became more interested in the arts and started exploring by making pieces with stamps and other mixed-media techniques. At that time, I realized how happy I felt when I was working on one of my pieces and that I wanted to be an artist. When I was a child, I took drawing and clay classes in a cultural center in my hometown. I did not have any more formal training until I started taking classes at the League several years ago with Silya Kiese and Mariano Del Rosario. In 2013 I studied for a semester at Escola Massana in Barcelona taking painting and sketching classes. Currently I'm taking Bruce Dorfman's class, and I recently started the welding class with Haksul Lee.

For the past ten years, I have been working with used postage stamps and other discarded materials. One of the big draws in working with recycled materials is that they come with their own history and there are memories attached to them. As I put the stamps on a piece, I start thinking about how many people have touched the stamps and how many messages have come through them. They stop being just stamps and become part of a larger pattern. The repetitive nature of the work helps me to let my imagination go. When I see the transformation from something old, sad, and broken into something else, it's very intriguing.

My hope in producing art from recycled materials is to provoke a bigger conversation about how important it is to preserve the planet. I want people to take that little extra step to look at things differently. I hope when someone sees one of my pieces—the colors, the texture, the form, the space—that they become more conscious about the planet and how important it is to conserve our natural resources.

I love that art offers endless possibilities and the flexibility to explore new techniques. It's also very gratifying to see the reaction of people when they see my work and when they support me by giving me stamps or materials that they think could be interesting.

It's not a secret that New York is an expensive city. I work in real estate, which gives me the ability to be flexible with my work schedule and to dedicate time for my art. However, if money were not an issue, I would love to live and work with an indigenous community to develop a program to create art from recycled materials. 🌱



# From Monk to Outside Artist

## How the Contradictions of Faith Fueled the Creative Process

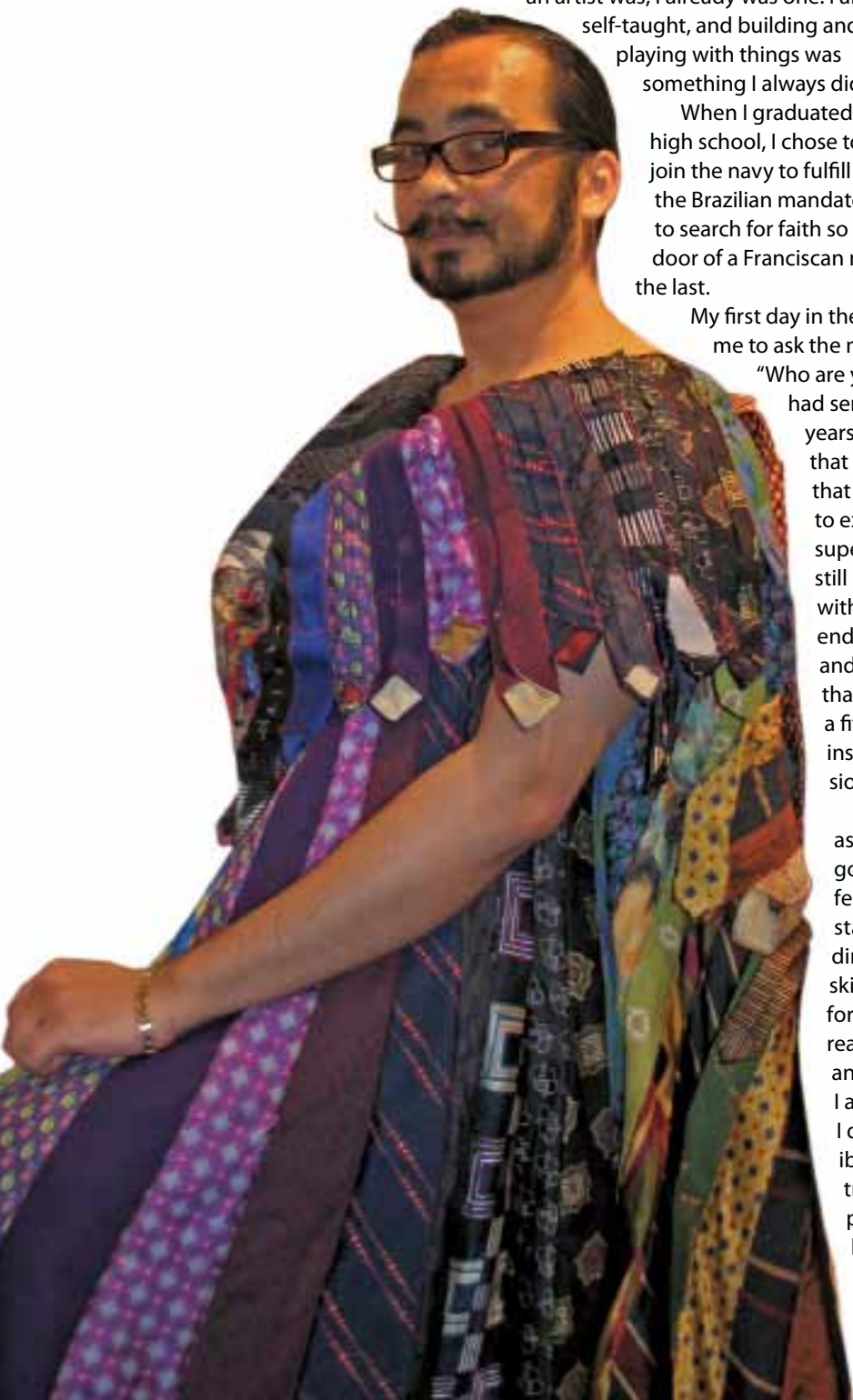
C. L. DeMedeiros

**M**y parents always gave me opportunities to be creative and to express myself, so without knowing what an artist was, I already was one. I am self-taught, and building and playing with things was something I always did.

When I graduated high school, I chose to join the navy to fulfill the Brazilian mandatory draft requirement. After military duty, I had the urge to search for faith so I decided to reach out to a monastery. I knocked on the door of a Franciscan monastery in Rio, and they let me in as a test—probably the last.

My first day in the monastery, a terrible remark about Jews prompted me to ask the monk why he made the remark and his response was, “Who are you?” The monk who accepted me told everyone that I had served in the navy, and “We accepted him as a test.” Three years later I met one of the monks who had been present at that time, and he said my fate had been decided after I asked that question. They kept me for a year, but they had decided to expel me. I went back to my parents and worked in a supermarket. Nevertheless, my desire to find religion was still strong. A former employer’s daughter put me in touch with an old-fashioned seminary with retreats and spiritual endeavors. Again, the anti-Semitism of the monks, nuns, and bishops drove me back to my parents. I was worried that something was wrong with me because I couldn’t find a fit. I traveled to different monasteries for 14 years. Deep inside, I felt that I was an agnostic. Yet, I was trying to envision what my life would be like if I became ordained.

A call from my friend informed me of an amazing monastery in Bolivia. I took a bus and train across the country, got a six-week visa, and embraced this place because I felt so welcome. The people were amazing and cheerful. I stayed seven years. During my last three years, my spiritual director asked what I liked most, besides prayer. Without skipping a beat, I said, “Art.” Then he said, “Is there a way for you to embrace art in your leisure time?” Every day I read the cultural and art calendar in the local newspaper, and I knew there was an upcoming ceramic workshop. I asked for nine months of retreat, and it was granted. I didn’t tell anyone that I was a monk. It was an incredible time, and I started to build my circle of art friends. I tried to be very open-minded because I wasn’t trying to proselytize. There was a risk of being ostracized if I was labeled as a religious person. Eventually they found out anyway, and the artists felt that I was too free-spirited to be a monk. I found my home among these artists. After





the nine months, I came to the realization that I did not believe in man's version of G-d. I believe in universal goodness. Everyone is born to do good things. The fact that you are born into one religion might exclude you from experiencing the belief of universal goodness.

After seven years of studying philosophy and theology, plus the three years of intense association with the art world, I managed a nonprofit art gallery. I felt much closer to everything connected with art than with religion. If there was a G-d, G-d would be much bigger than what was offered to me through religion: a G-d of inclusion and never exclusion, a G-d of acceptance and not rejection, a G-d that would truly embrace everyone and everything, inspiring peace and tolerance.

Eight years ago, my mother called to tell me that she had cancer and was starting treatment. She wanted to reconnect with her family and try to wrap her mind around forgiveness for peace of mind. She lost her breast and almost died. At that time, she discovered that she was Jewish. She traveled to the north of Brazil, and her nephew told her our Judaism can be traced back 14 generations. Her family escaped the Portuguese Inquisition. We had no idea.

In 1996, I attended a members' meeting at the Art Students League with a man I met when I was in the navy, who had invited me to stay with him if I visited. Back then I was working at 54th and Broadway. As I walked into the League, I experienced the delicious and familiar smell of turpentine and oil paint. I felt that I was home again. I couldn't take classes then because I was too busy trying to survive, to make ends meet. Fast forward to 2005: I was back in New York and able to take a shot and pursue an art career; the time was right. I was able to do art and become a true artist thanks to the Art Students League's Exhibition Outreach program. I was discovered by legendary art dealer Marion Harris, who sells my work. I never looked back. Art is my home, and I'm very happy pursuing artistic endeavors.

When I first came to the Art Students League, I was short on money so I asked for a class where the materials were affordable. I learned about mixed-media, combining objects, and making constructions using found objects. My purpose is always giving new life to materials that are destined for the landfill. There is beauty in everything. To be able to transform broken dolls, ripped wood, textiles, and new things gives me immense satisfaction. I cannot get any satisfaction if I don't do what I do.

I would not be able to do what I do without the help and support of my partner, Alan Tulin. Additionally, I found a way to sustain myself financially by being a part-time caregiver for an autistic young man.

The focus of my art is religion, politics, culture, and personal stories. I'm a storyteller, and I try to be a good one. Every single piece has its own unique story. The ideas come from my experiences, memories, dreams, and everything in-between.

My mother gave me the best lesson before I left home. I grew up listening to her say, "When you leave our house for the world, accept, respect, and tolerate, and the world will be an easy place to be." Grace Knowlton pointed out that those three words formed an acronym: "ART."

When I met my first collector, I wasn't expecting to make a sale. What I do sometimes can cause an uproar. Everything I build comes from a place of love, a lot of love. Love moves me to make my world a better place. I always remember the reactions to my controversial pieces; the memories of those reactions could fill a book or two.

To make a difference, we need to shake up some rusty and narrow minds. Welcome to my world. I believe that art cannot be taught. You can learn art history. You can learn how to be skilled in making paintings, drawings, or sculptures. I believe that everybody is an artist if they have a chance to make art. My dream project would be creating a place where people can express themselves without being bound by instructions, especially kids and teenagers. I now look back and notice that I was lucky to always do what I wanted, and that I was always able to be creative. I wish everyone could have the hint of satisfaction that I had in pursuing what I wanted.

I will share time with anyone interested in visiting my art studio at Silk Mills in Union City. Prepare to be amazed. I've participated in the Outsider Art Fair from 2011 to 2015 and will be at the Outsider Art Fair 2016 as well. If you miss the fair, Marion Harris Gallery is still representing me. 🌐

godskin9@yahoo.com.br



Artwork by C. L. DeMedeiros



Hanna Seiman, *Hiroshima's Garden*, 2015, acrylic on canvas, 31 x 48 inches

# Poured Feelings

Hanna Seiman

As long as I can remember, I've been drawing and painting. My formal training started as an art major in high school. I was very fortunate to attend a school with an intensive art program. In college, I majored in history and minored in art history. However, I also continued with art classes.

After college I taught history and participated in a hands-on art program for my local elementary school district. I also taught art at the local community college.

Through the years, my style has evolved. Initially, I was a realist painter specializing in portraits and landscapes. Then my approach loosened and I embraced impressionism. All that changed when I saw a Helen Frankenthaler retrospective at MoMA. That was my "eureka" moment. From then on, all I wanted to do was create stained abstract paintings. It was not a quick transition. It is much easier to paint something that you're looking at,

whether it's an actual object or a photo.

Having no prior training in abstract painting, I found the League was an ideal place to begin. My first instructor and my mentor was William Scharf. His input was invaluable to my growth as an abstract artist. There is a long list of artists who have influenced my work—Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Turner, Van Gogh, just to name a few.

I place unstretched, unprimed canvas on a low platform and pour washes of thinned acrylic paint directly onto the canvas. I usually have a clear vision of what I want on the canvas before I start. In the beginning, I used to sketch what I wanted on the canvas, but I no longer do that.

I also create assemblages on board, Plexiglas or canvas with synthetic polymers. Unlike my paintings, these tend to be small.

My work is emotionally driven. You could say that I literally pour my feelings onto the canvas. The works can represent

places I've visited or events in the news as well as my own experiences. When viewing a painting, we all bring our own interpretations based on our personal experiences—what I am expressing on the canvas does not have to be the same as what viewers are seeing, since they have their own histories from which to interpret what's on the canvas. I want viewers just to be engaged with the work. My intent is to make an interesting piece of art—something that leaves an impression.

Six of my paintings are displayed in a \$26 million duplex apartment for sale at 50 Riverside Boulevard, New York City. The paintings will be there for the year or until the apartment is sold. I participated in Holiday House 2015, an interior design showcase that supports the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. Leonard Lauder was the honorary chair of the event. I am currently represented by Carter Burden Gallery in Chelsea. 🌐

# NOT ALL TRUTHS SHOULD BE TOLD

Nadine Renazile

PERSPECTIVES

I was born in Haiti, a place mostly known for that ubiquitous phrase “the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.” For me, however, Haiti is a mythological and spellbound place where I experienced a wondrous childhood. I remember this one particular day very clearly: I went off exploring on my own (as I tended to do). The air was heavy and sweet smelling. I remember feeling the heat of the blazing sun as I walked around a nearby neighborhood aptly called La Vallée du Silence (Silent Valley), and feeling slightly dazed. I was barefoot (a habit my grandmother criticized as “unbecoming”), and I remember birds singing, a hazy horizon, an empty road, the houses with their large flowering trees that overflowed their gates and the distant barking of dogs. I was in a trance. I felt an incredible sense of place. I was 13. Little did I know that it would be decades before I would feel like that again. Being at the Art Students League in my fifties and feeling that incandescent joy, I began to paint.

I’ve been an art lover my entire life. I first developed an interest in art through books. Later, during my travels, I gravitated to museums and galleries. I became a collector of art. It was inevitable that I would build up the courage to create works from my own inner vision. Three years ago, I decided to take painting classes at the Art Students League, and there amidst the chaos of the studio, I found my voice. I’ve discovered kindred spirits at the League. From the start, I received accolades from my instructors and others for having “developed a strong language”—one that is entirely my own.

In Frank O’Cain’s class, I learned about elements of composition and the importance of placement in building a cohesive statement; Bruce Dorfman has made me more aware of materiality as an extension of the art and helped me to think about the scope of the painting beyond its existing parameters. However, it was Deborah Winiarski, instructor and mentor, whose critiques and probing questions about intent, process, and uses of materials helped me delve deeper into artmaking that feels truly authentic. Her critical analysis of my work has been central



Nadine Renazile, *Beginnings*

to my development as a painter. It was also Deborah, with her unwavering encouragement and support, who nominated me for the Fantasy Fountain Fund Scholarship. In the summer of 2015 I was awarded the scholarship, which allowed me to travel to Paris to study and paint for a month at the Paris American Academy.

I spent a great deal of time looking at Paris and its environment not only in terms of its architectural, cultural and artistic merits, but also in terms of its political and social concerns. These have all emerged in the body of work that I submitted for the final exhibition there: a total of six large paintings and eleven smaller ones, in various media on paper. Paris is the cultural center of European arts and as such offers a limitless array

of institutions and activities. While visiting these institutions I took copious notes on color, composition, values and scales, brush strokes, processes, and materials used. Most important, listening to Calum Fraser, our instructor, speak about the historical aspects guiding these works and how the events of the day influenced and later shaped these masterpieces helped me develop a better understanding of them. Connecting the various masterpieces with historical events strongly resonated with me because the social issues of my day largely inform my own work.

During my time in Paris, I also experienced a cultural shift in my understanding of French and European culture through the paintings and sculptures seen in the museums. The site visits to Versailles, Chateau





Chantilly, Monet's house in Giverny, Auvers sur Oise, the village where Van Gogh spent the last few years of his life, Pierre Bonnard's house in Vernon—where we stood on the very spot where he painted his wonderfully colorful masterpieces—along with the art history lectures, endowed me with a catalog of imagery with which to build upon. These experiences generated much internal

discourse. I have no formal education in the arts beyond my training at the League. This residency helped me realize the importance of integrating art history more purposefully in my practice. I am grateful to Greg Wyatt, president of the Fantasy Fountain Fund, who spoke to me of Eugène Delacroix's journals and of the importance of recording and documenting one's art process. Now, main-

taining a journal/sketchbook has become part of my daily practice.

Although I had visited Paris several times before, the residency offered me a wholly new experience. Having previously received a French education outside of France gave me an alternative historical perspective. It was with this uniquely qualified gaze that I investigated the French cultural landscape. I saw Paris, the culture, monuments, and institutions through my own cultural lens—receiving ideas and information perhaps differently from the way they were intended. I felt it important that my authenticity, being the outside observer, be represented in my art. I hope the paintings were able to convey that distinct connection. For that reason, I decided to name my exhibition *Points de vue*, (“Points of view”), placing an emphasis on the plurality of viewpoints. I was invited to have a solo exhibit of my paintings on the ground floor of the Paris American Academy. The paintings were very well received.

My practice is informed by my multiple identities: Haitian, diaspora, New Yorker, traveler, and observer. I investigate these multiplicities by excavating ideas of displacement, memory, family entanglements, language, race, and class ambiguities. My current artistic expression is taken up with unearthing and decoding long-held memories. Similarly, my life experience as diaspora and longtime observer of American life is also woven into my paintings. Using plaster, collage, and other found objects to build foundation, I infuse my paintings with texture and meaning. I challenge myself by choosing conventionally incompatible colors and experimenting with mark making and text, while working to establish a cohesive statement. I use mark-making not only as a compositional device, but also to connect my memory lines. So much of my work depends on memories—vivid, idle and faint—and the lines help me to remember and account for things. My color sense sometimes corresponds to memories of things past and when those are fragmented, that adds a curious and mysterious element to the work. Part of my finishing process involves writing text directly from the paint tube onto the canvas. It feels more intimate, as if the words are pouring out of me. My paintings are full of chaotic expressions. Is it any wonder since I'm from a land full of contradictions?

I use paint markers, pastels, paint sticks, crayons, and graphite pencils to make additional marks. Much of the text is worked over and eventually disintegrated into the painting. The text is camouflaged, and



ultimately unrevealed because I've heeded my grandmother's words: "*Toutes les vérités ne sont pas bonnes à dire*" ("Not all truths should be told"). My words are sometimes scratched, patched, erased, and muted. Words matter; words hurt, they heal, and when they are unspoken, they can become more powerful in their forced silence. Words bind the work to itself.

I've been privileged to show my work in several juried shows this past year: the critically acclaimed 2015 group show *Respond*, at Smack Mellon Gallery in Brooklyn; the *All Rise* show at Robertson Hall, Princeton University; and the Winiarski LPM Concours at Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery. In a show full of spectacular large-scale installations, I was happy to receive a blue dot for my painting.

Since returning from Paris, I have started to explore a series depicting my experiences there. Simultaneously, I have continued to develop an earthquake series titled *Goudougoudou*, the Haitian naming for the devastating earthquake that has left the country in utmost disarray—still. In January 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated Haiti, leaving hundreds of thousand dead. Two months later, I traveled there to volunteer my services. I came home despondent. Along with my countrymen, and friends everywhere, I have been in grief. Speechless, I found that I needed canvas, paint, brushes, fingers, and torn up letters to begin to create a language that captured the immensity of the loss I had experienced and my empathy for the countless of individuals affected by this mass tragedy. Thus far I've made four paintings and several studies for the remainder of the series and am excited at the possibility of exploring and creating them in larger formats. Looking at some of the religious paintings in Paris, full of intrigue and gore, has given me an unexpected inspiration for depicting the mythology of Haiti.

The urge to develop a deeper practice led me to renovate my apartment to accommodate a home studio. I paint everyday. I encounter myself each time I am in the act of painting—both a glorious and perilous process. I read modern masters such as Per Kikerby, Cy Twombly, Robert Motherwell, and Glenn Ligon. I also have a kinship with Jean Michel Basquiat and with Haitian-born French artist Hervé Télémaque, whose ethnicity I share and whose striking visual vocabulary inspires my work. All of these artists have influenced my work in various ways as well as inspired me to give shape to my wild imaginings. Their stories and



Artwork by Nadine Renazile, Clockwise from previous page: *La crosse*; *Tell Them I'm Still Here (with white border)*; *Goudougoudou*

art generate a yearning in me to be a better painter. I aim for each painting to stand on its own while battling with my own inadequacy to render on canvas what my heart whispers and my mind demands. This battle is one that I look forward to wrestling with for the rest of my life. 🌀

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

*Nadine Renazile immigrated to the United States in 1973 and now lives and works in New York City. She has been a librarian for 19 years and currently works as a lead librarian at The School at Columbia University. She holds graduate degrees in library information management and knowledge strategy from Pratt Institute and Columbia University.*

*This past April she participated in a group show curated by Lauryn Hill, which culminated as a two-day, pop-up art exhibit at the King's Theater in Brooklyn.*



# REINVENTING THE ARCHITECT

Rodolfo Edwards

In high school, I used to copy masterpieces by neoexpressionism artists. That's when I knew I wanted to be an artist.

I graduated as an architect from Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile. My mentor there, Alberto Cruz, was the co-founder of the architecture school. I learned from his poetical way of observing and creating. Then I did the four-year international program at the Arts Student League of New York, where Bruce Dorfman became another mentor for three years and helped me believe in my work. Daily life and my experiences, my travels, and artistic influences have also been continuing sources of learning.

My medium is basically acrylic paints and photograph paper. I combine them to recreate the space or landscape that I'm trying to build in every piece. The materials speak to me in a complementary way. I mean that paper and acrylic are elements that have more potential when I add them together and they represent something.

My inspiration comes from natural colors, the construction of cities, geography, and from emerging contemporary artists. These cutting-edge artists exhibit a new idea or style of narrative. Also, I reference masters of modern art, such as Sol Lewitt, Liu Wei, Frank Stella, and more.

Five years ago, when I decided to live in New York and start a new life here with nothing, I began reinventing myself and that pushed me to start developing a new style of artwork that has become my language.

Like a writer wanting to tell a story, I keep making art. My work is telling a story about how we are living today. I'm very passionate about changes in this part of contemporary history, where many things are happening simultaneously and fast. One example is the cultural-social factor in Asian countries, specifically what is happening in countries like China, which have centuries of tradition co-existing with present-day development.

I try to keep myself busy and organized with a schedule of part-time jobs and selling my work to my collectors and interested buyers, usually from the United States and South America. I work part-time mornings at the League, and I spend the evenings in my studio working on my pieces as well as meeting with curators, artists, and collectors.







Artwork by Rodolfo Edwards

To survive as an artist, I save for the future when I'm having good sales, spend only on basic things, and keep doing more work.

Being an artist, I've learned how to adapt to American culture and understand people. For example, don't be impatient; things come at the right moment. Just keep your mind busy with ideas and motivation to create, and never get desperate about what's going to happen in the future. Just trust your creativity and develop, using your own personal process, the language that best represents you.

The most important thing to value in an artist is his or her own style, whether the topic changes or not. 🌐

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







## FREEDOM IS SUPER IMPORTANT

Basia Goldsmith

I was born in Poznan, Poland. As a two-year-old during World War II, I experienced a tumultuous, unsettled life. My mother, siblings, and I were relocated from France to Algiers in North Africa, where I spent three years. I learned French there. As a displaced person, I went to a Catholic boarding school in London from around the age of eight to sixteen. Though the years there were traumatic and I was alone, I had wonderful art and dance teachers who came in from outside the school and sort of adopted me. These teachers were my lifesavers. They took me to museums and art shows. Painting and drawing were my escape to a fantasy world—a world of freedom.

I passed the Oxford High School exams at 16 and later applied to the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. Although I was younger than their usual students, they accepted me and gave me a scholarship. There I took classes in anatomy, sketching, painting, and life drawing, but I specialized in textile design and printing because I had to make a living. I was also working odd jobs after school to support myself. At Central, once again I had the most wonderful, supportive teachers in painting and textile design. Patrick Heron was particularly memorable. He encouraged me to paint as abstractly as possible, to be true to my feelings and not try merely to please others.



While I was at Central, a friend persuaded me to try out with her for the American TV show *To Tell the Truth* that had just come to the BBC in London, because we might win a prize. I won a place on the show, and then I won the prize! The prize

money facilitated my going to Paris to work. I worked in textile design, most notably selling my designs to Biancini-Ferrier, a well-known firm that specialized in silk textiles. (Raoul Dufy was one of its earlier designers.)



Then my life took another turn. I had the habit of meeting up with a few friends every Friday at a café (in Montmartre). We were regulars and knew the proprietor. One day three Americans came in, a couple and another man, and I helped the proprietor by translating for them. It turned out the Americans were very nice (at that time, in the early 1960s in Paris, Americans were often considered loud and vulgar), and we got to talking. They were leaving for New York in a few days and I said, "Oh, New York!" The husband offered to sponsor me and pay for the trip. After the Americans left, my friends said, "Are you really going?" I said, "No they're just joking." The next morning I got a call from them. They were at the American embassy getting my visa! I had to sell and give away all my things and make all the arrangements in three days. Then I sailed to Canada with the man's wife who didn't want to fly back.

In 1964, I ended up in New York and, again, had to find a way to support myself. I was introduced to a newly formed studio for freelance textile designers and painters named Gadfly. It was a wonderful and talented group of textile painters. Through my former mother-in-law, Ellinor Poindexter, I was introduced to wonderful American painters like Richard Diebenkorn, whom I admired very much.

Much later, I started painting on silk for fashion designers Giorgio Sant'Angelo, Mary McFadden, Arnold Scaasi, and others. Then I moved on to making floral paintings on silk. These were commissions for commercial and private clients. In the early 1970s, I also signed up for part-time classes at the Art Students League. I took anatomy with Robert Beverly Hale and painting with Leo Manso. I stayed only a few years because it was hard to take classes and work at the same time. Finally, in the early 2000s, encouraged by my husband, Chris, I enrolled again at the League, full-time. I took Catherine Redmond's painting class. I saw a show of Bill Scharf's work in Washington, D.C. and signed up for his class. And then with Charles Hinman, where I am still taking classes every morning. Coming to the League was another turning point in my life.

At the League, I have met the most interesting people—of all different ages and nationalities—and made lifelong friends. I am so thrilled every morning to paint with friends in class and then go to my studio downtown, where I still do commissions. I feel extremely fortunate that Chris supports my passion for painting and that I have



found such a wonderful, inspiring place in ASL, with friends for life.

I now also have summers to look forward to, when I attend Mariano Del Rosario's class. He encourages us to take risks, to move forward in our work. With his guidance, I have been inspired to print photographs I take of my own graffiti onto vinyl and canvas and to paint over them freely. For some time now, I have been interested in painting over writing or images from other sources. A few years ago, after finding in the garbage near my studio big rolls of fashion advertising printed on vinyl, I was inspired to paint over them, leaving some of the print and images underneath visible. I just went crazy, wild, transforming the images by overpainting the advertisements with my own expressions of

abstract themes. The texture of the vinyl has added vibrancy to the acrylic colors. When I showed my paintings to the Carter Burden Gallery in Chelsea last year, they wanted to put these vinyl paintings in a show right away. This summer, from June 30 to July 21, 2016, I will be exhibiting a larger selection of my work at Carter Burden.

What keeps me motivated? Freedom is super important. 🌟

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

Artwork by Basia Goldsmith



# Divulged Interior

Daniel Tackney-DiGrazia



From left: Daniel Tackney-DiGrazia, *Brain Chemistry*, acrylic, spray paint, and ink on canvas, 5 ft. 3 in. x 7 ft. 3 in.; Daniel in front of his painting *Mood Oscillation*, acrylic and ink, 5 ft. 3 in. x 7 ft. 3 in.

Comfort in my own skin is achieved with brush in hand. My happiness lies within the thrill of the creative process. I speak best through paint. Eating, sleeping, and breathing what I create is necessary in order to maintain daily stability. The act of creating something from nothing is why I get out of bed. As a matter of fact, if I didn't have painting in my life, I would

permanently reside in an asylum or prison.

I am a painter, but it is not my job; rather it is my purpose, my calling, and a way to keep my head above water. Abstraction is the physical embodiment of uncertainty, and I find a great deal of comfort in that. Abstract painting gives me the ability to explain and express my true self in a way my words never could. The emotionally charged



abstractions are autobiographical, and equivalent to a mirror for me. Each piece is an intimate confession available for all to see.

Painting is an exploration of self-discovery and communication. Larry Poons once said to me, "You can't think and paint at the same time." This rings true every time I work. To be free of thought during the painting process makes it easier to attack the canvas without remorse, hesitation, or fear of the unpredictable.

At the age of 19, I was diagnosed with a type of bipolar disorder, specifically known as rapid-cycling bipolar disorder. Only 10-percent of those who are bipolar have this type which causes me to experience three or more episodes of mania and/or depression in a single year. After receiving this diagnosis, the anxiety triggered by uncertainty left me confused and disoriented for years. I was in need of an outlet for everything that continually built up within me and a way to vent my aggression and frustration with the world around me. One thing I did consistently during this struggle was paint and sketch. Art gives me an optimistic perspective on my condition and provides me with the opportunity to release what is pent up inside. Ultimately, I decided art was worth my total devotion.

Without the slightest bit of desire to hold back, I set out in the beginning of 2015 to create a painting series that depicts the bare bones and completely unrestricted unveiling of my true self for the first time, *The Divulged Interior*. The series consists of five large-scale abstract paintings of different sizes. Each painting provides insight on



the experience of living with a brain disorder. The series also depicts my profound daily struggles: Hardships Endured and Lessons Learned. Lastly, the paintings reveal all the significant traits/characteristics that define me as a person.

We all have our own brand of miserable stuff to deal with. My agenda doesn't include sympathy or a desire for attention. All I can hope for is some level of understanding and a little less judgment. When it comes to painting, I am drawn to the fact you have only yourself to blame; in other words, I know that when creating, I am the one in control. Painting is the key to longevity in this life for me. I can firmly guarantee that painting is going to be a lifelong love affair that reinforces my true identity. This is what I do, who I am, why I exist, and where I'll continue to be. 🌱

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

Artwork by Daniel Tackney-DiGrazia

From top: *Hardship Endured*, acrylic on canvas, 4 x 4 ft.; *Every Ounce of My Being*, acrylic and ink on canvas, 5 ft. 2 in. x 3 ft. 8 in.





# THE OCEAN WANTS YOU TO RISE

Sara Eileen

My parents recently cleaned out their house, and I went to help them clear out some things from my childhood, including several file cabinets full of drawings, sculptures, and paintings dating from age three to college. I keep a painting I did on my fifth birthday in a frame on my studio wall.

I took classes at the Maine College of Art young adult program while in high school, majored in visual art (and English) at Columbia University, and continued to work on my own. After a master's degree in creative writing unexpectedly put me in a marketing role at a start-up, I began studying design. From 2012 to 2015, I was chief editor of a small arts magazine and also pinch hit as a designer and art director for several issues. I've been taking courses at the Art Students League since early 2013.

I have fluency in a number of different media. I studied oils and silkscreen in undergrad, and my first solo show was done in acrylics. I also have a great deal of experience with fiber arts, and have been working on a series of small fiber monster sculptures as a potential accompaniment to paintings in one of my upcoming shows.

That said, I'm currently three years down a rabbit hole of falling head over heels for watercolor. I switched to watercolor because I wanted a medium I could take with me while traveling, and haven't looked back. I love the medium's potential for blending tones, its clarity of color, and I find it very well suited to the balance of delicate touch and bold colors that I'm currently trying to cultivate.

It's difficult for me to give proper credit to all of the people who have taught me excellent lessons about art—partially because there are very many of them, including my high school art teacher, my friends who are also artists, and Rick Brosen here at the League.

But, more critically, because while I'm writing for *Lines from the League*, I'm also keeping vigil with my family for my grandmother, who was a spectacular



watercolor artist, and who is now reaching the end of her life at the age of 99. I have been surrounded by her art since I was a child; she was very prolific, and every one of her descendants has a few of her paintings hanging on their walls. She kept meticulous travel journals that mixed together paintings and narration, several of which I keep in my studio. When she no longer painted, I inherited her supplies, and it's been a joy over the past three years since I switched to watercolor to discover that she and I are using the same paints, the same paper. I have a stack of Arches 300 lb. cold press from her and a box of Windsor Newton paints with the handwritten price tags still stuck to the metal tubes.

I am often inspired by those I love; both their qualities as wonderful humans, and the feelings of love and connection between us. I like to make art that feels joyful, that is densely and aggressively beautiful. I find that nourishing, as shared love is nourishing. I like to focus on creating art about abundance; not abundance of wealth or material objects, but abundance of emotion.

Recently I started cultivating an internal creative landscape, a three-dimensional mental space where I store ideas and images that appeal to me, grouped together and connected by various threads, sorted and re-sorted. Some of the landmarks on the map are easy to name: monsters, the ocean, human intimacy, flowers, brilliant colors. Clustered around these landscapes are hundreds of small images and ideas. The landmark of flowers contains—to name a few—the dot pattern on the insides of

foxgloves, the curving lines of art nouveau borders on old books, my grandmother's watercolor renderings of the Japanese maple in her garden, the teeth of the Venus flytrap, the image of a dahlia bloom grown to the size of a human being, and the stones of the garden outside my childhood home. All of those are connected outward to other landmarks; human-size dahlias are also monsters, my grandmother's paintings are also a part of our shared intimacy as family members and artists. When I start a new piece, I spend time with those connections; if I pull on the threads of connection that bind a few of these ideas together, what sort of art does that make?

Making art is what I want to do when I wake up in the morning, and at this point in my life I'm still reeling from the blessing of being able to do so almost every day. Motivation is not the issue; focus, I've found, is often the issue. As in, what do I focus on? I have so many ideas; which ones do I take the time to manifest in a loving and expert fashion?

I haven't had one enormous "eureka!" moment in my artistic life just yet. But I do find that occasionally a piece or a series will suddenly spring to mind, often as a response to feelings of frustration or confusion.

The *REX* series is a good example here. I spent a great deal of time in my twenties trying to create art within the context of my political and social identities. I found that this work was increasingly hard for me to accomplish; I am a queer woman surrounded by a community of other queer folks of many intersecting, marginalized identities, and I







struggled (still struggle!) to make art that I felt contributed, usefully, to easing the pain of my community.

One day I went to my studio exhausted, and I remember saying to myself, “Just do something fun today. Do something that will make you laugh.” The first *REX* painting came together all in that day, fully realized in the space of one afternoon. I had literally never been able to do that before; it was exhilarating. And, I realized as I shared that first piece, and the second and third that rapidly followed, the paintings that were making me laugh were also making other people laugh. It turned out that was better than anything I’d done before.

The *REX* series became a small solo show in late 2013, and I’m now working on another solo show that will have a similar theme: beautiful, goofy monsters. That show will be at the Pocket Theater in Seattle, WA, in April of 2016.

Since creating *REX*, goofiness has had a dedicated place in my work. This past year I did a piece called *I Have Complicated Feelings About Selfies*, which was essentially an excuse to play with some art nouveau techniques and self-portraiture, while pulling silly faces for the viewer. Art nouveau style is, I find, often used as a shorthand for indicating that an object is beautiful or important, and while I like that idea, I find I would rather poke fun at the idea of creating beautiful, idealized faces than actually paint them.

Often I find myself returning to the idea of making work that is a comfort, sometimes to others, sometimes to myself. I have been

dealing with depression most of my adult life, and I started getting treatment for it in 2013, after a particularly severe depressive episode in late 2012. The series *The Ocean Wants You to Rise* was about articulating the comfort and newly expanded senses I found in my recovery process. The series started, in my creative landscape, from linking together the concepts of equilibrium of emotion and the sensation of sailing a boat on the ocean. I spent a lot of time visiting aquariums, taking pictures of sea creatures and thinking about

blue light. I’ve since started two other series in this same vein, one about anger and the other about pain. The series is hanging in my home, and I still sell prints of it, with half of the proceeds going to the National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

Next year, in addition to my goofy monsters show, I’ll have a show of landscapes hanging at the NYU Langone Hospital of Joint Diseases. Although in a more traditional vein, I’m hoping these pieces will also demonstrate the beautiful density and sense of expansiveness I’ve been working toward.

If money were no object, I would love, with all my heart, to create and run a massive, ongoing, collaborative arts space with other artists. I picture a space that would give small grants to artists to make work they dream about, that would generously support its residents and work closely with its surrounding community, that would put fellow artists in rooms together to spark with one another, that would host huge installations of all sorts of work, and that would meticulously document and archive that work for the future. 🌊

#### Artwork by Sara Eileen

**Previous page, from top:** *The Ocean Wants You to Rise* #2, 2014, watercolor on paper, 13 x 9 in.; *The Ocean Wants You to Rise* #4, 2014, watercolor on paper, 13 x 9 in. **This page, from top:** *I Have Complicated Feelings About Selfies*, watercolor on paper, 14.5 x 11.25 in.; *The REX Show: Tyrannosaurus*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 in.





# Light, Time, and Imperfection

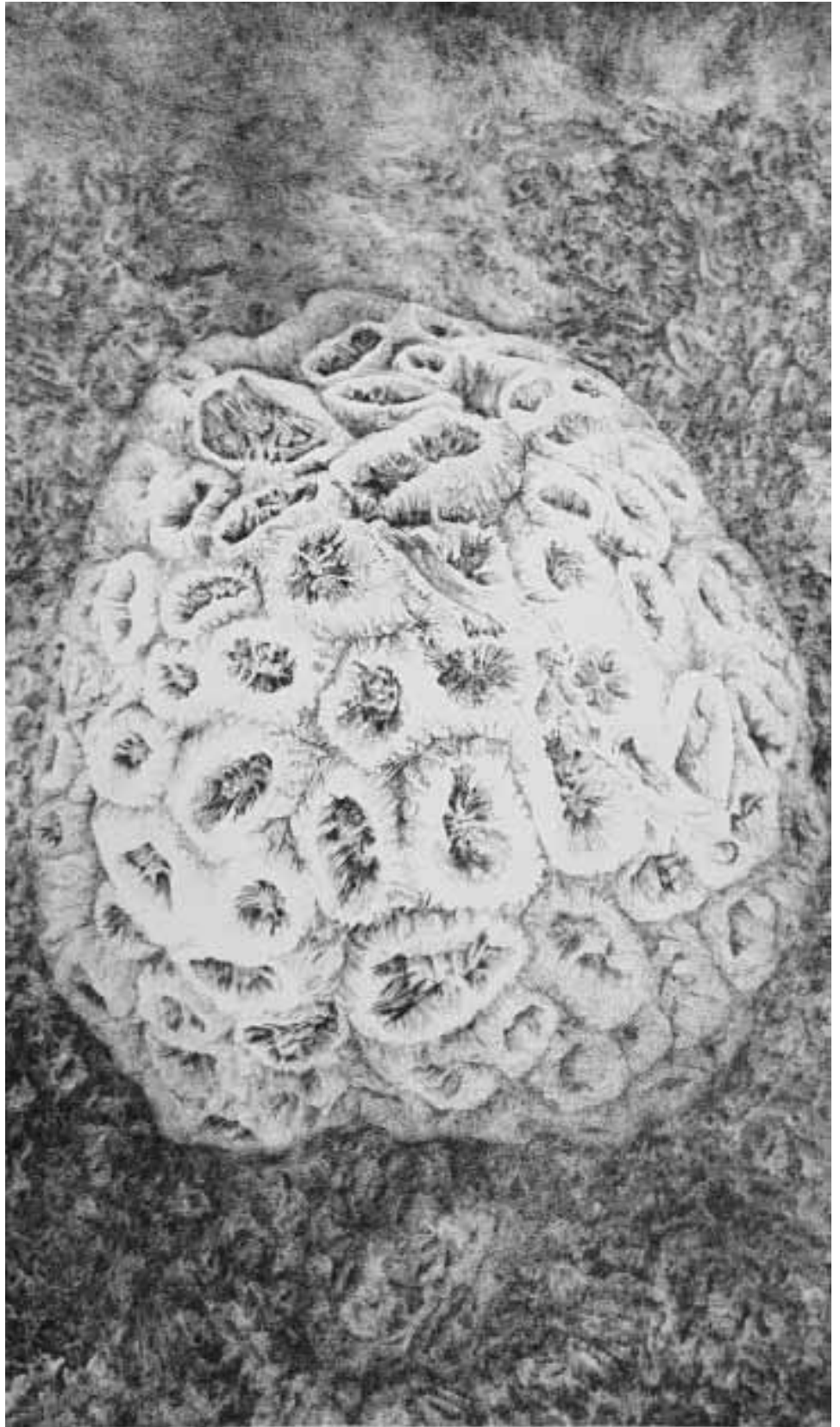
Colleen Pike-Blair

I have no formal art education and have always painted on my own. However, in 2010 I began taking printmaking at the League. My development as an artist has flourished, having found studio classes that are more than compatible with my work schedule: Although ASL classes have to be planned around work, they feel like the center of my life.

I attribute a great deal of that experience of feeling grounded and engaged to the League instructors I've studied with: Bill Behnken, Tomomi Ono, Doug Safranek, Rick Pantell, and Michael Pellettieri. Each of these exceptional teachers shares professional expertise and his or her own personal perspective on art with an openness and passion for this pursuit, which is inspiring. My fellow classmates and I are learning by doing: We have lively discussions, but, ultimately, the way in which each of us incorporates what we learn into our practice is entirely free for us to choose; there's no limit to how far one can go.

For the past four years, I've been working primarily in stone lithography, enhanced by an exhilarating foray into egg tempera painting. Within all of that I'm considering three things: light, time, and imperfection. Light, because I seek a luminous medium and put a premium on work that is both magical and difficult. Time, because the basic materials are ancient, and I recognize the value in allowing ideas and images to incubate. Imperfection, because I have a fascination with the repetition and innate fecundity of biological life under duress. 🌱

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





Artwork by Colleen Pike-Blair

Previous page: *Salt Life*, lithograph, 14 x 11 inches

This page, clockwise from left: *Winter Afternoon*, lithograph, 11 x 8 inches; *Florida*, lithograph, 8 x 11 inches; *Inflorescence*, lithograph, 8 x 11 inches





# The Artist and the Artists' Model

Nina Kovalenko

I was born in a small Siberian village in a family of “Old Believers”—a conservative Orthodox Christian branch. Even so, my grandparents gave me absolute freedom, which I used walking through forests, eating grass, experiencing nearly drowning, falling into a well, burning my legs jumping over a stake, etc.

My mother was an unrecognized artist and poet even though she had a natural talent for both. When she was 14 years old, she drew over all the walls in her house; for that, her stepfather beat her up. Afterward, she was afraid to draw. Instead she learned tailoring, knitting, and even created a special machine to make tapestries! She was also an elementary school teacher and my first teacher. One day, my mom gave me and my classmates homework that consisted of drawing a rooster and a dog. When I went home that day, I asked her, “Mom, draw for me a rooster and a dog.” She drew with the speed of Flash the two images beautifully. The next day she checked our homework, and I got a “two” (very negative). I asked her, “Mom, why did you give me a ‘two’?” She

replied, “Because you did not do it yourself.” Thereafter, I knew that we have to do (and think) for OURSELVES.

I believe I was born an artist, like my mom. That was my diagnosis. First I danced instead of walked. I was four years old when one evening, I was asked to dance for my grandparents’ guests, and I did. I wanted to tell by my dance some sad story (that story was published in a German literary magazine called *Bridges*), but those simple people were laughing at me (“such a funny child”); so, after my grandma put me in bed to sleep, I was upset. The next morning I woke up unable to walk and spent months in bed. (I remember my strange pose and unsuccessful efforts to move, and unpleasant pain in my knees.) Grownups tried to heal me by different creams, etc., but nothing helped until I was five years old and the village sorceress came to our home with three spikes. The first day she whispered some meditations, threw one spike into a window and said to me, “Stand up and go.” I tried to sit, but I could not. The next day she came with two spikes, whispered and threw one spike into a window

and again said “Stand up and go.” I was able to sit. She left and came the third day with one spike, whispered, threw the last spike into the window, and again said, “Stand up and go.” Then I moved to the edge of bed, stood up, and made my first step. I started to learn to walk again, but I did not dance anymore. I was afraid to fall down, but I started to sculpt. I made an atelier (actually it was a pit) in the orchard where I made clay figures of animals, birds, and humans.

My mom moved to the Far East to teach in a small village. There was no clay with which to sculpt, so I wrote clumsy poetry and stories and participated in plays. My mom organized the theater.

Since in my village, and those surrounding it, there were only elementary schools, from age 11 on I stayed in a distant town where there was a high school. I had to rent a bed, and my “hosts” wanted me to take care of their animals and homes as payment



for staying there. Those animals were my only friends. It was horrible to hear their voices one moment and then see them later in the form of a meal. Since then I have been a vegetarian: I do not eat my friends.

My grandmother wanted me to be an engineer, so I went to Moscow and became a student in the nuclear energy department, МЭИ. After three or four years, I realized it was not my place so I left and worked simple jobs. Soon after this realization, I attended the Cinematography Institute to learn movie-journalism. There I “fell in love on the second floor” where the artworks by students in the art department were displayed and decided I would paint. After a couple of years working in Siberian TV and newspapers, I was pronounced “anti-Soviet,” because I wrote a monograph about the Hungarian actor Ivan Darvish. So I went to Moscow, took a brush in my hand, and started to paint. I was educated enough in visual art history to understand how to avoid mistakes in my own art. The memory of my mother’s experience came to mind.

After eight years painting alone, for myself, and trying to revive on canvas dear images (my grandma, my first love, my beloved pets, favorite flowers, etc.), I thought I would throw it all in the garbage if a professional advised me to do so. I found a professional adviser, Nikolay Modenov, who commented on what was good or wrong, and then he asked if I had more. “Sure,” I replied. Later I was surprised when he told me to bring my works for Malaya Grusinskaya’s show. He said, “They won’t accept me but will accept you.” It was strange, but he was right. I became





Left: Portrait of Nina by Yolande Heijnen;  
All other artwork by Nina Kovalenko

part of the show and of the independent artists' movement. Later I drew with instructor Alexey Nesterov-Maximov. My media are oil on canvas and aquarelles on paper, because I love color. Even my dreams are in color. The memories of my childhood, and all its turning points, have been my main inspirations. Strange, but when I saw African masks in an African art show, I was SO impressed! That was an example of how artists do and tell stories about THEMSELVES, without foreign influences. It's about life in art.

In the 1980s in Moscow, I was more or less successful as an artist. I had a dealer who visited me once a month, took a few paintings, and paid. Then I joined a peace movement, became a member of the "Trust" group, met young artists (hippies), and organized underground shows with them. The most significant event was a show/demonstration called "ART is STRONGER than BOMBS," where there must have been 200 people. There was a mass arrest; our artworks were destroyed and authors beaten up. But a few artists reached the destination and were holding in their arms paintings and posters: "Art is stronger than bombs." I still have a photo of this event. For that and other activities, I was arrested and imprisoned multiple times. I also spent some time in mental institutions where I was injected to "correct my persuasions." Finally, I was exiled from the USSR. So on January 29, 1987 my teenage daughter and I came to New York City, where I joined the army Miserables.

In New York, I tried to find jobs and sell my works on the street. Only once in five years did I sell anything; a lady bought a painting for \$100. I also wrote a novel, *White Horse*, around that time. My MoMA wall mates supported me with sandwiches or

money for the train. I tried to dress colorfully to attract passersby to my works, but people looked at me, ignoring the paintings. Once a woman approached me and said, "Why don't you be a model? I know one place, the Art Students League." She took my hand and brought me to the League, where coordinator James Harrington listed me. That was when Rosina Florio was still the executive director.

If being an artist is my "diagnosis," being a model is my destiny. My first experience came about when I was three years old: A young artist named Andrey came to our village and asked for "that little girl [me] to pose." I posed very well, and I remember his drawings to this day. Then when I was a student of cinematography, I carried a message to one sculptor, R. Muradian, from his brother. When Muradian saw me, he did not want to let me go and sculpted me for eight years, for all his own work and for commissions like *Mother, Russian Nefertiti*, etc. That experience was helpful, even when I was blacklisted (starting in 1981) for my peace activism. Deprived, since my work was never going to be accepted by publishing houses, I resorted to modeling stage gowns for a theater art school.

Nevertheless, I continued to paint and write. After I was pronounced an "anti-Soviet," I was afraid to take pen in hand, but while doing artistic retouching for publishers and magazines, I was also writing "secretly for myself." When in New York I met the Russian writer and historian Viacheslav Zavalishin, who forced me to publish my writing; he gave me a second life in literature! I have written a few stories about my experience as an artist and as a model at the League and other locations, including at "In the Heart of the Heart of the Artificial Art," "Five Steps to Resurrection," and more.

Money has never been an issue. To survive and be at peace is what matters.

I consider myself a "figurativist": a figurative artist. When I participate in the Paris Salon, they always classify me as surrealist. I am too poor to use my resources for abstractions. When I am asked, "When/where do you write/paint?" I answer, "I do not know." I recall with great appreciation Minerva Durham's Spring Street Studio, where at least I am provided a space to draw.

All the advice I can give others from my poor brain: Do not be afraid of life. And carry your own cross. 🌿





# From Music to Photography to Writing to Painting

Eli Dimeff

Last year I received a call from a physicist in California. He had just bought an oil portrait of Albert Einstein that I had painted some 30 years ago and was sold from the estate of the man who originally had bought it from me. The caller asked what had led me to paint the portrait. It came about at a point in my story when I was moving into becoming a professional artist and art teacher after careers in music, photography, and writing. I had just moved to Princeton, NJ, where Einstein passed the last 19 years of his life as a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study. I thought there might be an opportunity to sell a portrait of Einstein to the Institute or to Princeton University's physics department or library. Instead, it was bought by a man who had purchased at auction a verified letter signed by Albert Einstein regarding nuclear proliferation, and he wanted the portrait to hang next to the letter.

My interest in art began at quite a young age, in the mid-1940s, and I continued doing artwork throughout my school years. I also played the trombone for eight years in school. This prepared me to audition to play music in the Air Force, which I did for four years after graduation in 1958. At Clark Air Base in the Philippines, where I was stationed for 18 months, there was an art recreation building that offered various craft and creative activities, including oil painting. The Filipino artist who was in charge of the art section advised me about supplies, and I did a couple of oils that turned out successfully without any formal instruction.

After my military discharge in 1962, I moved to Manhattan to begin a career as

a professional musician. I had many wonderful musical experiences. I played in orchestras at Radio City Music Hall; in Broadway musicals; with Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand, Sammy Davis, Jr., and others; at the Grammy Awards (before they were on TV) and many other such occasions; as well as touring the country doing one-nighters. When the music scene began to change, I returned to my lifelong interest in photography. I eventually worked at Modernage Photo Processing where one of my co-workers told me about the Art Students League. I signed up.

I studied with David Leffel in the mid-1970s five evenings each week after work. David turned out to be just the right teacher for me. I turned the photo darkroom in my apartment into a painting studio. I first learned from David that painting is much more than depicting objects, but rather, it's a matter of painting the optical qualities that comprise the objects. David also discussed the subject of painting atmosphere and the importance of space around the subject and how, if one learns to successfully paint all of these attributes, one can paint anything. Shortly after getting into my studies, I knew that I wanted to pursue art as a career. Over time I have painted portraits, still lifes, landscapes, and abstracts.

At one point I worked days in an antique shop on First Avenue where the owner allowed me to hang and sell some small framed paintings and drawings. I kept replacing them with other works as they sold.



One such oil was an 8 x 10 inch painting of a ballet dancer in a low, outstretched pose as the White Swan, set in an antique hardwood frame that the owner placed on an easy chair in the window of the shop. I was closing up one evening when a fellow barged through the door and boldly announced, "I'd like to buy that Degas in the window for my girlfriend." And buy it he did. Thank you, Mr. Degas!

About that time I realized that I could paint anywhere. I didn't need to be in New York, as I did when I was playing music. That's when I moved to Princeton and painted the Einstein portrait. In addition to painting and exhibiting, I soon began teaching painting and drawing (privately and in classes) wherever I could find an opening. I had several classes going each week. This lasted for some 25 years. One class was ongoing for so long that there were people who kept attending—for 6, 7, 10, 15, 18 years.

After the Einstein portrait, I painted one of Abraham Lincoln in a small oval frame. I entered it in a show at Essex County Community College in Newark, NJ, and as a consequence was invited to kick off



a series of one month, one-man shows at the college's remodeled gallery, which happened to be a beautiful hanging space. I filled the gallery with 53 oils, one watercolor, one drawing, and one photograph. My oils ranged from the largest at 6 x 6 feet, down to the smallest at 8 x 10 inches.

Looking at the work in its entirety inspired me to turn my attention to another medium. I enrolled in a one-week pastel workshop with Daniel Greene at his White Plains studio. That opportunity opened up a whole new adventure in painting. Later on, I found out that David Leffel was holding painting classes in his New York studio and, to refresh my skills, I signed up for a month of Monday classes.

The primary life lesson that I have learned through all of my various interests and careers is the connection of all of the arts to each other as well as their association with the sciences, and ultimately their relationship with the values, highlights, and composition of the substance of life itself. This is what motivates my interest in



the study of all areas of existence and all forms of expression. All are interrelated. If I learn something significant about one, I learn something significant about all.

My dream project would be to have a large north-lit studio with a nice platform where I could have models pose, so I could delve into portraits and figure studies in watercolors as well as oils and pastels. I would also like to explore digital photography and get back to practicing my trombone. Currently, I find great satisfaction in doing quick pen-and-ink portrait sketches. At this point I'm basically in agreement with the following sentiments, expressed by many artists in different ways:

- Mondrian, who couldn't stop reworking his later canvases, explained, "I don't want pictures. I just want to find things out."
- Picasso remarked, "One doesn't make a painting, one makes studies, one never ends getting near" (cited by Paul Trachtman, *Smithsonian Magazine*, January 2006).
- Isabella Stewart Gardner as saying: "Truth and beauty bring me greater dividends than stocks or bonds" (cited in Ulrich Boser's *The Gardner Heist*, March 16, 2010).

Artwork by Eli Dimeff



I believe that experiment is accomplishment that leads to more experiments and other accomplishments.

In addition to continuing my art, music, and photography interests, I continue to write on metaphysical topics. My book, *Getting Clear on Faith and Fear* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, October 21, 2001), explores how artists, musicians, actors, and those in all of the creative arts can overcome fears regarding career moves and enjoy freedom in making artistic decisions. 🌐



# COMICS, ILLUSTRATION, GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Ian Gabriel

Art has been a constant in my life from very early on. I can't really remember when I wasn't drawing or doodling in the borders of my loose-leaf. I suppose I became predominantly consumed with pursuing art when I was 19 or so. I dropped my architecture major at CUNY City College and was wondering what I could do. I always had a deep affection for illustration and graphic storytelling, but I didn't see it as a viable path until I was about a year into college and felt absolutely miserable designing buildings and air vent plans. I decided I'd rather pursue art for art's sake than feel listless and depressed.

After City College, I went to Queens College. Ultimately I received my bachelor's in studio art from SUNY Geneseo. I don't put much stock in it. The program was suspended three months into my first year at Geneseo and the university allowed only the remaining majors to complete their degrees. Safe to say the classes suffered because of this, and the majority of my professional training was derived from looking at other artists' work and at any traditional texts on design that I could find. So I left college as, primarily, a self-taught artist.

Steve Walker is the only person that I consider my mentor. His good humor and constructive criticism have been an invaluable asset to me. My work has benefited from it. He got me my first comic job. That counts for a lot.

Reading *All Star Superman* made a significant impact on my life. Anyone who read this comic series will immediately understand why. It made me want to make comics and art forever. I'm compelled to the point that I sometimes drop everything I'm doing when I have an idea for an image that I have been trying to work out.

My medium of choice depends on which section of the comic I'm producing. If I'm working on a full value and color piece, like a cover or a painting, I prefer water-based media that are easy to pick out and cheap to maintain, preferably traditional watercolors and gouache. I usually use digital finishes on Photoshop for expedience. When I'm working on an individual page for a story or even sketching for myself, I adore brush and ink. It's probably the most unforgiving medium outside of woodcut, but I love the



subtlety of the lines I can get with just one tool and a cheap bottle of ink. I am also a bit of a traditionalist when it comes to comic production. I need to use brush and ink if I'm given a choice.

I draw inspiration from a variety of sources. Although I love the classical painters that everyone can cite, I really get excited for the artists who cropped up at the turn of the

twentieth century and those who followed in their footsteps, artists like Félix Vallotton, J. C. Lyendecker and, later, Andrew Wyeth and Walter Everett. Their sensibilities flowed into comic artists Winsor McKay, Will Eisner, and even later to James Jean as well as Chris Ware. There is a graphic impact in their work that functions on a very subtle level. It remains readable and pleasing while not always



obvious. I feel post-abstractionist work loses a lot of impact and accessibility because of its tendency to break down visual language tropes that have served others well. I'm a firm believer in the need for a reliable visual vocabulary of techniques and structure, which all the artists I mentioned use.

My dream project would be to create an epic, fully painted and hand-lettered work of fiction that I could work on for three years without interruption.

I survive as an artist one day at a time and accept as many jobs as I can to keep me afloat, not to make me comfortable.

Being an artist has taught me patience, diligence, and persistence. In this industry, one has to always be the first to reach out. Life doesn't extend an invitation. 🐼

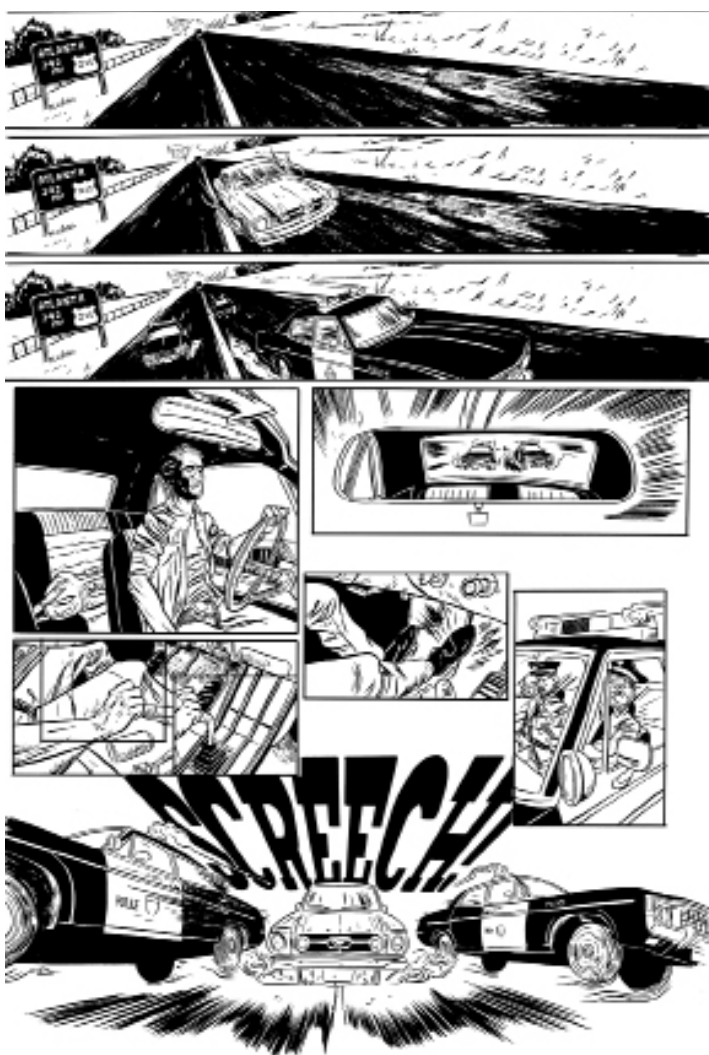
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Artwork by Ian Gabriel

Previous page: *Ad Infinitum*, page 1

This page, clockwise from left: *Manticore*, issue 3, cover; *Keeping Busy*, page 1; *Manticore*, issue 3, page 12





# Jerry Torre: Raw Vision #87

## CARVING HIS OWN PATH

by Edward M. Gómez

Sculptor Jerry Torre, “the Marble Faun” of Grey Gardens, has lived up to his moniker while remaining true to his humble love of stone.

It was a summer day in 1972 in East Hampton, when Jerry Torre saw an elegant woman in big, dark sunglasses and a headscarf making her way toward him. He was 16 years old and employed as a gardener and maintenance man on the grounds of J. Paul Getty’s mansion, and he watched as the woman walked along the narrow path that led to the entrance of the neighbouring property, Grey Gardens, whose owners he also assisted.

The visitor, it turned out, was Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, the former American First Lady and widow of President John F. Kennedy, who was now married to the Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis. At the time, Getty was one of the richest men in the world, and there in East Hampton, on the far east end of Long Island to the east of New York City, young Jerry found himself surrounded by wealth and those who enjoyed its privileges.

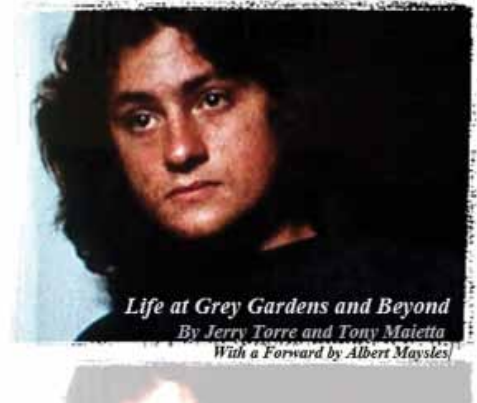
How he came to find himself in such circumstances and, in time, how he started to make hand-carved stone sculptures, which only very recently have begun to attract the New York art world’s attention, are parts of one of the most unlikely personal stories ever to have surfaced in the world of self-taught artists.

Gerard Joseph Torre was born to Italian American parents in Brooklyn in 1953. In a recent interview at his home in the Queens section of New York, he recalled visiting the 1964–1965 New York World’s Fair, where, in the Vatican City’s pavilion, he saw Michelangelo’s *Pietà*. The sculpture of the grieving Virgin Mary, holding her crucified son, which a 24-year-old Michelangelo had produced at the end of the fifteenth century, was displayed behind bulletproof Plexiglass. Torre said, “I was deeply moved by what this extraordinarily talented sculptor had brought forth from a piece of stone.”

A few years later, mainly to escape a father he described as “very tough, even abusive,” Torre moved to a town on Long Island where his uncle was building himself a house. Torre said, “I was close to this uncle, who helped me in many ways. To construct his house, he used old cobblestones that had been dug up from Brooklyn streets that were being repaved. Cleaning them and learning how to use them to erect walls—all of that was part of my first encounter with stone. My uncle was a skilled mason.”

That same uncle gave young Jerry a tip that led to his employment as a handyman for the mercurial (and, reputedly, miserly) Getty out in East Hampton. Torre recalled that his boss, whose fortune had come from oil and who reportedly had once quipped, “The meek shall inherit the earth but not its mineral rights,” insisted that Jerry remain out of sight. Torre said, “How was I supposed to cut the grass or trim the hedges without being visible? I was fired and rehired

### Faun in the Garden



From top: *The Marble Faun of Grey Gardens*; outtakes from *Grey Gardens* depicting Jerry Torre with “Big Edie” and “Little Edie”

numerous times, because inevitably, Mr. Getty did see me as I did my work outdoors.”

One day, Torre remembered, he followed a path that led to the entrance of a neighboring, once-attractive, now-derelict mansion that was overrun with vegetation. “Trees had grown up around an old Cadillac in the driveway,” he recalled. “The roof was a wreck. I thought, ‘Is anyone living here?’ The place looked uninhabitable.” Apprehensively but inquisitively, he stepped up onto its porch and knocked on the front door. To his surprise, a middle-aged woman appeared and called to someone upstairs. It was Edith Bouvier Beale, who Jerry would later learn was Jackie Bouvier Kennedy Onassis’s first cousin. “Little Edie” lived in a broken-down house with her mother, Edith “Big Edie” Ewing Bouvier Beale, a sister of John “Black Jack” Bouvier, Mrs. Onassis’s father, who had died in 1957. Upon seeing Jerry for the first time, Little Edie patted him on the head before shouting up to her bedridden mother, announcing, “It’s Jerry, the Marble Faun!”

“I knew I was in for some kind of strange adventure,” Torre recalled. Jerry was known as “the Marble Faun” by both Beales from then on, the name having been inspired by an ancient Greek statue, the *Faun of Praxiteles*, via a Nathaniel Hawthorne romance. The eccentric Beales, faded members of America’s high society, became the subject of *Grey Gardens*, a 1975 documentary film by the brothers Albert and David Maysles. It documented the Beales’ dysfunctional relationship, in which Little Edie catered to the needs and whims of her mother, a former socialite and amateur singer. Their leaky house, with its one functioning toilet and all-over dilapidation, was filled with rubbish,



Jerry with his sculptures at the Art Students League

cats, and raccoons and Little Edie dressed up in different self-styled costumes to perform for the camera among the debris.

During the 1970s, Torre continued working for Getty even as he spent time with the Beales, helping them to clean up their property and making small repairs. It was during this period that Jackie Onassis turned up. Her mission: to offer the two Edies some funds with which to undertake some basic refurbishments. Without such repairs, Grey Gardens would have been condemned by local authorities and the Beales would have been evicted. Torre recalled, "Mrs. Onassis told me, 'Now, Jerry, you're going to oversee the renovation.' But I was just a kid! Still, I did it. I supervised roof repairmen and other workers. They did enough to stabilize the house, but the two Edies continued to live reclusively, in squalor."

Throughout that period, Torre sharpened his skills in the handling of stone, wood, and other materials. He went on to work as a gardener for Saudi Arabia's royal family in Riyadh and made the most of opportunities to travel to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. Years later, in the late 1980s, he lived in New York City and, following a very difficult time in which his partner died and he found himself lost, began to make stone carvings. Torre said, "My first sculpture, of a crouching woman was made from a block of Carrara marble—I carved it in the stairwell of the building in which I was then living, because I didn't have a studio." Influenced by his visits to such ancient sites as the Parthenon in Athens and the pyramids in Egypt, and by sculptures he saw in museums, Torre began carving animals from chunks of stone he managed to recover from New York buildings

whose façades were being renovated. "Stone that already had been weather-treated was being thrown away! I took it and used it to make my sculptures," Torre explained.

In recent years, thanks largely to the cult status of *Grey Gardens* and Albert Maysles' 2006 follow-up documentary, *The Beales of Grey Gardens*, as well as the dramatic-film and musical-theatre adaptations of the Beales' story, Torre and his art have garnered some media attention. In addition, Jason Hays and Steve Pelizza's documentary about Torre, *The Marble Faun of Grey Gardens*, was released in 2012.

As an artist, Torre continues to be known as "Jerry, the Marble Faun," and earlier this year his sculptures were shown at the Outsider Art Fair in New York, where they attracted critical notices in the local media. "I don't call myself an artist," Torre says modestly. "I just make my carvings and enjoy being able to give form to my ideas. I've been lucky to have had some memorable encounters with some very eccentric or famous or powerful people, but even now I feel I'm still that kid who first saw Michelangelo's masterpiece when he was 10 years old and never forgot the impact it made." 🐾

Edward M. Gómez is *Raw Vision's* New York-based senior editor. This article was reprinted from *Raw Vision* with permission.

*Faun in the Garden* will be released in June 2016 in bookstores throughout the United States and Europe. This work covers portions of Torre's life, including being witness to American history in the oddest of settings with two unique women.



# My Canvas Is Steel



Barbara Walters

Ten years ago I would never have thought that I would be in a welding class creating art. Standing at a blackboard illustrating how to diagram the usage of verbals in a sentence to a group of teenagers was my form of art. But, teaching and time became competitive. It was apparent that a new direction was necessary. Because I was having so much fun teaching, I needed something that would parallel the profession I loved so much.

With an educational background in advertising and linguistics from New York City Community College (now City Tech), an BA in mass media communication and English from Hunter College, and American literature at Montclair State University, the three educational disciplines intertwined into a common thread—English.

Prior to college, my employment history commenced at age 14 and has been consistent until I retired approximately five years ago from full-time to part-time work. The routine of high school and work became a necessity. When I graduated from high school, I was on my own, and the transition to college was quite difficult. During the summer I worked full-time and part-time. While working, I heard a song playing, “Is That All There Is?” This song sparked my determination and gave me the added strength to survive and to make choices: an efficiency apartment (at 19 with help from a former classmate’s mother), college, and full-time employment.

College encouraged me to gain an abundance of knowledge in art and literature. A permit granted by New York City Community College for me to attend the School of Visual Arts provided the opportunity to study illustration design. Eventually, I taught students writing skills through art: creating and designing books, and writing poems and essays while drawing illustrations to express the content of their writings.

After graduating from Hunter College and before attending graduate school at Montclair State University, I had to take on additional part-time employment with an airline. This enabled me to travel internationally and to visit museums, galleries, and universities. Traveling through Europe, Central America, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean was culturally and artistically valuable and inspiring. To join the Masai tribe in Kenya, to climb the inside of a pyramid in Giza, to stand at the foot of the Sphinx in Egypt, to visit Tlaquepaque in Guadalajara and watch the many artisans make their wares of silver, leather, glass, pottery to name just a few, and to watch the universe give the stars permission to play on the water’s surface in Curaçao and twinkle away are beautiful memories and experiences that will be forever etched in my mind.

Next I traveled to Houston, Texas, in search of literary history on the slave narrative. Houston at that time was the center for galleries exhibiting works by African American artists, and I visited several of those

galleries. Frank Frazier, one of the artists whose works were being exhibited, seemed familiar. I recalled that I had met him in New York several years prior when a good friend hosted a show for him. Besides his own artistic works, he had brought several pieces of art by another artist, John Biggers, to exhibit. Twenty years later, I’m in a gallery in Houston surrounded by the work of John Biggers. Many were charcoals, which are my favorites. I had to learn something about him before I left Texas.

John Biggers, poet, sculptor, muralist, and illustrator, came to prominence after the Harlem Renaissance and toward the end of World War II. “At a very early age Biggers was self-taught until he began taking drawing courses at night from Viktor Lowenfeld, an Austrian immigrant who had fled Nazism.” Biggers continued to study under Lowenfeld, first at Hampton Institute and later at Penn State where he received his doctorate. “Lowenfeld introduced Biggers to African art, which Lowenfeld had been collecting before he fled Vienna.” Like Lowenfeld, Biggers was also a teacher who passed forward what he learned from his mentor and friend. “Lowenfeld encouraged his students to learn about their own culture and artistic heritage. You don’t want to draw like a European; you want to speak out of your heart,” he said. Wow, and this was before the nineteen-fifties!

In Texas I had the opportunity to explore other artistic avenues. Driving near the



downtown area of Houston, I was intrigued by a metal sculpture. It was approximately eight to nine feet tall on someone's front lawn. I stood there gazing at the sculpture for nearly an hour. The proprietor, who was very receptive, came out to speak to me. He explained how he designed and welded the sculpture in his very large garage in the back of the house. He made it sound like a labor of love.

I remembered when I was much younger watching my uncles in South Carolina weld different objects and parts on their trucks and tractors, and while I was in Alaska to purchase a totem pole, I observed someone welding tools and a section of a sled. I also spent a couple of days observing how a very big, very wide, and a very tall totem pole was being chiseled.

Traveling to Texas and Alaska was an awakening that helped me to find my parallel—that which equals my love of teaching—welding. Welding is synonymous to the art of writing. There's a beginning, a

middle, and an end. Welding is also parallel to painting. Both start with a flat surface: steel, canvas. They are just developed with different techniques. I'm so amazed at what I have accomplished in welding, which is a tribute to the welding instructors at the League. I like working with steel, my canvas. To watch the development of a flat sheet of steel become a beautiful artistic piece gives me a sense of power. Besides making art, welding has become therapeutic. I would love to share this art form with the students I have taught by welding some universal piece that reflects their 44-plus nationalities, but space is limited. How great it would be to have space large enough and the money to purchase the materials to develop my love tribute. 🌟

Artwork by Barbara Walters





# All Power to the Imagination

Anthony Pozsonyi

I always belonged to the minority of classmates or friends who showed a better-than-average ability to draw and to visualize things spatially. In my teens I used this skill only as a means to an end, not an end in itself; I had a greater interest in writing poetry and prose. But when I arrived in the United States as a penniless refugee with no knowledge of English at age 23, I was obliged to turn to art to earn a living.

While still in high school, I attended an art school similar to the Art Students League, and later continued my studies while working. I was able to support myself as a designer, but my ambition was to become a writer. Belaboring what should be obvious by now, my English is self-taught. Once in the United States, I borrowed a copy of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and plowed my way through it with an English-Hungarian dictionary. It was a start. Later, during the Cuban missile crisis, with the primary motive of self-preservation, we made a pilgrimage to Hannibal, Missouri, but stayed

nearby Injun Jo's cave ... just in case.

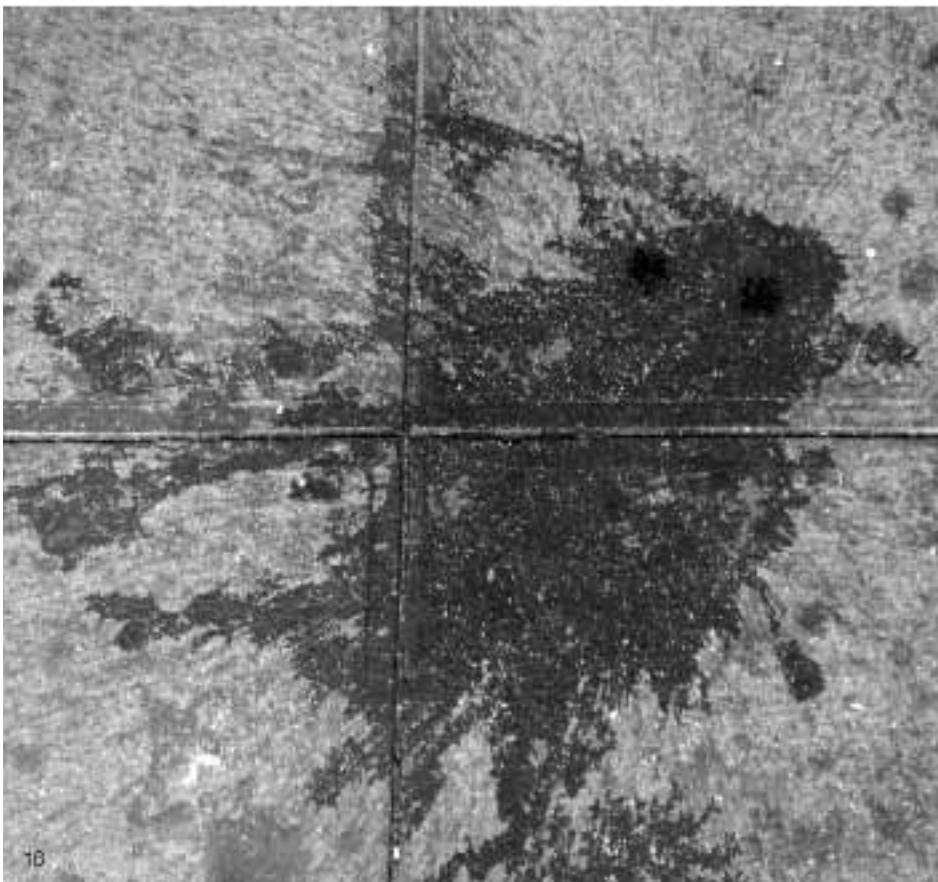
When I was about 10 years old, in my mythicized homeland of Transylvania, my earliest encouragement came from Mrs. Tauber, an elderly artist of considerable renown, who gave me my initial lessons in oil painting. For my first canvas she gave me a round piece of plywood that had obviously once served as the seat of a bentwood chair. I defied the round shape and painted a square landscape in the round field. In a way, it was the beginning of my lifelong preoccupation with squaring the circle—metaphorically speaking. Mrs. Tauber's husband was a retired mechanical engineer. As his hobby he fabricated, among other things, an incredibly complex working scale model of a lumber mill. It was made entirely of wood, without a single metal part, and powered by water from a wall faucet. It's hard to tell which one of them had the more lasting influence on me, but the smell of linseed oil still transports me back to those wondrous but tragically complicated times of 1943.

More far-reaching was the influence of my Hungarian art instructor, Istvan Tovari Toth, during the Soviet occupation of the fifties. Tolerated by the regime, but at considerable risk to himself, he was a keeper of the flame of progressive modern art. The discussions he conducted were in direct conflict with the orthodox aesthetics of social realism, which was the only school of art sanctified by the system. His recollections about his own student years in the pre-war School of Fine Arts in Budapest gave insights to some of the academic teaching methods of the past.

I still remember his story of how one of the instructors limited his students exclusively to line interpretations of their subjects for the initial six months. Tovari frustrated us with similar restrictions for a shorter time, as we drew plaster-cast heads of Voltaire, Donatello, and flayed anatomical models. In another anecdote, he quoted a well-known teacher's response to a student's insistence that the model did have the idiosyncrasy questioned in his drawing: "If Miss Roza's shoulders are that way, she is wrong. It is your responsibility to correct them in your work." In a bizarre association, I often thought about that whenever I was being fitted by a tailor for a jacket or a new suit. Despite failing health, Tovari lived to be 95 and triumphantly outlived communism by many years.

My medium is primarily the pencil, with an obligatory nod to the eraser. It is the simplest tool for conjuring up things from nothing. It is the poor man's Polaroid, father of the selfie—instant gratification. Also—heresy of heresies—the computer and the digital camera. In addition to shooting many thousands of photographs, I enter all my graphics into my computer, adjust and modify them, and unapologetically create original digital art. The pencil speaks to me with quiet indignation, but also patient understanding. The computer protests loudly in a stern, reprimanding voiceover whenever I attempt some avant-garde move that was not programmed into its job description.

Outsider art, pre-Columbian art, African art, petroglyphs, gargoyles, graffiti and children's art are my inspiration. Also, Jean Dubuffet, Michel Nedjar, Bill Traylor, Joan Miró, Man Ray, Max Ernst, Marcel





Duchamp, the Bauhaus, Dadaists, surrealists, cubists, and futurists. Such lists a few decades back would have made me suspect in the eyes of the House Un-American Activities Committee and, still earlier, would have handily secured me a place on the index of degenerate art sympathizers.

Coming to America in 1956, following the Hungarian Revolution, was a turning point in my life and work: learning a new language, new graphic idioms, and making a go of entering the turbulent, fast-evolving business of advertising. Initially I worked as an art director with consumer ad agencies (notably, Gardner Advertising in St. Louis), but later specialized in medical pharmaceuticals at the Ted Bates Medical Group, and the J.W. Thompson Company's medical division in New York City. I started my own design studio and ad agency in the mid-seventies and retired in 1987. For many years, I did a lot of day sailing and blue water cruising, but never without a camera or a drawing pad on board.

I have nothing but gratitude for the better than fair and welcoming treatment I received from my adoptive country. With halting English, a somewhat eccentric portfolio, and a self-declared, limited competency in drawing, I got a start, acceptance, and an opportunity to participate constructively in the American communications industry. The America of my imagination materialized beyond my wildest adolescent fantasies.

I've always felt that I should have been paying for the opportunity to make art. The accepted wisdom is that art and the fabrica-

tion of things must be one of our hardwired faculties; that our desire to play, construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct is inborn, part of a search for structure in disorder. A Canadian friend of mine researching the subject is the ardent promoter of the theory that involvement in art releases the hormone oxytocin in the brain, inducing a happy, euphoric state as a side effect. The list of theories goes on, but I firmly believe that it is as much about the process as the end product, if not more so. In sailing parlance: The trip is the destination. Periodically, I experience an addict's restlessness if I do not draw for a while

### *Ars Longa, Vita Brevis*

At my age, time is the coin of the realm. High on my bucket list is an item that preoccupied me for a long time: using randomly formed, pure abstract images (e.g., stains on the street pavements) as sources for creating representational, figurative works of art as part of an interactive exhibit. As John Updike observed in his book *Still Looking*: "One

of abstraction's necessary concerns ... is to keep things from looking like faces, which our eyes are prone to see everywhere." This tendency is defined in the dictionary as *pareidolia*—a psychological phenomenon involving a stimulus (an image or a sound) wherein the mind perceives a familiar pattern of something where none actually exists" (Wikipedia). See also, *apophenia*, "the

human tendency to perceive meaningful patterns within random data" (Ibid).

For decades, I've been captivated (as have many others since humans first looked at the skies and came up with the signs of the zodiac, or a face on a potato chip) by clouds, and stains on the sidewalks that suggest images of fantastic creatures, amusing characters, monsters, or abstract landscapes. I photographed these urban fossils by the hundreds and edited them down to a book titled, *All Power to the Imagination*—a coloring book for all ages—to exercise the interpretive, allegorical, metaphoric, and narrative abilities of the "reader." I used them often as my source material, drawing them conventionally, or, my favorite, by automatic writing. In both instances, the results were full of surprises



and spontaneity that would have been difficult to arrive at in the conventional manner. My own interpretation of the process is that the shapes trigger dormant images in our memory banks, and we recall and recombine them into new entities. Sometimes, it takes a deliberate effort to avoid the emergence of a Disneyesque figure, or characters with time still left on their copyrights. None of this is new, but speaking from experience, it is as productive in generating novel figurative works as, once, the reverse of it was effective in getting away from the representational to the abstract.

As a book, in its original form, *All Power to the Imagination* is used as a sketch and coloring book with a creative twist. As an exhibit, selected pages from the book would be displayed along with clipboards and crayons supplied to accommodate interested visitors. The drawings produced would be exhibited on a separate wall to prevent cross-contamination or to avoid influential subsequent participants. Accordingly, the exhibit would become self-perpetuating through the personal takes and interpretations, either displayed, or shown on a computer screen. 🌐

*Anthony Pozsonyi's books are available online without mark-up and can be viewed cover-to-cover by searching his name at [www.blurb.com](http://www.blurb.com).*

Artwork by Anthony Pozsonyi





# The Road to Self-Discovery

Maya Cariño

I always wanted to study ceramics in Mexico. The first time my grandmother took me to the artisan stalls in her little town of Acatlán de Osorio, I was 7. That was when I saw, “The Trees.” These candelabras portray a beautiful example of Mexican folk art. *Árbol de la Vida* (“Tree of Life”), *Árbol de Abundancia* (“Tree of Abundance”), *Árbol de Mar* (“Tree of the Sea”), and *Árbol de Pavoreal* (“Tree of the Peacock”) are just a few examples of the numerous forms this particular ceramic art form takes. Inspired by heavy symbolism, colors, culture, and traditional ties, I promised myself to return and learn this craft of my heritage. This year-long trip would be one of self-discovery as well as artistically instructive.

The last week of August 2014, I met my uncle Javier in Mexico City. After a five-hour bus ride southeast to the small town of Acatlán de Osorio, Puebla, another 30-minute ride ensued, to the village of San Vicente Boquerón, where my grandmother Ines resides. The small village of Boquerón is in the middle of the mountains with mostly dirt roads, farms, and uninhabited wilderness for miles. This is the setting I lived in for the year. Quite a contrast from New York City life—from one of the most fast-paced cities in the world to a small town where I did not even speak the language. I jumped in headfirst and completely submerged myself into the people, culture, and way of life.

In October, I began my apprenticeship with local artisan Simon Martínez López in the town of Acatlán de Osorio. I traveled three times a week to his home, where he worked with his wife, Carmen. I remember the first day so clearly. Simon instructed me to roll coils and make spirals all day. I started to wonder what on earth I was doing there. For the first few months,



Simon Martínez López, 2012

I only worked about six hours, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., but as time passed I found myself staying much later in correlation with the complexity of the work I was producing.

The first pieces were simple forms, mostly cups, bowls, and vases. I became familiar with the techniques Simon used. The pieces created reflected the seasonal demand. For example, for *Día de los Muertos* (“Day of the Dead”), I made candlesticks and incense burners that are used on altars and graves. For *Navidad* (“Christmas”), I learned to make bells, fruit bowls, and other trinkets. Each new piece brought with it a new technique that was required to create the trees: a fruit bowl had the same base as the trees or candelabras, a handle to a vase was made the same way as the arcs for the trees, and so on. I was able to see how it was all connected and important to the craft. Acknowledging this fact curbed my impatience. About three months in, I created works that were hollow and more intricate. Simon was very proud of the fact that he never used molds. Many artisans made plaster molds, which allowed them to make large quantities of pieces quickly and easily. It was a business to them, not an art. At the end of my sixth month, I began my first tree, a small *Árbol de la Vida*. I continued to make trees exclusively from this point on. I was able to finish two pieces in the span of six days and had a total of 16 trees by the end of my apprenticeship.

## Building

Due to the slow process of building its structure, waiting for it to dry, and continuing to construct the small individual pieces of the turtles and fish, *La Sirena*, “The Mermaid” candelabra, took three days. After each tree is built, *las figuras*, or the figures of flowers and leaves, are made and put onto wires that extend outward from the side of the candelabras. The wires are placed into the clay while it is “leather hard” and remains there throughout the kiln firing. Most electric and wood burning kilns reach extremely high temperatures and would melt or completely burn away any metal or wire. Simon’s technique employs a low temperature wood-burning kiln.

## Sanding

Once the pieces are bone dry, which can take up to a day in the intense Mexican sun, each piece is sanded down with sandpaper. This technique is used to make the joints where two pieces of clay converge smoother and more delicate, and to even all sides. After a piece is sanded down, it is brushed free of all the excess clay dust. The process is done outside with plastic sheets covering your legs, so the excess clay dust can be collected and reworked into new clay once water is re-added.

## Applying Slip

Slip is a suspension of clay in water usually used in slip castings, or as a way of conjoining two pieces of clay when hand building. Simon used different clay bodies of gray or red pigments harvested in the mountains near his home. The slip is used to tint pieces by brushing completely over each piece. Three to five coats of slip are applied, and you wait for each of the previous coats to dry before brushing on the next. This creates a rind of slip over the bone-dry piece.



### Varnishing

Once the previous step is completely dry, water is brushed on to temporarily re-wet the outer layer of slip. While still damp, the shell of slip is rubbed vigorously with a plastic bag or a plastic pen casing. This varnishes the surface to look smooth and shiny.

### Painting

Depending on whether the base slip is gray or red, the opposite color slip is now painted on to create designs, patterns, or words.

### Varnishing

Once the painted designs are dry, Simon uses large, compressed graphite sticks, such as Lyra Graphite Crayons, to “draw” over the entire piece. This varnishes and protects the newly added designs from chipping off during or after the firing.

### Firing

The kiln is made of bricks, with clay covering the inside walls. The open top is covered with metal sheets to keep in the heat. The kiln has two holes on either side of the bottom where wood is set on fire. This wood-burning kiln is manually run for about three hours—chopping wood and pushing it into

the holes on the side of the kiln. The last hour is spent “smoking” *goma*, gum of the cactus plant, into the kiln. The goma gives the clay its colors, without the smoke. I’m told it all comes out white or an off-shade. Once completely cooled down, the pieces are removed from the kiln and cleaned of debris.

### Assembling & Varnishing

Every piece is varnished again. A pasty pink oil is rubbed into each piece, then set aside to absorb into the clay which is then rubbed with cloth to add shine and protection.

### Self-Discovery

On the days I was not at my apprenticeship, I worked on my oil paintings and spent time getting to know my family. I made friends, went to cafes, became integrated into the culture. I picked up odd jobs, teaching English in an after-school program, painting advertisements for a gas company, and on weekends I sketched portraits of people in the park. So many new experiences I bravely dove into.

During my almost eight-month stay with Simon’s family, we became very close.

Simon has three sons, all in their late twenties. None of Simon’s sons has a passion for the craft as their father does. Furthermore the town where they live is very small, not lacking artisans, but lacking the artist community; thus Simon feels quite alienated. He was very fond of me, always proud of what I did, constantly saying, “You learn fast because you like it, you want to know. With this thirst for knowledge, you can go anywhere in life.”

I became their daughter, sister, and aunt. I felt truly a part of their family. Many times, especially at the League, there was a sense of community, so, I understand now what artists mean when they say “art family.”

Being back in the States makes it seem as if it was all a dream. I made a home in Mexico. Ever since I returned in July 2015, I have been working on organizing workshops in collaboration with Simon, for other artists to go down and learn this beautiful craft. 🌊

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From left: Assorted ceramics; *Árbol de Mar* (“Tree of the Sea”), 2015





# I'm an Inny, Not Outy, Artist

Jamie Santana



Figure 1

I would like to thank everyone in the Seeds of the League Program for giving me this scholarship, which has ultimately changed my life. It may sound cliché or like something that you have heard many times before, but I am grateful for being given an opportunity to go to this historic school that has changed the lives of so many others before me.

Before I went to the League, I was a quiet girl, terrified to talk to others, and in recovery from being bullied. When I had just turned 16, I was hit by a van that pushed my spine out of place and nearly killed me. After the car accident, I spoke even less and completely closed off from everyone, including my mother. While I was recovering from spinal fusion surgery, I produced some work. One of these drawings I created a few months after my surgery (see Figure 1).

Recalling the grueling eight hours I had to endure while two titanium rods and 20 screws were placed in my back, I realized that I have pushed past so many bumps in my life (bullying, the car accident, and surgery). I believed and still believe that I should stay optimistic in life, no matter what.

During my first class, with the help of Sherry Camhy and the monitor at the time (Richard Husson), I began to sketch, for the first time, a model—Alice, I believe is her name—by simply shading in the shadows of

her face, and surprisingly I saw a face staring back at me. I am not going to lie, my sketch ended up looking like Medusa, but it did not dampen my high spirits in trying a new style and having fun. It propelled me to try harder, focus, and study the facial structure and bones of the body so that my sketches look realistic and exactly like the models that pose in front of me. From using shadowing, I moved onto blocking in and enveloping; for some reason, blocking in seems easier to me rather than enveloping. After I learned how to apply those methods, I began to sketch portraits better than when I started. I used to try making a circular egg shape and hope for the best; now I pay attention to the bone structure of the face and try to show the planes that I can finally see on a face.

Due to my physical state, it felt as if my moves were mechanical instead of flowing gracefully, especially when it came to making a portrait. But when I started from the eye or lip, I was able to draw the rest of a portrait with ease. I spoke to Sherry about this, and she said that I'm an "inny," not "outy," artist; artists start wherever they're



comfortable with, whether it is starting with the inside or the outside of the face. So I'm excited that I'm beginning to notice my preferences as an artist and achieve the standards I set for myself.

I am trying to move past using only graphite, though I must admit it became a comfortable niche. In class, I focus on trying to capture how a person looks. When I get home, I experiment with color and remember everything Sherry mentioned about color and painting in class. The next time I see Sherry, I will show her my creation; partially because I am excited to show her, but also because I am slowly trying to transition into watercolor.

I am beyond delighted to attend the League. Not only has this changed my hands for the better—I began sketching and painting with both of my hands after Sherry Camhy's suggestion—but I also began opening up and talking to people. For example, if I am having difficulty sketching a nose, I am not afraid to ask the person sitting next to me for some help. This school and the faculty are life changers. 🌱

Artwork by Jamie Santana

# Nancy Wilson Duncan Corbett, 1877–1964

## From Texas Ranch to The Art Students League, 1898–1901

*Article reprinted with permission from The Paintings of Nancy Wilson Duncan Corbett: 1877–1964 catalog, by her great-niece Nancy Powell Moore.*



An institution like New York's Art Students League (est. 1875) was considered radical and admitted women students. It offered life study, but still men and women attended separate life classes. When Augustus Saint-Gaudens in 1890 taught the first mixed modeling class, many women protested. Women's participation in art was still limited. It would be the 1960s before unsegregated classes would draw undraped models of both sexes.

It was here that Nantie chose to attend art school, and amazingly her family went along. Her father in 1898 took her to Galveston in the horse-drawn vehicle that he used to transport goods bought in that city for the ranch store. He put her on the Magnolia Lines steamer going from Galveston to NYC. There she lived in boarding houses and attended art school.

At a time when women were still unable to vote and society was in various ways still pushing women aside, modernism was in the air. And Nantie was taking part. 🎨



Artwork by Nancy Wilson Duncan Corbett



# Kikuo Saito (1939–2016)

by Julia Montepagani



The League mourns the loss of longtime instructor Kikuo Saito, who passed away on February 15, 2016 at the age of 76. Originally from Tokyo, Japan, he moved to New York City in 1966. He studied at the League, and also worked as a studio assistant for Helen Frankenthaler, Kenneth Noland, and Larry Poons. In 1976, Saito began to exhibit his own work. He also worked as a theater designer for many noted directors, and later directed his own plays. In 2005, Saito began teaching painting and color composition at the League. His harmonious paintings combine a heightened color sensibility with calligraphic strokes, and occasionally stenciled letters, alluding to his varied artistic influences.

In the 2014 exhibition catalog (*Kikuo Saito: Paintings and Works on Paper* at Leslie Feely), Joshua Cohen comments on the connection between Saito's theatrical works and his color-field paintings:

"At the same time, Saito was also known for his poetic theater pieces which incorporated silent drama, costumes, light, music and dance. He has collaborated with such



theater luminaries as Jerome Robbins, Peter Brook, and Robert Wilson. Saito's approach to painting is rhythmic and lyrical. Saito paints on the floor, moving around the canvas or paper as he works, much like the dancers he directed in his stage productions. The choreography of his productions have significantly influenced the composition of his paintings."

New York-based curator and critic Karen Wilkin explains in the 2006 exhibition catalog (*Kikuo Saito: Recent Paintings and Works on Paper*), that Saito's renowned calligraphic strokes may be related not only to his stage-sensibility, but also to his experience of moving to New York from Japan. She writes:

"His repeated investigations of alphabets, scripts, and calligraphy—both readable and unreadable—may be a metaphor for his experience, as a very young man, of arriving in New York from Japan and being forced to deal not only with a new language, but also with new visual equivalents for that language. The two opposing motifs of freely disposed gesture and ordered lettering also owe a great deal to Saito's parallel practices as both a painter and a director of mysterious, poetic performance pieces."

Saito's work is among the permanent collections at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City; the Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale; the McNay Art Museum, San Antonio; and the Ulster Museum, Northern Ireland. Mr. Saito was an artist-in-residence at Duke University in 1996 and was a visiting professor at Musashino Art University in Tokyo in 2003. His work is currently represented by Leslie Feely Fine Art, New York City, and Octavia Art Gallery, New Orleans and Houston. He is survived by his wife, Mikiko Ino.

Marianne DeAngelis, one of his former monitors, captures the feelings echoed by many of Saito's devoted students: "Kikuo's infectious curiosity and humbleness created a very special and safe space for his students. He would spend time with each of us, carefully considering our valiant efforts, encouraging experimentation. I hear him when I paint: 'Keep working. More color. Go crazy.'"



Artwork by Kikuo Saito

Previous page, from top: *Golden Grasshopper*, 2013, oil on canvas, 48½ x 80¾ inches; *Summer Evening*,

2007, oil on canvas, 54½ x 65⅝ inches

This page, from top: *Deep Blues*, 2012, acrylic on paper, 32 x 30 inches; Kikuo teaching at the League





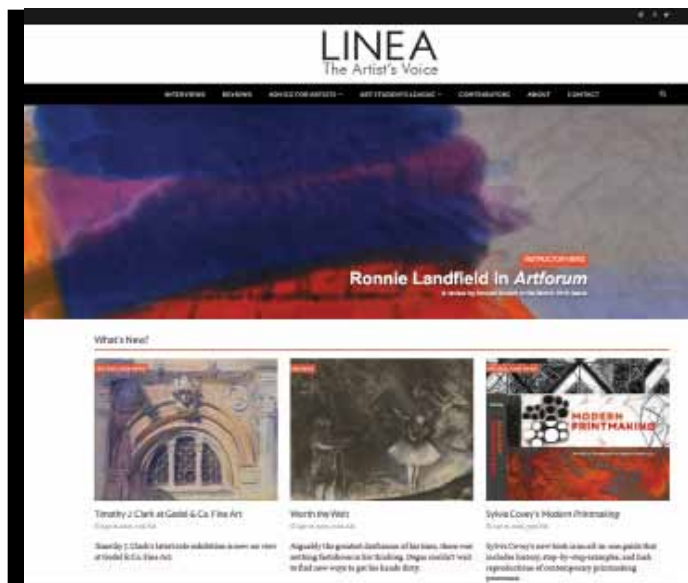
# Welcome New Members

*Elected to the Membership of the Art Students League at the October and December 2015 Membership Meetings*

Josef Akrab	Alison Causer	Valerie Goldburt	Michael Kerschbaumer	Alan Neuberg	Sam Shacked
Walter Altamirano	Steadman Channer	Jerry Grant	Sarah Konstam	Janice Nieman	William Sinclair
Margarita Berg	Yongxi Chen	Larry Green	Dorothy Kopelman	Yuri Ohara	Maxwell Singer
Sheila Berger	Mihaela Cosma	Gaia Grossi	Ruth Kozodoy	Herbert Oppenheimer	Irving Soifer
Mari Berkley	Lauren Covey	Joseph Haber	Zoya Linden	Vera Povolna	Joel Spector
Oksana Berzinsh	Yvonne De Gaetano	Michael Haviken	Margo Magid	Jesse Rory Quinn	Satoko Takahashi
Donna Bionda	Suzanne Drapeau	Vanessa Hernandez	Artem Maloratsky	Antonieta Rea	Jeffrey Watson
Samuel Bodden	Sid Edwards	Bente Hirsch	Fred Maltzan	Ruth Rioux	Rachel Weiswasser
Juan Pablo Bohorquez	Victoria Eiger	Mariana Ikuta	Murali Mani	Leigh Robinson	Shao Ching Wang Williams
Linda Brosterman	Galina Feit	Dione Isasmendi Aguilar	Steven Margolis	Patricia Rowbottom	Susan Wolfe
Leah Brown	Julie Fisher	Zlata Ivanova	Nurit Margulies	Kostiantyn Rudnichenko	John Zwaryczuk
David Brusino	Francoise Freij	Kathleen Jansyn	Joselyn Marquez	Scott M Rutter	
Rachel Buder	James Garvey	Megumi Kaizu	Annette Meeks	Miriam Saba	
Alvaro Burgos	Charlotte Geschleider	Olympia Kazi	Aela Morgan	Yasser Sabra	
Pamela Butler	Zalmen Glauber	Erik Kelly	Yuuki Nagata	Laura Santiago Monteiro	

## 2016 Calendar: League Dates to Remember

<b>May 29</b>	Last day of 2015–16 Regular Session of Classes	<b>July 13–July 23</b>	Final Project Exhibition
<b>May 30–June 5</b>	End-of-Session Cleanout (League closed)	<b>July 27–August 19</b>	Technical Instructors Exhibition
<b>June 6</b>	2016 Summer Session of Classes begins	<b>August 20</b>	Last day of 2016 Summer Session of Classes
<b>June 6–18</b>	Red Dot Exhibition	<b>August 21–September 5</b>	End-of-Session Cleanout (League closed)
<b>June 23–July 7</b>	Merit Scholarship Exhibition	<b>September 6</b>	2016–17 Regular Session of Classes begins
<b>July 4</b>	Independence Day (League closed)		



## LINEA

A Platform for the Instructor's Voice  
[www.asllinea.org](http://www.asllinea.org)

LINEA's articles encompass the instructor's expertise, as both creator and thinker.

Learn from interviews that explore the lives of artists, exhibition reviews, instructional posts, and more at [www.asllinea.org](http://www.asllinea.org).

## 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). We've added a Members page with key dates and an *In Memoriam* section.

From the League's website you can:

- Join our E-mail list • Become a Facebook fan • Subscribe to our YouTube channel
- Follow us on Twitter & Pinterest • Join our Alumni Group on LinkedIn









# The Art Students League of New York

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