



GREAT ART WORLDWIDE

WHEN TIME STANDS STILL

JULIETTE ARISTIDES: A LIFE'S WORK

Customs House Museum & Cultural
Center
Clarksville, Tennessee
customshousemuseum.org
through March 31

On view at the Customs House Museum this season is an exhibition of recent still life, interior, and figure paintings by Juliette Aristides (b. 1971), founder and instructor of the Classical Atelier at Seattle's Gage Academy of Fine Art.

Almost all the works were made during 2020, which the artist describes as “a year of solitude and introspection set against a backdrop of intense disruption — a pendulum of extremes. My body of work is centered on a deep appreciation for the simple and unchanging parts of my everyday life. This collection of paintings, in their stillness and silence, is a record and a gift of that particular time. The aim of many art forms, from poetry to painting, is to return home and see it as if for the first time. As William Steig once said, ‘Art ... has the power to make any spot on earth the living center of the universe.’”

Customs House curator Terri Jordan adds that Aristides “is one of the best contemporary painters of light.” She goes on, “Her ability to portray that bit of afternoon sun hitting a windowsill and reflecting on a pewter pot is unmatched. You can feel the warmth in her paintings, and also a sense of time standing still for the viewer’s tranquil gaze. Her scenes tend to draw you into your own memories.”

Indeed, paintings such as *The Atelier*, illustrated here, underscore Aristides’s understanding of light and its effect on everyday surfaces: note how the gleam of sunlight highlights the wooden table’s polish and the soft curving silhouette of the sculpture at left.



JULIETTE ARISTIDES (b. 1971), *The Atelier*, 2020, oil on panel, 24 x 17 in.

PORTRAITS FOR ALL

EQUITY PORTRAIT STUDIO

New York Artists Equity Association
New York City
nyartistsequity.org/the-portrait-studio

Operated by the New York Artists Equity Association, the Equity Gallery has long championed an egalitarian accessibility to both art appreciation and acquisition by showcasing works with broad appeal and modest prices. Director Michael Gormley and his colleagues recently took a long, hard look at the field of commissioned portrait painting and realized that the Internet could be deployed to strengthen the creative connections between portraitists and patrons.

Working from reference photographs is standard practice among portraitists, who generally take photos of the sitter themselves. Alas, the current necessity of social distancing and travel restrictions has made this crucial step impractical, if not impossible. The newly launched Equity Portrait Studio works around the problem cleverly: the client uploads a set of reference photos of the sitter that she or he has taken, thereby reducing costs and speeding up the process. To help with this phase, Equity has produced a free step-by-step “portrait photographing” video for clients to consult.

The program has launched with four gifted portraitists — Brooks Frederick, Kristin



Kunc, Hyeseung Marriage-Song, and Patricia Watwood — all of whom employ an *alla prima* approach that emphasizes lively brushwork. Commissioning a head and shoulders portrait (measuring 11 x 14 or 12 x 12 inches) from one of these artists costs \$3,500, not including framing and delivery. Please visit the initiative’s website to learn more.

HYESEUNG MARRIAGE-SONG (b. 1978), *Chris*, 2020, oil on canvas, 11 x 14 in.

THE ENDURING ORCHID

PATRICIA LASPINO: GLOBAL GARDEN, RESONANT BEAUTY

Stamford Museum & Nature Center
Stamford, Connecticut
stamfordmuseum.org and
orchidallianceproject.com
through April 25

Over her 40-year career, the artist Patricia Laspino has developed a signature style that entwines dozens of layers of transparent oil glazes over a sculptural groundwork of botanical impressions. On view now at the Stamford Museum & Nature Center is a major exhibition of her large oil paintings, as well as etchings and drawings. Laspino’s artworks are the cornerstone of her Orchid Alliance Project, which highlights the interconnectedness of humanity and nature and underscores the urgency of sound environmental stewardship.

“Laspino’s work marries together art and science, making them tangible in a way that people can receive and perceive,” says Jillian



PATRICIA LASPINO (b. 1955),
Obsession, 2016, oil on
canvas, 36 x 60 in.

Casey, the center’s curator of collections and exhibitions. “Her orchid paintings explore and inform the viewer of the complex interdependencies and careful balances inherent in environments of orchids, which include every continent except for Antarctica.”

Many of us don’t realize that thousands of orchid species and hybrids have been cul-

tivated by humans for more than 2,500 years. Laspino believes that exploring ancient attitudes about orchids and their function, through the lens of art and culture, may shed some light on the power that orchids still have over us.

HIGHLIGHTING WOMEN

WOMEN PAINTING

Museu Europeu d'Art Modern
Barcelona
meam.es
March 8–May 2

In Barcelona, the Museu Europeu d'Art Modern (MEAM) is set to open — on International Women's Day — an exhibition of recent paintings by approximately 70 women living around the world. Accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, the show will include such American talents as Kelly Birkenruth, Stephanie Deshpande, Nanette Fleur, Nadine Robbins, and Patricia Watwood.

Illustrated here is Watwood's *The Dance of Life and Death*. She explains, "I began this work just before the world shut down early in 2020. The import and emotions of the central figure took on new meaning as we all witnessed death, protest, struggle, and fear. Our interconnectedness and fragility sunk into our hearts as never before. What is the place of art and beauty in a world of death and struggle? What is the meaning of joy

PATRICIA WATWOOD (b. 1971), *The Dance of Life and Death*, 2021, oil on linen, 40 x 30 in.

and ecstasy when the fragile world seems on the edge of collapse? The central figure expresses my deep desire for freedom, dance, sensuality, joy, and love. She represents my dogged conviction that art is essential in reminding us why we struggle. The conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Aquarius on December 21, 2020 (the winter equinox) seemed like an intergalactic sign for our global crisis. The symbols of Jupiter and Saturn here call for expansive and imaginative vision combined with structure and discipline, and signal that our culture is entering a time of tumultuous transformation and rapid change."

This is powerful, thought-provoking art, and many more examples will be on view in Barcelona this spring.



TRANSCENDING CHALLENGES

3 AMERICANS

Arnot Art Museum
Elmira, New York
arnotartmuseum.org
through August 28

Renowned for its collection of contemporary realist art, the Arnot Art Museum in 2009 launched an exhibition series titled *3 Americans* that is mounted every three years. The artists selected for the current edition are the figure and still life painter Nadine Robbins, the landscapist and portraitist Bruce Muirhead, and Richard Masters, who makes monumental, monochromatic drawings of cityscapes.

Robbins's participation is particularly noteworthy given the challenges she has faced recently. Trained at the State University of New York at New Paltz and now based 30 miles away in Rhinebeck, Robbins is presenting 15 works in Elmira. She explains, "In 2018, I was diagnosed with inflammation of the optic nerve, which destroyed most of the vision in my right eye. Without depth perception, I lost the ability to anticipate when my brush would strike the canvas, and I thought I would never paint again. Though



I was depressed and fearful, I developed a new, more pointillist approach to hyper-realism," an approach embodied by such new works as *Burger Hill*, illustrated here. As ever, Robbins remains committed to sharing the stories of individuals from all walks of life, especially those defying societal norms involving gendered notions of identity, behavior, and sexuality.

NADINE ROBBINS (b. 1966), *Burger Hill*, 2020, oil on linen, 48 x 72 in., available through Anthony Brunelli Fine Arts (Binghamton, New York)

OIL PAINTERS HEAD TO CALIFORNIA

OIL PAINTERS OF AMERICA 30TH NATIONAL JURIED EXHIBITION OF TRADITIONAL OILS

California Center for the Arts
Escondido, California
oilpaintersofamerica.com and
artcenter.org
April 9–May 16

The nonprofit organization Oil Painters of America (OPA) will co-host its 30th National Juried Exhibition of Traditional Oils at the California Center for the Arts this spring. More than 1,000 professional artist members from across the U.S. and Canada vied for only 200 spots on the show's checklist.

Among the OPA Master Signature artists participating are Daud Akhriev, Kathy Anderson, Nikolo Balkanski, Cindy Baron, Ken Cadwallader, John Michael Carter, James Crandall, Nancy S. Crookston, Louis Escobedo, Daniel Gerhartz, Albert Handell, Nancy Howe, Robert Johnson, Calvin Liang, Huihan Liu, Ned Mueller, William Schneider, Michael Situ, Craig Tennant, James Tennison, Deborah Tilby, Jan Peng, Jeffrey R. Watts, and Christopher Zhang. In addition, works by five newly elected Master Signature artists will be on view: Johanna Harmon, David Mueller, Camille Przewodek, Mary Qian, and Deborah Tilby.

One of OPA's leading members, Jeffrey R. Watts of San Diego, will serve as juror of awards, distributing approximately \$100,000 in awards, including the Gold Medal accompanied by a \$25,000 cash prize. Enhancing the show will be a display of winning works from OPA's first annual Student Art Competition, which focuses on artists aged 14 to 22.

Naturally the pandemic has made definitive planning for in-person events uncertain, so please check the organizers' websites, where you will find all of the exhibitions' artworks illustrated and available for purchase.



NANCY HOWE (b. 1950), *Frank Conversations*, 2020, oil on linen, 28 x 22 in.

HEAVENLY VISIONS

SAINTS & SYMBOLS

Seraphim Press Ltd
England
alastaircarew-cox.com

The British architectural photographer Alastair Carew-Cox has a passion for Victorian glass. In 2012, the world welcomed the volume on Pre-Raphaelite stained glass (1850–70) he created with scholar William Waters. In 2017 came their book about the subsequent two decades.

Now their trilogy has been completed with *Saints & Symbols, The Stained Glass of Ford Madox Brown, William De Morgan, John George Sowerby, Walter Crane, and Frederic Shields*. Its 304 pages, glowing with more than 500 previously unpublished photographs, reveal that these five artists were active on the periphery of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, and all strongly influenced by William Morris. Sadly, their work



in stained glass has not been much investigated until now. Most of their windows appear in the new book, with emphasis on details difficult to see with the naked eye.

The publishers have kindly offered readers of *Fine Art Connoisseur* a discount on this book and also on the limited remaining number of the earlier volumes. To learn more, please send an email to a_carewcox@yahoo.co.uk.

The cover of *Saints & Symbols*