



"Grape Plate and Gourd," oil on linen, by Judith Sutton



"Routine Maintenance," archival pigment print, by Rob McHugh



"Kitri," oil on canvas mounted on panel, by Robert Beck

At New Hope Arts, two dimensions are enough

A venue known for sculptural exhibits fills its gallery with paintings.

By GWEN SHRIFT
STAFF WRITER

It's hard to impress me with photography, surrounded as I have been for decades by first-rate photojournalists.

It's even harder to get a rise from the likes of Richard Rosenfeld, owner of a distinguished gallery in Philadelphia and judge of the New Hope Arts Center's Members' Open Juried Exhibition.

According to center director Carol Cruickshanks, Rosenfeld was extra-strict with the photography submissions, making them the rarest of the rare in a venue that seldom exhibits two-dimensional work.

This high standard produced an exhibit filled with familiar names, as well as several artists I was pleased to encounter for the first time.

Among the latter is Jay Eisenberg, who contributes a small portrait in oils, "James," the delicate execution of which makes it hard to imagine anything so prickly as a paintbrush was involved. Eisenberg's "Modern Armor," a much-larger work in charcoal on board, is similarly accomplished. The artist frames his portrait of a classic motorcycle jacket in black leather that retains snaps and seams and zippers and pockets.

New to this critic's notebook are the photographs of Robert Porter, whose almost surreally vivid "Deconstructed Peonies" verges on three-dimensional, and Rob McHugh, whose archival pigment print "Routine Maintenance" shows men painting a water tower. The background color descends from cool at the top to warm lower down, touching a subject of intrinsic interest with painterly intrigue.

This being Bucks County,



"James," oil on board, by Jay Eisenberg

many landscapes have gone under the bridge, and over the hill, and through the woods in countless exhibits, but Addie Hocyec brings a fresh sweep to a time-honored genre with her cloudscape, "After the Storm." The movement of the weather is particularly well-composed, and the painter makes great play of the white brilliance often witnessed after clouds release their rain.

Judith Sutton also is new to me but clearly not to the art of still life. The light seems to penetrate solid ceramic in her oil on linen, "Grape Plate and Gourd"; despite this dynamic, it's a restful composition.

A few carefully selected sculptures are included, among the most refreshing Don Gonzales' "Paralle Universe" in glass and copper. The work, by an artist previously unknown to me, is a small pool of glass indented with a geometric form, as if to suggest an alien spacecraft touching down on the surface of a prehistoric pond.

Old acquaintances contribute works that make it a pleasure to revisit the careers of painters such as Robert Beck, Annelise van Dommelen, Tracy Everly, Richard Lennox, Gail Bracegirdle and Lucy McVicker, and artists who work in three dimensions, such as Andy

DiPietro, Etta Winograd and Constance Bassett.

Beck treats the viewer to his customary choreography of complex perspectives in "Kitri," a depiction of the famous grand jeté from the ballet "Don Quixote."

He suspends the dancer in air — I'll go out on a limb here to say you can almost see and feel that air — as she leaps into the spotlight at an angle that may be second nature to a ballerina but a tour de force for a painter.

Even allowing for that, what really nails the viewer to the fourth wall is a triangle of highlights on the leaping dancer, the pool on the floor and the gleam on the skirt of

a figure to the left.

Van Dommelen offers "Companion," a bird form that is never more gothic than she has executed it in oil over stone lithograph. The artist's works are consistently penetrating and multilayered; apart from that, van Dommelen exhibits a respect for her materials that is extraordinary even amid the distinguished company her paintings customarily keep.

Here and there, I have witnessed the startling horizons in Lennox's paintings of towns and skylines, but this time, he stood back and painted a landscape with the ground immediately underfoot.

"Tonal Gamut" is nothing short of an education for the eye as the painter analyzes a bare mountainside and farm buildings in austere blues, browns, golds, greens, yellows, cold white and, ever so sparingly, warm white.

Everly moves from strength to strength, proving the ever-increasing refinement of her visualizations of old farm buildings; in "Open House," she allows herself an almost-anarchic touch in the intrusion of a tree branch between the viewer and a white barn, a small but mighty gesture that elevates this work.

Watercolorist Bracegirdle departs from her often-exhibited subject matter — lovingly rendered fruit and flowers — in favor of moving forms in "Wishes in the Wind."

Rippling strips of fabric printed with words hang on a line; the composition is lyrical yet at the same time tougher than what I have previously seen of the artist's work, perhaps because of an unexpected black background.

The exhibit is on view through Sept. 28 at 2 Stockton Ave. in New Hope.

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'Ghost of Marriage Past' could rattle plans

Dear Abby: I am a divorced woman with three children ages 24, 22 and 16. I live on my own with my girls. I have been dating a man, "Reed," for three years. We are very much in love and have been working to blend our families. (He has two children.)

We have decided to move in together at the end of October. My lease will be up then, and Reed has sold his condo. We

will be moving into the house he shared with the ex-wife while they were married. I'm comfortable with the move and our kids are very excited about it.

Everything is fine except for one thing: His ex-wife has not yet found a new home to move into. With little time to go, he's suggesting we move in and live with his ex-wife until she finds a new place. Reed believes this will be very short-term — a month or so.

The house is big enough for all of us, so that's not an issue. His ex-wife and I are friendly, so that's not an issue, either. But I'm not comfortable with this plan. Am I being irrational? Should I just act like a grown-up and make the move, or should I refuse?

— **Second Thoughts in Massachusetts**

Dear Second Thoughts: You are neither immature nor irrational. You are thinking ahead — and that is what grown-ups do.

What if Reed's ex *can't* find a place that suits her in a month or so? What if it takes six months or even a year? While you may like the woman, do you really want to share your dwelling with the "Ghost of Marriage Past"?

If I were you, I'd talk to my landlord and ask if you can work out a month-to-month extension of your lease. If that's agreeable, Reed can move in with you for the "short term." I'm sure you'd both be happier.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.



"Deconstructed Peonies," photograph, by Robert Porter

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