



Artists Supporting Artists

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by Pat Rogers

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Hamptons, NY

The art can captivate, engage and conjure questions. It may delight. It may disturb. It may invoke a range of emotions in between. This is true whether it's figurative, surrealism, conceptual, narrative or other genres. The art may be painting, drawing, photography, digital art, mixed media and more.

The 2nd Annual Art on the Waterfront: East End Artists Supporting Artists with Mental Illness is an initiative of Demato and Sawyer. Demato is the founder and director of Richard M. Demato Gallery in Sag Harbor. Sawyer is a figurative artist. Sawyer's sister found herself in need and Fountain House was there to help.

"Fountain House saved her life," Demato said. Hosting the now-annual fundraiser is their way of showing gratitude and giving back to the organization that helped their family, Demato said. They have been involved with the organization for around 20 years.

Fountain Gallery is an integral part of Fountain House. The gallery hosts changing exhibitions of art made by members. Shows are curated. Artwork is presented in themed group shows selected to present artistic range and develop the theme, said Fountain Gallery director Jason Bowman.

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Quality is an important element for the work exhibited at Fountain Gallery. Many artist members have art degrees or have formally studied art, Bowman said. Others are self-taught and produce artworks within the "outsider artist" category (as well as "visionary art" which refers to artwork made by those with mental illness).

"People don't always realize the art is visionary art when they walk into the gallery," Bowman said. "We work it into our conversations... Awareness and acceptance of the mentally ill is part of our mission."

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“I Make You Dizzy” by Anthony Newton. Courtesy Fountain Gallery.

What’s unique about the Art on the Waterfront benefit is the purposeful inclusion and involvement of area artists, said Bowman. A conscious effort was made involve mainstream artists to connect them with artists of Fountain House. The hope is mentor-type relationships could result between artists that “click.”

“The art world isn’t always known for being helpful to each another,” said Bowman. “It’s a competitive place. We hope to change that. Especially in the Hamptons, where there are so many artists, we wanted the benefit to include artists helping fellow artists, who just happen to be suffering from mental illness.”

Both Art on the Waterfront benefits include an art world power couple to help set the tone. Last year’s Honorary Chair was artist couple Eric Fischl and April Gornik of North Haven. This year’s Honorary Chair is photographer and author John Gruen and artist Jane Wilson. The pair donated artworks for auction. Bidding is live through August 5, 2011.

This year’s host committee includes local connections Guild Hall Executive Director Ruth Appelhof, artist Daria Deshuk and photographer Mark Seidenfeld.

Art on the Waterfront hopes to raise funds and awareness that artists with mental illness are artists. Fountain Gallery artists who donated artworks are expected to attend the benefit, Bowman said.

BASIC FACTS: The 2nd Annual Art on the Waterfront: East End Artists Supporting Artists with Mental Illness is being held July 30 from 6 to 9 p.m. The event is sold out but donations will be accepted through fountaingallerynyc.com. Click “Donate” on the Home Page.

The Sixth Annual Outsider Art in the Hamptons continues through September 6, 2011 at Galerie BelAge, 8 Moniebogue Lane, Westhampton Beach.

Fountain Gallery: fountaingallerynyc.com.

Fountain House: www.fountainhouse.org

Galerie BelAge: www.galeriebelage.com

UPCOMING: Fountain Gallery’s Celebration of Life Benefit takes place on November 14, 2011. It will be held at The Prince George Ballroom, 15 East 27th Street, New York. The benefit includes 100 artworks by Fountain Gallery artists. Details will be posted at <http://fountaingallerynyc.com>.