



# Bonac Tonic Evolves

August 5, 2011

by Pat Rogers

**DISPATCH - July 30, 2011 (Saturday; 10:35 p.m.)**

## **Springs, NY**

Bonac Tonic openings are known for crowds, antics and fun. Exhibitions by the artist collective are a great excuse to get together and see what the Bonac Tonickers and their invitees have been up to.



Grant Haffner immersed in A Midsummer's Nightmare

One thing always holds true: there will be monsters, power lines, flowers and cartoon heroes at every show.

Switching things up, "A Midsummer's Nightmare" had the artwork commanding the attention. The weekend show ultimately revealed artists moving into their own.

Artists in the collective unveiled new artwork, presented new directions and launched the debut of a dream at "A Midsummer's Nightmare" held July 30 and 31, 2011 at Ashawagh Hall.

The show featured artwork from Bonac Tonic core artists Grant Haffner, Carly Haffner, Scott Gibbons, Justin Smith and Gary Lovelace. Invited artists were Oliver Peterson, Christian Little, Maeve D'Arcy and Christine Lidrbauch.



Bonac Tonic formed in 2005 and has exhibited at Ashawagh Hall (and elsewhere) ever since.

They launched into the public eye during a one-night-only group show on the grounds of the Parrish Art Museum several years ago.

So did the artist collectives Arts 4 Collective of Sag Harbor and FRESH of Port Jefferson. Arts 4 Collective is now defunct. FRESH holds regular shows at Toast Coffee House in Port Jefferson.

Bonac Tonic has been going strong ever since. They hold annual "Bring Your Own Art Shows," fundraising exhibitions for Ashawagh Hall, and exhibitions like "A Midsummer's Nightmare" where core artists exhibit with invited artists.

For this show, fewer artists were invited and more artwork from each artist was exhibited, said Grant Haffner, a painter and Bonac Tonic founder.

“We’ve kind of went back to our roots with this show,” Haffner said. “Having fewer artists means there’s more art from each person. We decided to put artwork made by one person together instead of mixing it through the show like galleries do. There’s so many different styles that I don’t think it would have worked well if we had tried it any other way.”

Here’s a snapshot of some of the artwork exhibited by invited artists:

Oliver Peterson’s art combines mysticism, anatomy and history in his mixed media artwork. Crows frequently appear. So do words and sentences. Peterson sands the acrylic paint to create layers. Sanding and layering helps give the sense of past experiences while concealing, implying and revealing something that may be profound.

Highly detailed, Peterson said his favorite reaction from collectors is when they discover new visual references in the work after owning it for a while.



Black Buzzard by Oliver Peterson



Merlin by Oliver Peterson



Perfect Timepiece by Oliver Peterson



Oliver Peterson with his artwork

Peterson recently exhibited in a show at Silas Marder Gallery in Bridgehampton. “The History of What” exhibition was held throughout July 2011.

Christian Little’s work is inspired by mythology, history, religion and the experiences of everyday life. His art typically combines drawings on paper applied to board. Figures that borrow from Egyptian art feature prominently. Native American art is another influence. The works exhibited in “A Midsummer’s Nightmare” capture moments fully lived and celebrated as single moments in time, Little said.



Rock Hopping by Christian Little



Pyramider (Drum & Key) by

## Christian Little



Confetti  
Geyser by Christian  
Little



Christian Little besides Medicine Man

Little exhibited work in the show, "Altered States," at Sara Nightingale Gallery in Water Mill. The group exhibition was held in July.

Christine Lidrbauch exhibited a series of drawings that depict a relaxed Mother Nature blithely wreaking havoc. The series arises from the idea that man is oblivious to the destruction we reap on the planet and nature is equally blasé about the effects on us, Lidrbauch said.

Wanting the work to be playful, Lidrbauch made a series of drawings that may draw smiles from viewers.



Playful Mother Nature -Fog by Christine  
Lidrbauch



Playful Mother Nature - Contented by  
Christine Lidrbauch

For a complete look at the series, see the HAH blog post, "The Lighter Side of Hurricanes."

Maeve D'Arcy exhibited a series of abstract works inspired by Jackson Heights in Queens, Ireland and the Hamptons. Each painting is stippled with acrylic painting. The motion of making them infuses a meditative quality into the art.

When viewers gaze upon them, D'Arcy hopes to conjure a cornucopia of emotions ranging from serene to chaotic, messy to meditative with dashes of disturbing, nightmarish, agitation, sentimentality, earthy and pagan, according to her website.



LIC # 5 by Maeve D'Arcy



LIC # 8 by Maeve D'Arcy



LIC # 3 by Maeve D'Arcy

Beyond exhibiting works by invited guests, "A Midsummer's Nightmare" revealed new work and directions by its core members.

For instance, Justin Smith held a book signing of his debut comic book issue of "Spyungo!" The premiere issue is the first of seven. The comic is 27 pages plus illustrations from Smith's Pin-Up Gallery. Issue #2 will be released this fall.



A drawing of Spyungo by Justin Smith.

"Spyungo!" opens in New Jersey at the foot of an abandoned Chromium factory. Tucked within society's hidden recesses, a battle unfolds between teenage outsiders and a band of mutants that have made their home nearby.

"Spyungo!" pulls from Smith's experiences growing up in the shadows of smoke-stack factories in his native New Jersey. In fact, the main character (Spyungo) evolved from a doodle made by Smith on a high school desk, said Smith. The idea to create a comic book was born in those days, he said.



Life intervened and the idea was postponed. Smith kept drawing. He made a series of illustrations featuring superheroes. He satired corrupt professionals. The idea for a comic was never far away. Drawings started and then stalled.

This past year, Bonac Tonic Comics took flight and "Spyungo!" was born. Saturday's opening was the first comic book signing held by Smith. Besides signing his comic book, Smith offered caricatures and exhibited limited edition cover art of the premiere issue of "Spyungo!."

"This is a dream come true," Smith said.



Justin Smith debuts the first edition of his comic book "Spyungo!"

"A Midsummer's Nightmare" inspired Bonac Tonic founder Carly Haffner to make a new series of flower paintings, she said. The last series was exhibited at Silas Marder Gallery several years ago.



Carly Haffner with a series of new flower paintings

She continues to build Carly's World and make art featuring the fuzzy pink happy monster.



Carly's World by Carly Haffner



Another level of Carly's World

Haffner also unveiled paintings that combine happy characters with an unexpected kick.



Bunnies and Money by Carly Haffner

Grant Haffner, Carly's twin and fellow Bonac Tonic founder, exhibited three paintings in the show.

His art has been exhibited widely this summer (so far). Haffner's landscapes are included in a group show at Sara Nightingale Gallery. The exhibit, "What's Out There," is on view through August 13. One of Haffner's power lines painting is also included in this year's 44th Annual "Artists of the Springs Invitational." He was invited to create an artwork for the invitation. The show is presented from August 4 to 20, 2011 at Ashawagh Hall.

Recently, Haffner's art was included in an exhibition on new contemporary artwork at Vered gallery in East Hampton. An Untitled black-tinged painting won an Honorable Mention in this year's Annual "Artists Members Exhibition" at Guild Hall. Haffner is a past winner of their landscape painting award.

In July, Haffner's art was accepted for fundraisers benefiting LongHouse Reserve and Watermill Center.

New for this year is an emphasis on color, Haffner said. For instance, the oranges and neon reds in the painting below were inspired by the newly-painted orange floor at Dan Flavin Institute in Bridgehampton, said Haffner.



A Grant Haffner landscape

He's also started changing up the composition to include other man-made features besides the power lines he's known for.



### Grant Haffner painting on ceramic tile

A new line of artwork on ceramic tile was released a few months ago. They've been popular sellers, Carly Haffner said. The tiles are affordable and allows anyone who wants a Grant Haffner painting to have one, she said.

The tiles are a way to explore how art other than original paintings can be sold, Grant Haffner said.



### Grant Haffner painting on ceramic tile

Since they're tile, the paintings can go anywhere ceramic tile does, Carly Haffner said. "You can have a Grant Haffner painting in your bathroom," she said. "They're waterproof."



### Grant Haffner painting on ceramic tile

Monster-maker Scott Gibbons exhibited a new series of his Bonac Bubbies in shadow boxes at "A Midsummer's Nightmare." Each Bonac Bubbies is clad in the same patterned material on the back of the box.



### Bonac Bubbie art by Scott Gibbons

As always, there were plenty of smaller Bonac Bubbies bouncing around.



### A Bonac Bubbie by Scott Gibbons



### Bonac Bubbies by Scott Gibbons

Gary Lovelace showed a series of his fantasy paintings. He's inspired by nature, classic German portait artists of the Renaissance and painters of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, according to his website.



### Fallen by Gary Lovelace



Fairy-Tale Romance by Gary  
Lovelace



Aesrell and Her Dragon  
by Gary Lovelace

For an extra dash of fun, the Cardboard Gift Shop was built as a playful way to separate art from commercial efforts.



The Cardboard Gift Shop



A window into The Cardboard Gift Shop



Carly Haffner with hand knit cupcake  
containers made by her sister, Joni Haffner,  
in the Cardboard Gift Show

Like every Bonac Tonic show, there were plenty of funny moments.



Christine Lidrbauch puts on  
her Cumulonimbus Hat.



Showing off a portrait by Justin  
Smith

As the opening drew to a close, East Hampton comic Math McGinley took to the mic and added a dramatic end to the night.



Stand up comedian Math  
McGinley



**BASIC FACTS:** “A Midsummer’s Nightmare” was held from July 30 and 31, 2011 at Ashawagh Hall in Springs. Food was provided by Cassandra Ellis’s damn good cooking. The exhibition included works by Gary Lovelace, Maeve D’Arcy, Scott Gibbons, Carly Haffner, Grant Haffner, Justin Smith, Christine Lidrbauch, Christian Little and Oliver Peterson.

Bonac Tonic artist collective: [www.bonactonic.com](http://www.bonactonic.com)

Grant Haffner: [www.granthaffner.com](http://www.granthaffner.com)

Carly Haffner: [www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/10132-carly-haffner](http://www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/10132-carly-haffner)

Scott Gibbons: [www.myspace.com/bubbiemonsters](http://www.myspace.com/bubbiemonsters)

Justin Smith: [www.justinsmithart.com](http://www.justinsmithart.com)

Christian Little: <http://wampumwampum.com>

Oliver Peterson: [www.olliiep.deviantart.com](http://www.olliiep.deviantart.com)

Gary Lovelace: [www.garylovelace.com](http://www.garylovelace.com)

Maeve D’Arcy: <http://maevedarcy.com>

Ashawagh Hall: [www.ashawagh-hall.org](http://www.ashawagh-hall.org)

**BONAC TONIC TRIVIA:** The name, Bonac Tonic, is a nickname for an iced tea that was first produced by Schwenk’s of East Hampton. A local favorite, according to Bonac Tonickers, it was equally revered for its name and its green carton. It’s now produced by Hampton Dairy, according to the Bonac Tonic artist collective.

**UNSUBSTANTIATED RUMOR:** Loose lips may sink ships. That’s how rumors get started. One such pair of lips let slip that it’s possible A Midsummer’s Nightmare was the last Bonac Tonic show. No one’s talking so I guess we’ll have to see...

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