



Art from a Box

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by Pat Rogers

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East Hampton/Westhampton Beach, NY

Boxes can be beautiful...especially when made for the annual Box Art Auction benefiting East End Hospice.



Paul Giovanopoulos

The 11th Annual Box Art Auction is being held this evening (Saturday, Sept 10) at the Ross School Center for Well-Being in East Hampton. The fundraiser starts at 4:30 p.m. with a silent auction and cocktails. A live auction follows.

This year's auctioneer is Bonnie Grice from the Southampton-based radio station 88.3 FM (Peconic Public Broadcasting).

As always, the cause is a worthy one: proceeds from the fundraiser benefit East End Hospice. The non-profit organization brings peace during a time of ultimate stress...watching a loved one leaving life.

Each year, area artists pitch in to create unique art that starts with a cigar box or wine box.

After receiving the square container, artists let their muse roam. Box art can conjure the artist's signature style in a work atop the box or can provide a leaping off point for art that moves beyond four corners and flat surfaces.

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Reynold Ruffins

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Carol Hunt is one artist who typically uses the box as a jumping off point, said Box Art Auction benefit chair Arlene Bujese. Hunt often makes a painting or drawing that cascades from the box "in many folds," Bujese said.

This year, Bujese set aside a red cigar box for Hunt. The box was so beautiful, Bujese was tempted to keep it, Hunt said. After receiving the box, Hunt's first move was to start thinking "outside the box."

Primarily a painter, Hunt has been weaving wall hangings for the last three years, she said. When she received her box, she had just completed a weaving titled "Firebird." She decided to use the extra yarn to make a small version of the weaving to hang from the box.

But completing the box wasn't that easy: Four trips to various stores for red paint to touch up the box left Hunt empty-handed. So she reached for black paint and red feathers that never made it into her original weaving.

"Et voila - Firebird Cigars!," proclaimed Hunt.

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Carol Hunt

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The top of Frank Wimberly's box was made before this year's artist invitations were extended.

At the time, Wimberly was working with wood and band saw teaching myself how to create the bends and curve now realized in his box, he said. When he received his box, the sculpture's base size struck him as complimentary to the Box Art box.

"It almost automatically fit the size of the work, acting as a natural base for it and giving the work an opportunity to allow its floating appearance, which was appealing to me," Wimberly said. "In creating this piece, I was, at that time, probably drawn to the sculptures of other artists working in metal as well as wood."

Wimberly's art is now mostly abstract works on canvas. Since making the sculpture that's part of his box art, he's gone onto make "a number of wood sculptures" using the know-how acquired through his initial efforts, he said.

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Frank Wimberly

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Stephanie Reit is a big fan of the Box Art Auction. She starts conceiving her ideas soon after the benefit evening is over. As a collector of "junk," as she puts it, boxes are among the items she collects to incorporate into art.

That said, it's important to know that Reit is a painter.

The Box Art Auction gives Reit a chance to stretch out as an artist while keeping her focus in the studio on painting. Her box art typically doesn't resemble her paintings, she said.

This year's box incorporates worn wheels from an old doll carriage she found at a junk shop in Maine she kept for "someday," Reit said. The wheels found themselves atop some of her "many wooden cigar boxes."

She rummaged through her object collection and selected 10-20 objects for possible usage. Playing around eventually led her in a direction Reit liked. She then added a small ceramic angel that was sitting on a bookcase. A wreath of berries and butterfly wings followed.

"Voila" – it felt complete, Reit said.

Some artists have even developed signature styles specifically designed for the box art auction, Bujese said.

Jennifer Cross presents an annual Mystery Box containing a secret that's only revealed after purchase. Linda Capello stretches her box to allow for a portrait of a female figure. Every year, her box presents someone new.

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Linda Capello

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Stephanie Brody-Lederman's boxes always take on the look of her narrative paintings, said Bujese. Brody-Lederman's paintings typically incorporate words, images of nature and a bird or other animal.

Marilyn Church's boxes cue to her work as a figurative artist, Bujese said.

Sculptor Dennis Leri wanted to make something represented of his steel artworks. He wanted to use the box as part of the work, but not as the primary shape. He also wanted to create textural contrasts. So he deconstructed the box and entwined it with steel so both elements could occupy center stage.

The result is a box that can't be used as box...a la Marcel Duchamp, said Leri.

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Dennis Leri

Fulvio Massi wanted to impart his art but experiment with the box form. His box art is the first time he's attempted a sculpture, Massi said.

To make the leap from canvas to sculpture, he approached his box as if it were a three-dimensional canvas, he said. Wanting to take advantage of the interior and exterior surfaces, Massi painted on all the surfaces and reveals the inside of the box by cutting the cover and placed a mirror inside to "offer a multiplicity of view points," he said.

When making paintings, he often employs free form lines tracing trajectories that connect different events taking place on the canvas, he said. For the box, he applied guitar strings to add a spatial aspect and achieve an overall effect that's similar to his art on canvas, he said.



Fulvio Massi

Many artists use the box as a substitute for canvas or paper, Bujese said. Landscape painters are big fans of this method. Some use the box top only, others use the inside surfaces and still others paint upon all surfaces.



Daniel Pollera



April Gornik



Darlene Charneco

Artists can surprise from year to year with a new motif, said Bujese. Others prefer to make boxes that conjure their signature works.



James Kennedy



Nan Orskevsky



John Capello



Marcel Bally

Margery Gosnell-Qua's box is inspired by children navigating sunfish sailboats in Tiana Bay in Hampton Bays. Gosnell-Qua's children took part in sailing sunfishes during the Town of Southampton's Sailing Program this summer, she said.

While her children were busy, she took advantage of the quiet moments to paint. The view captures Dune Road in Hampton Bays.



BASIC FACTS: The 11th Annual Box Art Auction is being held on Sept. 10 at the Ross School Center for Well-Being, Goodfriend Drive, East Hampton. The benefit begins at 4:30 p.m. A live auction begins at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$60 and includes wine and hors d'oeuvres.

The Box Art Auction benefits East End Hospice. The non-profit organization provides care for terminally ill patients, their family and their loved ones. Services extend to those living on the East End and in Brookhaven Town. Donations on behalf of the Box Art Auction can be made through

www.eeh.org or by calling 631-288-8400.

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