



# “Bruce Helander: A Survey of Works” at Peter Marcelle Gallery

July 13, 2012

by Pat Rogers

Peter Marcelle Gallery is pleased to present Bruce Helander: A Survey of Works.

On view July 14 to July 22, 2012. Opening Reception July 14, 6 to 8pm.

Helander will also be participating in a panel discussion on Friday, July 13 at Art Hamptons from 4 to 5pm.

.

Peter Marcelle Gallery is pleased to present a survey of selected works by the artist, Bruce Helander. For this exhibition, presented in the gallery's inaugural summer schedule, director and curator Marcelle has selected twenty works created over the last ten years that demonstrate the artist's concentration in collage, assemblage and painting.

Helander is best known for his collages that utilize vintage printed surfaces and adaptively re-use them in a completely different context; he also explores metaphor, double meanings, word play, irony and appropriation.

The works in the exhibition display the artist's penchant for quirky images that have been “diced and sliced” and rearranged into an abstract expressionist context, while incorporating snippets of recognizable forms, often with a humorous flavor.

The noted critic, Jed Perl, in a feature exhibition review titled “Successes” in *The New Criterion*, observed without meeting the artist that Helander was a “camp-it-up comedian, a hopeless romantic and a gifted abstractionist;” many of the works on view demonstrate these qualities.

Kenworth Moffett, former director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, observed in *Gold Coast* magazine that “If there was a Pulitzer Prize for collage, Helander would surely win it.”

The majority of the works on exhibit have been created within the last few years, including *Post Triangle*, a painting that incorporates a composition in the abstract shape of a triangle; the original collage is centered around a cut up Post cereal ad.

Another work, *Sending out an S.O.S.*, is a large, vertical painting that uses repeat cartoon images from a vintage SOS cleaning pad magazine advertisement. The exhibition also includes a large painting on canvas titled *Bronco* that employs sections of a 1930s illustration by Norman Rockwell.

All of the paintings in the exhibition began as small collage studies, which were utilized as

maquettes for much larger works that were transferred onto canvas as a blueprint of the original, and then heavily embellished with multiple layers of paint.

Helander, who received a BFA in illustration and an MFA in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design, contributed collage commissions to *The New Yorker* for over a decade. One original collage, created originally for *The New Yorker* and loaned to the show by noted collector, Beth DeWoody, titled *Eye on Jersey* has been produced as an embellished limited edition print, which also is on display.

The artist also demonstrates his affection for serious fun in a series of paper compositions utilizing cartoons from a vintage Popeye book given to him as a child. *Sidesplitter* and *Cactus Chaos* give camouflaged snippets of a spinach-eating sailor with a pipe in theatrical settings.

Another series demonstrates a life-long fascination with appropriated images of Elvis Presley put into a contemporary context.

One assemblage, *Croaked Double Elvis*, relates to the famous silver series of works that Andy Warhol created of the King of Rock and Roll; *Double Elvis* from this series sold at auction this spring. In this piece, Helander began by purchasing painted plaster busts of Elvis and then buried them in his backyard face up for two years, checking as they “decomposed” and lost their color. He “exhumed” the two heads and repainted them as brightly tinted death masks characteristically in a Warholian color scheme. The twin heads repose connected horizontally and are surrounded by a collection of ceramic and plastic frogs (one with a king’s crown), and permanently rest in peace on an antique chapel shelf adorned with a bleeding heart.

Another unusual collage, titled *Elvis Revisited*, takes on a bizarre hybrid portrait, blending an Elvis portrait with a vintage Old Gold cardboard poster boy that produces an odd, unsettling subliminal recognizability. Perhaps the most humorous in this series is *Artist as Elvis (Past Performance)*, where the visual artist’s (Helander) face replaces the recording artist’s (Elvis) face.

*Imperial Cove*, a second assemblage “built” upon a found painting on board, depicts an imaginary coastal scene from the Hamptons, with some of the ingredients discovered in secondhand stores and at yard sales.

Bruce Helander has been exhibiting his work regularly for over thirty years and his work has been the subject of positive reviews in *Art in America*, *ARTnews*, *Art & Antiques*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Washington Post*, *The Miami Herald* and *The New York Times*.

His work is in over fifty museum collections, such as the Guggenheim, Whitney Museum of American Art, The Metropolitan, Brooklyn Museum, Smithsonian Institute, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Art Institute of Chicago, among others. His work recently was included in the Christie’s auction of the Dennis Hopper estate.

Helander is an accomplished writer, editor and critic, as well as a White House Fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts and is a former Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at RISD.

An illustrated catalog with a foreword by Donald Kuspit accompanies the exhibit and is available upon request. This exhibition was made possible in part by an artist's grant from the New York Foundation for the Arts).

**Bruce Helander** is an artist whose specialty is collage and assemblage. He has a master's degree in painting from the Rhode Island School of Design, where he later became the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs of the college. He is a White House fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts and has won the South Florida Cultural Consortium fellowship for professional achievement in the visual arts.

His collages appear in *The New Yorker* magazine, among others. He has written extensively on contemporary art and has an enthusiastic following for his regular blogs for *The Huffington Post*. His bestselling book, *Learning to See—An Artist's View on Contemporary Artists from Artschwager to Zakanitch*, was an Indie Awards Finalist for excellence.

**Peter Marcelle Gallery is located at 2411 Main Street, Bridgehampton, NY. 11932**



"Post Triangle" by Bruce Helander, 2012. Original acrylic on canvas with printed background, 56 3/4 by 39 1/4 inches.

---

Copyright 2012 Pat Rogers and Hamptons Art Hub. All rights reserved.