



Train Trestle Graffiti Legend Celebrated in Group Show

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by Pat Rogers

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BRIDGEHAMPTON, NY-

The Bonac Tonic artist collective has moved into Kathryn Markel Fine Arts to present a group show through February. Like all their shows, the gathering is couched in local legend. A celebration of the art (and local artists) will be held on Saturday from 6 to 9 p.m.

The story goes like this (according to Bonac Tonickers):

About 40 years ago, the phrase “Virgil Is the Frog Boy” appeared on a train trestle spanning the Sag Harbor Turnpike in Bridgehampton, NY. The words remained visible for years afterwards, although the weather took its toll on the spray paint.

Local lore has it that the mysterious proclamation was brought forward into contemporary times when an East Hampton teenager was christened with the moniker by his friends. The teenager’s identity and the circumstances under which the nickname was earned remains a secret—all except for a chosen few.

Some years later, “Virgil Is Still the Frog Boy” reappeared on the same trestle. Speculation about the mystery flared anew, but the case has never been solved...

Flash forward to 2013 and Bridgehampton:

The art exhibition “Virgil is Still the Frogboy” opened last week at Kathryn Markel Fine Arts. The exhibition presents works by Carly Haffner, Christine Lidrbauch, Grant Haffner, Scott Bluedorn and Scott Gibbons. Is one of them “Virgil”? Ask a Bonac Tonicker. It’s likely they know...

Here’s something else that’s equally likely. The exhibiting art has nothing to do with graffiti, train trestles or frog boys. All of the exhibiting artists have roots in East Hampton. Most have exhibited in prior Bonac Tonic exhibitions.

Here’s a quick glimpse at some of the art on view:

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“Psaura” by Scott Bluedorn, 2012. Found plastic, tin, fiberglass, vinyl

and epoxy resin on driftwood, 20 x 14 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



“Flower” by Christine Lidrbauch. Discarded plastic car bumpers, 6 feet by 7 feet (approx). Courtesy of the artist.



“Orange” by Christine Lidrbauch. Discarded plastic car bumpers, auto paint.” Courtesy of the artist.



“Studio in the woods” by Carly Haffner, 2013. Acrylic painting. Courtesy Bonac Tonic.



“Summer Skys” by Carly Haffner, 2013. Painting.

BASIC FACTS: Bonac Tonic artist collective presents **“Virgil is Still the Frogboy”** at Kathryn Markel Fine Arts through March 17, 2013. An opening reception takes place on Saturday from 6 to 9 p.m. The show features new artworks by Carly Haffner, Christine Lidrbauch, Grant Haffner, Scott Bluedorn and Scott Gibbons. The gallery is located at 2418 Montauk Hwy, Bridgehampton, NY 11932.

For information on the exhibition, visit www.haffnervision.com. The gallery will be open Friday and Saturdays from 1 to 7 p.m. and on Sundays from 1 to 6 p.m. or by appointment.

Bonac Tonic Collective: www.bonactonic.com

INSIDER KNOWLEDGE: 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.

Scott Bluedorn, an exhibiting artist in the “Virgil” show, is the founder and gallery director of Neoteric Fine Art in Amagansett, NY.

Working with car bumpers is a new direction for **Christine Lidrbauch**. She also does great work with a pencil.

When not exhibiting with Bonac Tonic, **Grant Haffner** shows his work in galleries around the country. He has been included for the last few years in Vered Gallery's annual "Art on the Edge" group exhibition of cutting edge contemporary art.

Haffner and his twin sister, **Carly Haffner**, and **Scott Gibbons** are all original founders of the Bonac Tonic collective. Carly Haffner and Gibbons both create lovable plush "monsters" as some of their artwork.

Other Bonac Tonic founders include Justin Smith and Gary Lovelace.

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