



A Hamptons Art Tradition - Springs Invitational

August 17, 2013

by Pat Rogers

There are some traditions that reflect the Hamptons art community. Guild Hall's annual Artists Members Exhibition and the Parrish Art Museum's biennial "Artists Choose Artists" are two exhibitions that reveal the artists that are working on the East End now. The annual Springs Invitational held at Ashawagh Hall in Springs, NY is another.

The Invitational's tradition stretches back to Jackson Pollock days when he and other artists living in Springs offered to include their art with the Fisherman's Fair. The Springs Invitational sprung from those days as a way to acknowledge the abundance of artists living in Springs, located just outside of East Hampton Village.

Since then, the tradition has broadened to include artists that live in the surrounding areas. The show only includes living artists that are invited by a guest curator whose identity remains cloaked as long as possible.

Each year, the curator begins by combing through a list of artists included in prior years. More recently, curators have been given the freedom to invite new artists into the fold based upon their own knowledge of the Springs and East Hampton artist community.

This year's curator is Jennifer Cross. She leads a Curator's Tour today from 4 to 5 p.m. This is the second time Cross has curated the Invitation. She also curated an Invitational held in 2003.

"This is a wonderful group of people working behind this show in committees," said Cross. "I love the Springs community. It's a joy to be a part of it."



Photo by Jennifer Cross.

When selecting this year's roster, Cross said she strove to include renowned, established and emerging artists who are important to the fabric of the art tapestry of the local community. Selected artists who have made ripples beyond the Hamptons pond include Joan Semmel, who's recently drawn much attention in the New York City art world, Jane Wilson, Esteban Vicente, Connie Fox, William King and others.



Gallery with William King sculpture. Photo by Jennifer Cross.

On the other end of the spectrum are young and possible up-and-coming artists. These include twin siblings Grant Haffner and Carly Haffner of Springs and recent Ross School graduate Isabel Cassou.

Like every year, the Invitational includes a range of artists and genres and mediums. Sculpture, photography, painting and mixed media works all presented at the Springs Invitational.

“Important to be was to include a diversity of style and aesthetic,” said Cross. “There are works in the figurative tradition, abstraction, works with a pop art look to it. There is art with an edge, like Claire Watson’s sculpture. There’s a surrealist aspect to it.”



Installation shot of the Springs Invitational. Photo by Jennifer Cross.

This year’s Invitational includes around 150 artists, up from last year’s 130 artists. The curator selects the artists and then the artists select the single work to include, subject to size regulations. After the works are delivered, Cross (with some assistance) installs the show with the art that arrives

“The placement is a challenge because you never know what’s going to arrive,” said Cross. “The show should have some sense of cohesion and the individual pieces could be seen and appreciated on their own merit.”

To accomplish this, Cross arranged sections where quieter works that required contemplation were presented and other areas where bold sculptures had space to command.



Sculpture by Michael Rosch. Photo by Kimberly Goff.

Walking around the exhibition during the Opening Reception on Aug. 2, it was clear that a venerable ‘Who’s Who’ of Hamptons Art could be found on the walls. These included Guild Hall

Artists Exhibition Top Honor winners Christa Maiwald, Drew Shifflet and Stephanie Brody-Lederman.



Christa Maiwald's "Cake." Photo by Jennifer Cross.

A relatively new tradition is the additional of a Gala honoring artists important to the community. This year's honorees are landscape painter Ralph Carpentier and illustrator Eleanor "Chip" Leaver. Last year's honorees were Rae Ferren, William King and Connie Fox. Proceeds from the benefit fund the Springs Improvement Society's high school student scholarship fund.

The Springs Invitational has another tradition—it draws the art community to the opening to see who was invited, the works that are on view and to support the Invitational and the tradition it represents.

What follows is a look at some of the people who turned out for the Opening Reception and the artworks included in the Springs Invitational:



Artist Pamela Focarino and Hortense Carpentier. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



Painting by Ray Colleran. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



Elizabeth Strong-Cuevas and her sculpture. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



"August Sun" by Ralph Carpentier



Beth Meredith and Robert Strada. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



Painting by Athos Zacharias. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



Ellen Frank with her work behind her and husband Steve Dickman. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



Sculpture by Robert Skinner. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



Nick Tarr and Joanne Pilgrim. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



Painting by Elwood Howell. Photo by Kimberly Goff.



Julia Gimenez and Herminio Gimenez. Photo by Kimberly Goff.

BASIC FACTS: “**The 46th Annual Springs Invitational Art Exhibition**” remains on view through Aug. 18, 2013 at Ashawagh Hall. Ashawagh Hall is located at 780 Springs Fireplace Rd, East Hampton, NY 11937. www.ashawagh-hall.org.

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