



Moby-Dick, Interpreted

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by Pat Rogers

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EAST HAMPTON, NY-

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* is receiving attention from Hamptons artists through The Moby Project. The inaugural creative event presents two simultaneous exhibitions with artworks interpreting some of the themes found in the American literature classic. Invited artists were requested to reaction to the novel's themes which include "whiteness, the sea, mania, invisibility, superstition, turmoil and the whale," according to project founder and curator Janet Goleas.

"I've worked on this concept for many years," wrote Goleas in an email. "I've always wanted to create an event here on the East End that incorporated contemporary art with literature, performance, poetry and other mediums."

Melville's *Moby-Dick; or The Whale* was published in 1851. The novel centers around Captain Ahab's unrelenting quest to conquer the White Whale, a white sperm whale who had previously destroyed Ahab's boat and bit off his leg.

Told through the eyes of the sailor Ishmael while aboard the Pequod under Ahab's command, *Moby-Dick* is considered one of the greatest sea tale ever told. The epic tale ultimately portrays the tragedy of vengeance and blinding obsession while exploring themes that include transcendentalism and class divisions. The book is also known for its detailed descriptions of whalers and whales, the history of whaling, and their hunting in the 19th century.

Selecting *Moby-Dick* for the project's focus seemed a solid choice that connected with the Hamptons rich history of whaling and fishing.

"There are so many descendents of whalers here, and so much history related to the sea," said Goleas. "And the book, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, is such an American classic — you don't need to be a whaler, a scholar or even a Melville devotee to get something special from the book."

While history and literature are the lighting rods for The Moby Project, contemporary art is creating the storm. The Moby Project is unfolding in three venues that includes a gallery, the grounds of a historic museum, and a restaurant that presents literature and creative-based event evenings.



"AHAB" by Jon Bocksel, 2013. Enamel on canvas.

The Moby Project kicks off this weekend with a pair of group art exhibitions. One exhibition is being presented at Neoteric Fine Art in Amagansett. "Moby-Dick" features paintings, works on paper, sculpture and a single site-specific installation inspired by the white whale. The exhibition was co-curated by Goleas and Scott Bluedorn, director of Neoteric Fine Art.

Exhibiting artists include Paton Miller, Ted Victoria, Melora Griffis, Melissa Mapes, Amanda Church, Sophia Collier, Emily Noel Lambert, Rory Evenson-Phair, Sue Heatley, Dalton Portella, Scott Bluedorn, Peter Spacek, Charles Ly, Christine Lidrbauch, Burt Van Deusen and The Neoteric Collective.

At the historic Mulford Farm, a site-specific work plus art by 15 artists are being exhibited on the historic Mulford Barn site in East Hampton Village, NY. An opening reception takes place there today from 5 to 7 p.m. Immediately preceding is a performance by artist Yves Musard at 4:30 p.m. A repeat performance is expected to be held on Sunday (Sept. 29).

Both exhibitions remain on view through Oct. 6. The Moby Project continues with a staged reading of Moby Dick planned for Oct. 23 at Almond's restaurant in Bridgehampton, NY.

The installations on the grounds of the Mulford Farm are the beating heart of The Moby Project. One of the highlights of the Mulford Farm installations is a work by Junko Sugimoto. Installed inside the barn, the piece explores the movement, turbulence and wonder of the sea, according to Goleas.

"The works have been selected, in part, for the way they relate to the site as well as to the book, and to contemporary themes related to whaling, navigation, water, turmoil, etc.," said Goleas. "Out of respect for the amazing architecture of the barn, Junko Sugimoto's installation was created without the use of a single nail, staple or pushpin."



"Moby Dick" by Sugimoto, 2013. Paper and fishing line. Courtesy
The Moby Project.

The Moby Project includes works by Bonnie Rychlak, Don Christensen, Judy Richardson, Joe Pintauro, Hope Sandrow, Jon Bocksel, Chris Lidrbauch, Dennis Oppenheim (1938-2011), Burt van Deusen, Amanda Church, Yves Musard, Scott Bluedorn, Wendy Small, Clayton Orohek, Steven B. Miller, The Neoteric Collective, and others.

Mediums include video, installation, painting and sculpture.



“Down the Drain in Sag Harbor” by Bonnie Rychlak, 2013. Courtesy
The Moby Project.

The Moby Project was timed to coincide with National Arts and Humanities month, celebrated annually in October. Original plans called for the inclusion of symposiums, poetry readings, performances, films and lectures unfolding throughout October. In order to only present quality programming, this year’s edition was scaled back to present two exhibitions and a staged reading.

“I hope in the future we’ll have additional curators, venues and multiple concepts operating concurrently in many locations and villages on the East End,” said Goleas. “I think that would be fantastic. We’ll see how the community responds.”

One hoped for outcome for this year’s Project is a provocative cultural dialog among the Hamptons community about the past, present and future, said Goleas. Whaling, maritime and the Hamptons long-standing tradition as an artist colony are all hoped for subjects for reflection and conversation conjured by The Moby Project, expressed Goleas.

BASIC FACTS: The Moby Project will present two exhibitions from Sept. 27 through Oct. 6, 2013. For details, visit www.themobyproject.com.

“Moby-Dick” is exhibited at Neoteric Fine Art, 208 Main St., Amangasett, NY. www.neotericfineart.com.

“The Moby Project” is exhibited on the grounds of Mulford Farm, 10 James Lane, East Hampton, NY 11937. www.easthamptonhistory.org.

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