

Talking With: Ellen Dooley On Curating 50 Artists

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by Pat Rogers

Putting together an exhibition with 50 invited artists is no easy task. Yet, artist and curator Ellen Dooley undertakes this task willingly. For the last six years (at least), Dooley presents an annual curated and themed show of invited artists at Ashawagh Hall in Springs. In most cases, the fewest artists invited have been 40.

For the exhibitions, Dooley enjoys picking themes that challenge both viewers and artists to think beyond the obvious and dig deep. Themes aim for the artwork (and the experience of viewing it) to twin personal experience with the human condition and link specific experiences with societal ones. Exhibition themes (and their titles) have included Fear, Purgatory, Shadow, BROK*N and [Curious](#). This year's theme is Resolve.

Another running current in Ellen Dooley's annual group shows is invited artists pull mostly from the Hamptons art community. The result is exhibitions that showcase a substantial section of artists working on the East End today. Dooley herself can be counted in these ranks. A graduate of Rhode Island School of Design, Dooley's work tends incorporate social and political commentary. Her art is primarily figurative made as paintings, drawings and mixed media. Her work is included in each exhibition.

"[Resolve](#)" will be exhibited June 19 and 20, 2015 at Ashawagh Hall. An Opening Reception takes place on Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m. The show presents contemporary painting, sculpture, photography and mixed media.

Pat Rogers of Hamptons Art Hub had a virtual chat with Ellen Dooley on her experience of putting together her 2015 exhibition and what it's like to gather 50 invited artists together.

HAH!: How did you come up with the theme of "Resolve" for this year's exhibition?

ED: Although I'm a visual artist, I often think about words; especially the root source. I think it comes from sitting in church as a child and listening to the Mass spoken entirely in Latin. I often wondered, "What does it mean?" I started to read dictionaries, and the thesaurus.

When I gather artists for a curated exhibition, and start the process of searching for a title, I think, what is the word?...that means "me", that means "us", right now.

HAH!: You invited 50 artists to be a part of this year's curated show. Why 50? Why not

10?

ED: I think there is strength in numbers, especially when it's important to make a meaningful statement in a way that connects on many levels, to many different kinds of viewers from this community and from places far away. Each artist in this exhibition has a different point of view, a different way of working with their materials, and each brings a unique personal history to their work and their output.

HAH!: **Is there a specific quality shared among the artists invited to exhibit?**

ED: The artists invited to participate in this exhibition all share a certain amount of resolve: a fixity of purpose, a dedication to their work, a need to find answers, and a strong determination to do something, and do it well.

HAH!: **You're also a part of the Hamptons art community. What's special about making art in the Hamptons for you?**

ED: I can't think of any other place in the world where I can run into an acquaintance on Main Street, and, while in the middle of our conversation, interrupt to point out, "Hey, look at that shadow", and they will know what I'm talking about, and why it matters.

HAH!: **What's the best part of curating a show for you?**

ED: It's really great to touch base with all the artists on a concentrated, high-energy level for a brief blast to showcase the sum of our talents.

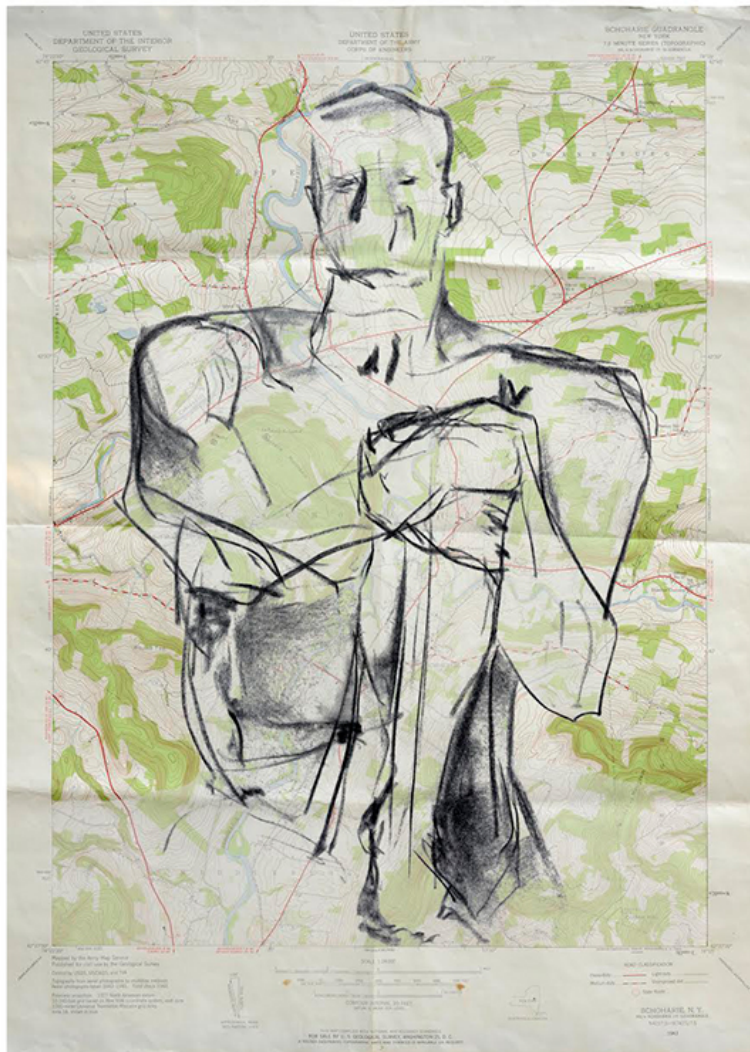
HAH!: **What are you most looking forward to for the 2015 edition?**

ED: I look forward to the Artists Reception, which will be held on Saturday, June 20th, 2015 from 5 - 8 p.m. It's when everything comes together: The art on the gallery walls; the artist's work and their statements on Resolve placed beside it; conversing with the artists in the exhibition; meeting their families; selling work to appreciative collectors; and meeting all the interested and interesting people from the community who enjoy and support art and the artists.

To see artwork from "Resolve" click here:

[View Slideshow](#)

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“Schoharie Triangle” by Ellen Dooley.

Artists invited to become a part of “[Resolve](#)” include Mary Antzak, Abby Abrams, Nancy Benzenberg Kiembock, Rosalind Brenner, Michael Cardacino, Marilyn DiCarlo-Ames, Art Donovan, Ellen Dooley, Don Duga, Ellen Frank, Barbara Groot, Stan Gilula, Mary Stern Grossman, Tracy Harris, Steve Haweeli, Scott Hewett, Bill Kiriazis, Mary Laspia, Cyndi Loewen, Joel Lefkowitz and [Setha Low](#).

Also, Jennifer Meihofer, Veronica Mezzina, Mary Milne, Savio Mizzi, Joanlee Montefusco, Jonathan Morse, Jeanelle Myers, Zoe Pennebaker Breen, Joyce Raimondo, Doug Reina, [Gabriele Raacke](#), Stephanie Reit, Bob Rothstein, Catherine B. Silver, Eileen Dawn Skretch, Tom Steele, Bob Sullivan, Pamela Topham, Irra Verbitsky, Walter Us, Lisa Weston and [Athos Zacharias](#).

Ashawagh Hall is located at 780 Springs Fireplace Road, East Hampton, NY 11937. www.ashawagh-hall.org.