



ART REVIEW: Tripoli Gallery's "Collective" Show in Three Venues

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by Eric Ernst

While normally around this time of year the art scene on the East End begins its seasonal descent into realms of torpor, the Tripoli Gallery has stepped into the looming void with a troika of interconnected exhibitions at its East Hampton and Southampton locations as well as at the Southampton Art Center on Jobs Lane.

Consisting of more than 100 works by 35 artists, the exhibition—titled the “11th Annual Thanksgiving Collective”—brings together local artists and some from venues farther geographically afield. Reflecting a decidedly broad survey of differing styles and approaches, from recent discoveries to some of the usual suspects from the gallery’s stable, the exhibit provides a mostly entertaining diversion from the approaching winter wasteland.

While each of the three locations features pretty much the same lineup of artists, the primary focus of interest for me revolves around the works installed at the Southampton Art Center (formerly the Jobs Lane home of the Parrish Art Museum before its move to Water Mill).

For the most part, this is due primarily to the more expansive space available, which allows the curator, gallery director Tripoli Patterson, to construct dialogues and juxtapositions between the works that quite often dramatically enhance their impact. For one example, in the rear room a wall features works by Ross Bleckner, Robert Harms, and Lola Montes, powerfully engaging the viewer by their contrasts of light and dark colorations along with the artists’ different approaches to the use of negative space.

Having said that, it should be noted that certain works in the smaller gallery spaces in East Hampton and Southampton create their own measure of impact simply through their degree of presence and visual dynamism. This effect is notable at the Southampton space in works such as Felix Bonilla Gerena’s *Garden of the Lost Pleasures* (oil on canvas, 2015) and Stefan Bondell’s *Self-Portrait* (oil on canvas, 2011).



“The Garden of the Lost Pleasures” by Felix Bonilla Gerena, 2015. Oil on canvas.



"Self Portrait" by Stefan Bondell, 2011. Oil on canvas.

Similarly, in the East Hampton space, works that also transcend the more limited space available include: Scott Covert's *Blue Blue 2* (oil on canvas, 2015), Michael Chiarello's *Untitled* (steel and bronze, 2015), and *The Massacre of the Innocents* (oil on canvas, 2015) by the Bruce High Quality Foundation—an arts collective from Brooklyn whose engagingly ambitious mission statement acknowledges an aim to "foster an alternative to everything."



"Blue Blue 2" by Scott Covert, 2015. Oil on canvas.



"Untitled" by Michael Chiarello, 2015. Steel and bronze.



"Massacre of the Innocents" by Bruce High Quality Foundation, 2015. Oil on canvas.

There are, of course, works that are of interest regardless of the space in which they are exhibited. These include paintings by Nick Weber, whose enviable control of both brush and palette in his series of nudes displays an understanding of color and tone that conjures a powerfully mysterious air of sensuality.

What really animates Weber's pieces, though, and allows the figures a sense of dynamism and vitality beyond mere figurative impulses, is the imaginative application of abstract renderings occupying the distant ground in each of the paintings.

This is conspicuously apparent in works such as *Nude Woman Looking Out the Window* (oil on canvas, 2013) and *Standing Nude* (oil on canvas, 2014). In a similar vein, in *Nude Young Woman* (oil on canvas, 1999) the artist uses an impasto surface mixed with subtly expressive coloration in the distance that, along with the dramatic foreshortening of the central image, conjures an entertaining melding of Hans Hoffman and Paul Gauguin.



"Standing Nude" by Nick Weber, 2014. Oil on canvas.



"Nude Young Woman" by Nick Weber, 1999. Oil on canvas.

Michael Halsband's portrait photographs are also of particular note, for the way he is able to adjust his approach to his subjects so as to elicit a truth within them that they themselves may be unaware of. He is able, in effect, to actualize Henri Cartier-Bresson's observation that a portrait photographer must "try and put your camera between the skin of a person and his shirt."

Halsband's achievement is dramatically evident in the East Hampton gallery in the portrait of former Beastie Boy (and son of an old family friend, the late art dealer Harold Diamond) titled *Mike D, Studio NYC, September, 15, 2009* (silver gelatin fiber based print). The photograph reflects an innate sense of that part of the subject's psyche that lies just beneath the surface and allows for an illumination of the sitter's persona unadorned by artifice.



"Mike D Studio NYC, September 15, 2009" by Michael Halsband. Courtesy of Tripoli Gallery and Michael Halsband.

This portrait is strikingly reminiscent of the same natural and vulnerable sensibility conjured by the late August Sander in his landmark portrait series *People of the Twentieth Century*.

Also of interest are: Mike Kelly's *Red Side* (mixed media on paper, 1976-1994), Benjamin Keating's *Portrait of Her by a Sculptor, Aberdeen, Washington, 1915* (cast aluminum, 2014), Yung Jake's *Fiji Bottles (Hi)* (printed vinyl and spray paint on metal, fluorescent light, 2015), Lola Montes's *Moonscape* (oil on canvas, 2015), Enis Sefersah's *Nugget* (steel, 2015), Robert Harms's *Tom* (oil and pencil on canvas, 2013), and Billy Sullivan's *Max and Sam, Sagaponack* (oil on linen, 1981).

View our slideshow to see artworks of interest on view at Tripoli Gallery's Thanksgiving Collective:

[View Slideshow](#)

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BASIC FACTS: Tripoli Gallery's "11th Annual Thanksgiving Collective" continues through through January 31, 2016 at three locations: Tripoli Gallery, 87 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, NY 11937; Tripoli Gallery, 30 Jobs Lane, Southampton, NY 11968; and the Southampton Center for the Arts, 25 Jobs Lane, Southampton, NY 11968. 631.377.3715 or 631.324.0149; www.tripoligallery.com.

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