



“Urban Revival” Debuts RJD Gallery’s New Location in Bridgehampton

March 17, 2017

by Pat Rogers

[RJD Gallery](#) opens its doors for the first time in Bridgehampton with a Grand Opening Celebration and a Reception for “Urban Revival” on Saturday, March 25, 2017 from 6 to 8 p.m. At 3,000 square feet, the new gallery more than triples the size of the previous space. Another noticeable difference: the entire exhibition is presented on the ground floor in three distinct spaces. Upstairs, a room featuring a solo show of [Andrea Kowch](#) prints will remain on permanent view. [Click [here](#) to discover all the changes in RJD Gallery and its journey following the fire that destroyed its Sag Harbor location.]

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“The Feast” by Andrea Kowch. 60 x 84 inches. Courtesy of RJD Gallery.

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“Urban Revival” features art by [Phillip Thomas](#), [Frank Oriti](#), [Drew Ernst](#), [Alfred Conteh](#), [Gabriel Moreno](#) and others. The paintings are a mix of contemporary narrative portraiture, imaginative realism and figuration, signaling a new direction for the gallery. Noteworthy in this regard are mixed media paintings by [Jules Arthur](#).

Figurative at their core, each of Arthur’s collaged works presents a portrait as center subject. The painting is inset into a collaged surrounding that provides a narrative window into the world of each subject. Also included are objects of personal value to the person that provide further clues into their stories. While the collaged elements are compelling, it is the portrait that occupies center stage in each. With eyes that beg for a connection with viewers, Arthur’s work is easy to become enamored with and difficult to forget.

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“I Shook Up the World” by Jules Arthur. Oil on canvas, wood, stitched leather, mixed media memorabilia, 64 x 38.5 inches. Courtesy of RJD Gallery.

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The same might be said of sculpture by Alfred Conteh. His pieces, along with the works of two other artists, signifies RJD Gallery's move into presenting sculpture that stretches narrative figuration in unique ways. "Urban Revival" presents the work of three sculptors who are also new to the gallery: Gabriel Moreno, [Veronique Guerrieri](#) and Alfred Conteh. All figurative, the works could not be more different.

French sculptor Guerrieri's ultra-contemporary pop sculptures are slick, eye-catching and expressive. Hard to miss is *Lapinou* (big-Rabbit) which promises a whimsical and unusual encounter. Spanish artist Gabriel Moreno's work is subtler. *The Fragility of the Beauty*, a bronze bust that is hand etched, transforms the contemporary woman into mythology as Moreno explores female sensuality rising from both fragility and strength.



"The Fragility of Beauty" by Gabriel Moreno. Edition of 8, Bronze cast with hand etched engravings, finished in Patina blanco, 75 x 40 x 24 cm. Courtesy of RJD Gallery.

American artist Alfred Conteh's sculptures in the "Tetnus" series on view have a rawness and energy that are impossible to miss. His work makes use of expressive lines that frequently surround or link abstracted figure(s). Filled with narrative wonder, the series symbolizes societal forces that destroy the collective consciousness.

According to the artist, these are visually emphasized by the decay, deterioration and patination of the steel the mixed media man made objects endure when exposed to the elements. These sculptures are displayed against the backdrop of Conteh's paintings which further exhibit the "visual toxins" and burdens of the African American experience.

His sculpture, *Sink*, was previously on view at the Clark Atlanta University Museum. *Float* was exhibited at the Harriet Tubman Museum in Macon, GA in 2015



"Float" by Alfred Conteh. Steel and mixed media, 93 x 46 x 35 inches. Courtesy of RJD Gallery.

Conteh's art is installed in conversation with paintings by Frank Oriti and Drew Ernst. Ernst's paintings reveal another aspect of urban life, depicting modes of transportation clad in the gleaming steel of a train and a motorcycle. Ernst's work is simple on the surface but contains

complexity born from the conflict of energy and emotion, inviting viewers to become part of the oversized worlds presented in paint.

In addition to presenting a new slate of artists, “Urban Revival” contains an unusual element: it weaves painters into the mix from a planned show celebrating Black History Month that couldn’t be presented because of the gallery’s destruction. Originally planned in fall 2016, “One Love” was to feature art by Jules Arthur, [Margaret Bowland](#) and Phillip Thomas. Works by Bowland and Thomas were re-selected to develop the “Urban Revival” theme.

Margaret Bowland’s psychologically-charged paintings frequently portray “JJ,” a young African American girl donning white face that may be set in elaborate backgrounds. Shocking, compelling and difficult to look away from, the girl portrayed in the works give a human face to issues of race, beauty, gender and individuality. The works simultaneously explore the states of internal suffering, denial and fragility balanced by the qualities of resilience, affirmation, confidence and an intrinsic beauty that makes for art that’s difficult to forget.

Phillip Thomas’s art creates narrative tableaux that question social identity and challenge historical traditions.

Also on view are gallery artists, including [Teresa Elliot](#), [Margo Selski](#), [Andrei Zadonne](#), [Pamela Wilson](#), [Salvatore Alessi](#), [Jesse Lane](#) and others. In addition to the painting in the gallery window, Andrea Kowch has a dedicated gallery of her own to present her prints. The gallery is located on the second floor.



“The Sailor and the Desiring Soul” by Margo Selski. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches. Courtesy of RJD Gallery.



“Eccebroker” by Salvatore Alessi. Oil on canvas, 200 x 180 cm. Courtesy of RJD Gallery.

BASIC FACTS: “Urban Revival” has its Opening Reception as part of RJD Gallery’s Grand Opening Celebration on Saturday, March 25, 2017 from 6 to 8 p.m. The celebration features music, cocktails and art as well as the chance to explore RJD’s new home. RJD Gallery is located at 2385 Main Street, Bridgehampton, NY 11932.

“Urban Revival” is on view from March 25 to April 17, 2017.

To discover the gallery's vision for the new space and learn about its journey following the fire, read ["A New Day for RJD Gallery and its Artists."](#)

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