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Artists of South Fork Begin To Look North

By Eric Ernst

Over the years, artists seeking to flee the more vulgar elements of civilization that have inexorably crept onto the East End scattered pretty much to the four winds in search of quiet and space for contemplative creativity.

Some headed as far away as Arizona or California, others headed north toward Nova Scotia and a few even ended up as far away as Europe or Asia.

Strangely enough, it was only rather recently that people realized that one need travel only as far as the North Fork—Greenport, in fact—to escape the practically year-round “seasonal” onslaught that has so completely altered the pace of life on the East End.

Attracted by that still bucolic village, a number of artists and galleries have moved there over the last few years, perhaps hoping, as happened on the South

Fork, that art collectors and aficionados would soon follow (without, it was hoped, sticking around too long).

Among those who have beaten a hasty retreat to those far more mellow environs is Hector [deCordova](#), a significant figure in the local artist community for many years, and the creative force behind an eponymous gallery on Main Street in Greenport that is emblematic of the positive changes underway for the North Fork art scene.

Featuring mostly local artists from both the north and south forks, the gallery represents artists whose work is familiar yet somehow more refreshing for the different context in which it is currently being shown. This atmospheric element is especially notable in the case of the [deCordova Gallery](#), which, in its placement in the downstairs of an early 19th century home, carries an unpretentious ambiance that seems to benefit a number of the works on display.

This is particularly true in the case of recent works by Emily Barnett, whose masterfully delicate drawings of bird nests are both tightly constrained and explosively energetic. Literally entwining figuration and abstraction to create images that are both static and frenzied, these works yield an overall effect that becomes intriguingly unpredictable.

Also balancing representational imagery with nonobjective impulses is Jemal Kukhalashvili’s “Sunday in the Park” (oil), which echoes George Seurat’s neompressionist masterpiece in title (though not in tone), and which features recon-



“The Black Slip” by Marilyn Church is on view at the [deCordova](#) Gallery.



Bill Negron’s “Afrodite ... Sort of” is on view at the [deCordova](#) Gallery in Greenport.

figured and interlocking planes of light and color as well as figurative images that are significantly more expressive than Seurat’s.

In a slightly similar vein, Guillermo Espinasse’s “Suenos de Pompeii” (mixed media) also uses light and color to structure the compositional framework and flatten the images themselves. But where Mr. Kukhalashvili’s figures are more reminiscent of Marie Laurencin’s style, Mr. Espinasse seems to look more towards Chagall.

Although the pieces are not displayed next to each other, works by Bill Negron and Marilyn Church offer entertaining juxtapositions and surprising similarities in the manner that each begins with line as the element that delineates both form and shadow. Yet, similarly for both, it is the use of color that then conjures the works’ emotional impact.

In Mr. Negron’s “Afrodite ... Sort Of” (monotype), for example, the powerful rhythms in the piece are established by

the figure’s flowing hair, but it is the matching patterns and eddies of wild coloration in the background through which the image becomes highly emotive and affecting.

This is even more apparent in Ms. Church’s “The Black Slip” and also “Moving Out” (both acrylic): both of these works have at their core foundation assertive linear elements which serve to define areas of color without dominating them.

Also of note is a new series of minimalist constructivist collages by Kathleen Bifulco that strike a powerful chord through her use of positive and negative space to create an air of monumentality while also playfully drawing attention to the subtlety of incised grids and Japanese sumi-e textures.

Also of specific interest are works by Michael Carolan, Bob Markell, Sal Gulla, Tom Wasik, and Hector [deCordova](#). The exhibition continues through December 23.



Bob Markell’s “... And Now for Something New” is also on view at the [deCordova](#) Gallery.