

VIEWPOINTS 2019

Juror Statement

Studio Montclair's annual "Viewpoints" exhibition is aptly named. A vibrant and sprawling township, Montclair encompasses a thriving community of artists, a world-class art museum, theaters, galleries and boutiques. Keeping the rich fabric of Montclair's people and cultural landscape in mind, I sought to select a wide range of art to reflect the depth of talent, interests, media and art practices that reflect Montclair's energy and diversity. The sheer number of entries to this annual exhibition bear witness to Montclair's reputation as a locus of creativity as well as Studio Montclair's esteemed status. With over 800 individual submissions by more than 250 artists, I was able to easily stick with this intention. In fact, the biggest challenge was to select work from this especially large and talented pool of artists. In the end, I whittled my choices to just 55 artists, or about 1/15 of the total of number of submissions.

Visionary artists, such as Emily Kenas, were highly represented in the pool of applicants and the use of found objects, such as in her work "One Eyed Goat Says What," represents both a sense of humor and facility with discarded items with an Arte Povera sensibility. Meanwhile, Elie Trubert uses found organic materials – in this case mushrooms – in a more conceptual sense to comment on big pharma and ongoing concerns about their grip on medical practice and public health. Other artists employ traditional materials and forms such as Quaasim Muñoz's portrait of "Phife Dawg" or Alan Gorman's "Shadows on 28th Street," an urban landscape which deftly portrays dramatic angles, shadows and perspectives in a photorealist manner. Katie Truk's "Tormented" and Theda Sandiford's "Wonder Woman Selfie" are notable for their emphasis on unusual materials, as well as their feminist dialogues, especially in light of current events. Abstraction makes an appearance in the hard-edged geometric work of Bob Ricciotti, but also in the more gestural and organic work of Pauline Chernichaw who uses abstraction metaphorically to describe a loved one's health issues.

Much of the work addresses the psychological or emotional states of the artist or the subject. Certainly, portraiture has that capacity, and it is compellingly evinced in the work by Ginger Ware, Jenny Graham and Donna Bassin. However, emotional states of mind are also present in the work of Pam Cooper's paper constructions and their emphasis on interiority. Paul Pitt's print and Jessica Lopez's drawing are vertiginous and fraught with a swirl of chaos and feeling.

"ViewPoints 2019" presents a cross-section of work representing a larger regional art scene that is fertile, energetic and replete with talent. It was an honor and a pleasure to review each artist's work and rewarding in that it has given this curator an introduction to so many new wonderful artists and an opportunity to work with others yet again. I heartily thank Studio Montclair and the submitting artists for the occasion to serve as juror.

Jeanne Brasile, 2019