

Vasari 21

The Mysteries of Moving, Critics Speak Out, and the Season Begins!

I fully realize that I've been kvetching about this move from one side of town to the other so relentlessly that it's begun to acquire a certain epic status, like Odysseus's 10-year voyage home from Troy, without the sexy parts. But at the moment, this process still seems endless as I contemplate where I might have stashed the key to a 19th-century armoire and where I will hang my other 19th-century artifact, a haunting portrait by an obscure Irish genre painter named Richard Thomas Moynan. Hard to decide if he, she, or they is male or female, so it's just right for our gender-bending times (my ex and I found it 35 years ago in a gift shop in Boca Raton, of all places).

And then hard on the heels of upheaval and dislocation came a stirring weekend of talks and panels to close out the Taos Fall Arts Festival. On Friday the 27th Peter Plagens, one of my all-time favorite art writers—designated “the only amusing critic to appear in *ARTforum*” by the late Hilton Kramer—talked about his fifty years of writing and painting on two coasts. The next day, Saturday, I moderated a panel that included Plagens, legendary critic Lucy Lippard, artist and writer Laurie Fendrich, and ceramics impresario Garth Clark, all talking about the state of art criticism today. I wish I could remember more from the discussion, other than a certain wonderment at the popularity of Instagram, dismay at the demise of print journalism, and bafflement that Peter Schjeldahl gets away with so much obfuscation, but I hope to have links to videos of both events soon. (V21 member Sandra Fillippucci adds: “We need more panels like this to distill reality from fiction, and face that reality so that we can effectively deal with it.” I'm on the case.)

At the Harwood Museum in Taos on Saturday, September 28 (from left): Peter Plagens, Lucy Lippard, Garth Clark, and Laurie Fendrich (photo by Sandra Filippucci)

After the panel, we headed over to 203 Fine Art, which has a terrific round-up of artists who made their way from Los Angeles to Taos beginning in the 1960s—namely, Larry Bell, Ken Price, Ronald Davis, and Ron Cooper. It's a beautiful show of first-rate works from the pioneers who continued the artistic legacy of this little mountain enclave. If you're in the area before October 28, call gallerist Eric Andrews for an appointment, 575-751-1262.

My thanks to all who participated in the weekend, and especially to [Dora and Carl Dillistone](#), who hosted a splendid dinner at their sprawling house off the Rim Road. [Dora](#)'s a committed artist who often collaborates with the weather to produce lyrical

adventures in “literal landscapes,” and the Dillistones have a collection that, as far as I know, has no rival in the area.

A wonderful weekend, and then I got sick with something that feels like the flu. Hence the lateness of the newsletter, which was supposed to go out on Monday.

So here at last is some news from other site members....

Marieken Cochius is in two shows in the Hudson Valley this month. At Hudson Beach Glass, she is part of “Canopy,” so called because the works all make reference to “the upper layer of or habitat zone formed by mature tree crowns.” About her work in this one, Cochius says, “As both sculptor and immigrant, driftwood holds an enormous appeal to me. Trees grow somewhere, then break off or are uprooted and end up worn and changed by their voyage to a new location. A life without boundaries where everything is in flux and patterns are temporary exists in tandem with the longing for organization. That tension between what is present and that what cannot be touched continues to be the most consistent theme in my work.” (Through October 6). Opening today and continuing through October 26, Cochius is also part of a group exhibition called “Portals” at Queen City 15 Fine Art Gallery in Poughkeepsie, NY.

Because this newsletter’s going out so late, I wanted to acknowledge that I missed Christine Bourdette’s show of new work called “Erosion” (though I’ve been admiring the images on Instagram) at Elizabeth Leach Gallery in Portland, OR. The work included “explores vulnerability and resilience through sculptures and drawings that mimic the colors, textures and shapes of nature,” explains the press release. “Drawn to the mutable and sensual materiality of paper, Bourdette says, ‘paper absorbs and carries, it weathers and stains in unforeseen ways.’ In the wall sculpture titled *Rift*, stacked sheets of paper embedded with sand and sawdust unfold, and an opening blooms with a brilliant violet mineral pigment. Bourdette’s mixed media drawings combine expressionism and realism, and possess the intimacy of nature studies.” My apologies for the late posting, but I will for sure include some of the artist’s work in the next drawings round-up.

Sharon Swidler has an open studio tonight at the Cornelia Arts Building, [1800 West Cornelia](#) Street, in Chicago from 6 to 10 p.m. There will be more than 30 artists participating, and it’s a fine chance to see what creative types in the City of the Big Shoulders are up to. “This painting is a wake-up call, a call to re-explore several past series’ of work for a while,” writes Swidler of the work shown here. “I’m heading down unfamiliar paths in familiar places.”

Brandon Graving and Ety Yaniv are both part of “Material Witness,” curated by the indefatigable William Norton at the Williamsburg Art & Historical Center in Brooklyn, NY (through October 13). The title, says the press release, stems from the definition of “material witness” as “a witness whose evidence is likely to be sufficiently important to influence the outcome of a trial. In this exhibition Norton has assembled artists for whom the media is a large part of the message. As such these artists all bear witness with total

conviction to the truth found in the usage and understanding of the information bound to their particular materials of choice. A change of material would invalidate that message.”

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of poet Walt Whitman, and the Center for Book Arts on West 27th Street in New York is marking the occasion with an exhibition that looks “at how Whitman’s writings have influenced contemporary artists working in the book arts,” says the announcement for “Walt Whitman’s Words: Inspiring Artists Today.” The show follows several themes Whitman focused on, “providing the connective tissue that links these works together. Geography, history, identity and immigration are a few themes that emerge from the works of art on view. Whitman’s fascination with Ancient Egypt, photography as a branding tool, and his notion of the world as he imagined it are all evident in the art on view. These diverse objects range from books, drawings, photographs, sketches, broadsides and a scroll.” Anne Gilman has two works in the show and will be part of a roundtable discussion with curator Deidre Lawrence on Thursday October 24, 6.30 to 8.30.

Through October 10, Heidi Jung has new work at Michael Warren Contemporary in Denver, CO. “This show represents works created over an entire year of production, with a focus on each piece being independent from the next,” she writes. ‘Many started in January with a visit to the Kew Royal Botanic Gardens in London, and many were completed just prior to the opening. Expanding on composition and scale, but continuing with my traditional materials, I am working to push the limits of a subject matter and medium that I love. This particular piece was created in a reductive way, using tape cut in the shape of stems, leaves and petals to remove the black background, creating an x-ray or ghost effect.”

Another I missed posting about because I was too damn busy sorting out my life: “Whiteout,” a project by Gelah Penn, closes at the Icehouse Project Space in Sharon, CT, but may be seen by appointment for another month (email kk@k2kozik.com). “The artist’s approach for this project was to consider the icehouse windows in terms of structure, light and shadow while alluding to their lens-like function that permits glimpses of an enigmatic world,” says the press for the installation. “Two zones, with primary components in multiples of six, reference the grid of the building’s windows. The immersive installation comprises one wall of profuse perceptual incident and the other of mysterious spare geometries.” Penn herself writes: “My sense of scale and visual ambiguity leads me to use simple, lightweight, synthetic stuffs, e.g., plastic garbage bags, Mylar, optical plastics and mosquito netting. These I cut, tear, layer, stretch and staple in site-responsive installations and constructed drawings. By engaging with the natural inclinations of the materials, I foreground internal conceptual and formal dualities: substance and immateriality, cohesion and fragmentation, balance and vertigo, banality and bling.”

Through October 19, Frances Ashforth is part of a collaborative exhibition featuring four female artists from the East Coast—three painters and one printmaker—at Sarah Shepard Gallery in Larkspur, CA. “The works presented, abstract and strikingly reductive, address matters of self-

expression, the tension between the present and infinity, as well as place, environment, and memory,” says the press release. Ashforth has six of her blue-ink monotypes in the show. “All of the prints are unique monotypes printed with Akua & Charbonnel waterbase ink on Arches 88 paper,” she writes. “All evoke memories of my time spent outside, along the edges of land and water, in both salt and freshwater habitats.”

Vasari21 members Carol Ladewig and Kim Thoman are the featured artists in “Pushing the Boundaries” at the Gallery at 48 Natoma in Folsom, CA (through November 7). “Since 2011 Ladewig has made large-scale painting installations, rendering time and its measurement into visual and literal form using color,” says the press for the show. “The installations are composed of small individual paintings. Each of these intimately scaled paintings represents either an individual day or week, transmuting into a single color the moods and experiences of a single day. The color is mixed from reds, blues, yellows and white. Each day’s color begins with the previous day’s color and is then combined with a neutral tone according to universal patterns — such as the percentage of night to daytime, or a phase of the moon that was in shadow on that date.” An expert in 3-D art printing techniques, Thoman says of her work in the show, “The basis for my art is a belief that duality exists in everything. I am aware of the presence of opposing forces in the world around me, such as intellect and intuition, male and female, stillness and movement, body and soul, light and dark, the organized and chaotic and, of course, life and death. My desire is to present opposite sides of any truth in order to see the real picture.”

Through November 9, Robischon Gallery in Denver, CO, has three concurrent solo shows for Kiki Smith, Fred Stonehouse, and Christian Rex van Minnen, plus a two-person show of works by Terry Maker and Walter Robinson. “Through their varied contemporary investigations of the otherwise traditional modes of still life, figuration and narrative-based vocabularies, each of the five artists on view address the complexity of the modern world from a surprising stance,” says the announcement. “With dark wit and astonishing imagery, van Minnen, Smith, Stonehouse, Maker and Robinson create their disruptive and disarming subjects primarily utilizing familiar materials of making: oil painting on canvas, linen or panel; drawing and prints including monotype, lithograph, etching, aquatint and dry-point; Jacquard tapestries and through a range of sculptural means from carved wood to found elements. ...The three concurrent solo exhibitions and the two-person presentation offer entry into locations of unsettling beauty, layered humor and insight, along with a broader sense of culture and nature.”

Inspired by a painting in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, Jean-François Millet’s *Starry Night* (ca. 1850-65), Susanna Coffey has been making small, powerful “night paintings” concurrent with her better-known work in portraiture. A selection of these will be on view at the Alpha Gallery in Boston, MA, through October 30, with a reception tonight, October 4, and a book signing in honor of the publication *Susanna Coffey: Night Painting* (MAB Books) tomorrow, October 5. “Natural and artificial light sources serve as reference points—moonlight on a field or a brightly illuminated gas station seen through a thicket, for example,” says the press release for the book and show. “But these paintings are not so much about place as they are about meeting the challenge to recalibrate perception, to coax out the world from darkness and, in Coffey’s own words to ‘paint a landscape that has no green trees.’”

On October 19 and 20, from 1 to 5 p.m., Gail Winbury will be part of a blow-out open studio event to include 40 other artists, a glass-making demonstration, and a food truck at the Manufacturers Village in East Orange, NJ (an easy Uber ride from the Bloomfield Train Station, she says). “I am very excited about my latest series, ‘The Other Side,’ an exploration of childhood memory,” she writes.

If you can't find something here to distract you from the impeachment circus this weekend, I would suggest you book a flight to the Venice Biennale or look into whitewater rafting down the

Grand Canyon. I intend to take a big deep breath and cart the rest of my moving boxes to the recycling center.

When I get my second or third wind, I will announce another fundraiser (hey, it's been nearly 1.5 years since I hit you up) to keep Vasari21 alive and kicking. I can't do this on Social Security and food stamps alone.

Till next time....

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Jandi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke under the name.