

The New Orleans

AVANT-GARDE[®]

THE ART OF CURATING: FEMME FEST 2011

by Georgia Ross



Georgia Ross

Curator's Statement

The successful curating of a show is an art unto itself. It is not about the curator or their personal aesthetics; it is about the artists represented. The goal is to show each artist's work to the best advantage, regardless of the style, size, media, or content. The curator must put aside one's personal taste and view each piece as a separate jewel unto itself, both the showy and the subtle.

I chose to hang the works best viewed from a distance around the perimeter of the gallery walls, as they will be most visible from across the space. Smaller, more intimate works were hung on the inner panels to invite a closer inspection by the viewer. I wanted to create small environments within those panels to surprise and delight the viewer as they were discovered.

To organize the hanging, I grouped like subject matter and colors together on each wall to obtain a cohesive similarity of concept that also relates to each other visually. Each piece must be strong enough to stand on its own and not fade into obscurity against a larger or more vibrant piece. The challenge of curating is to give each artist a fair shot at the viewer's attention so that each gem can be viewed as the jewel it is.

The first wall to the left as you enter the gallery represents figural work in many different techniques and styles. The common thread that links them together is the use of the human figure as subject matter, which invokes a powerful emotional response in the viewer. The back wall has larger and more vibrant color contrast in a theme that is both whimsical and magical in nature. Several artful quilts are juxtaposed with paintings having both the varied colors and repetitive patterns of a quilt-like nature. The right wall contains work that is distinctly spiritual in nature, each piece reflecting a thoughtful interior glimpse of the artists' own heart.

When you round the corner of the central panels, you are greeted by a glittering gold manikin modeling a hand-beaded dress. There are several bold color field paintings behind our model and distinctly New Orleans subject matter in front. The back of the panels presents a Zen-like visage of subtle color with an Oriental feel to the composition.

Curator's Choice

I have often been asked to present awards at exhibitions. Exhibitions usually present numbered awards such as first, second, or third place, frequently with best of show and honorable mentions. I have always felt uncomfortable with this system as it assumes that some pieces are better than others, fostering an unproductive sense of competition between artists. Some pieces are usually better than others, but in many different ways that are equally valid. Some have better technique while others have more originality or impact in color, contrast, or size. Some may be delicate and subtle and whisper to the viewer's imagination, while others are bold and demand attention.



Georgia Ross and Don Marshall at Femme Fest 2011

I would like to recognize several artists represented in this show based on their individual merits. I base these merit awards on qualities I wish to call "artistic virtues." All virtues are equal and all pieces chosen have equal, although very different, merits. Artistic merit is often divided

into two major categories: the "concept" or idea behind the piece and "technique" or the physical execution of the work. The works in this show transcend this distinction as they incorporate excellence of both concept and technique. Each is extraordinary in its own way. There is no first, second, or third in this show, there are only the *artistic virtues* of:

Technique	M. Bibi Wolke-Bronswijk "Reflexion"
Craftsmanship	Susan Harles "Irma Thomas"
Draftsmanship	Kelly Quigley "Jazz Cock"
Humor	Jane Rawls Talton "Arrogance"
Whimsy	Carrie Hartley "Love Cross"
Social commentary	Pati D'Amico "Rage and Fear"
The Avant-garde	Luba Zygarewicz "Hope, 50 cups of green tea"

I am more pleased with this exhibition than any I have ever curated. It is a complex medley of inspired achievement, unique as individual pieces, with a much stronger harmony as a whole. I salute the achievements of New Orleans women artists and thank you all for your participation in one of the best art shows in New Orleans.



The exhibiting New Orleans women artists of Femme Fest 2011

Courtesy of Bedonna Magid-Wakeman

COORDINATING FEMME FEST

by Phyllis Parun



Phyllis Parun
Photo by Bill Warren

Après-déluge of 2005 as Founding President of both the Artists' Equity Association of Louisiana and the Women's Caucus for Art of Louisiana (WCA/LA), Phyllis gathered 32 New Orleans visual artists, curating two exhibits in California, catalyzing a new art movement with fellow artists, Bill Warren and Pati D'Amico, naming it "Kataclysm."

Femme Fest was born in 2006 when Don Marshall, President of The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, met with 60 women at Ashé Cultural Arts

Center. In 2008, Don ran into Phyllis in a grocery parking lot and asked her as the leader of WCA/LA to get involved.

Since 2008 at Phyllis' suggestion, the WCA/LA Board has sponsored and curated Femme Fest as an open-call, non-juried exhibit providing Louisiana women artists valuable opportunity to create and exhibit new work. Each year more artists apply, and the work exhibited is more creative and fresher.

Femme Fest, always a March Women's History Month

exhibit, has become the signature exhibit for both the WCA/LA and the Jazz and Heritage Gallery.

Phyllis also sponsors Poets and Writers, Inc., events annually at several venues.

A WCA/LA members-only exhibit is planned at the Big Top for November this year. ❖

To join the Women's Caucus for Art of Louisiana, go to www.nationalwca.org and fill out the application as a Louisiana (LOU) member or contact Phyllis Parun at pbparun@yahoo.com or leave phone number at 504-949-8876.

2011 WOMEN'S SPRING LITERARY SALON

BEYOND THE READING

by Delia Tomino Nakayama

On March 26th, 2011, I was one of five local women poets to gather together and share our poetry with New Orleans. We sat in a semi-circle in the courtyard of the Jazz & Heritage Gallery, dispensed with the usual podium and introductions, and read our poetry "round-robin" style.

Alongside giving local women poets a lovely and noted venue to read their work, this event (among many more to come) was intended to inspire and encourage the women of New Orleans to begin, continue and/or replenish their respective poetic journeys and connect with other women poets and artists.

And so, this well-attended event's purpose reaches far beyond the moments of the reading itself, which were blessed with

auspicious weather and delectable provisions. I am grateful to have collaborated with poets Beulah Carey, Amelie Prescott, Laura Kristen Mattingly and Emily Ewings and look forward to curating more poetry celebrations in the future, and making room for others to do the same.

In the spirit of nurturing our artistic community, I host the "Women's Weekly Poetry Circle" at St. Anna's Church on Monday afternoons from 2-4pm. For more information and to join, email me at poetryprocess@gmail.com. ❖

(Special thanks to Don Marshall, Phyllis Parun, Bonnie Marcus, Roxane Sanders, Dashika Davis, Peter Nu and Milena Martinovic.)

rédaction

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Poets and Writers, Inc., at Jazz and Heritage Foundation salon