

May 7, 2010

Celebrating Artists Who Keep the Action in Abstraction

By SUSAN HODARA

WHEN Dara Meyers-Kingsley was invited to curate [ArtsWestchester](#)'s annual exhibition of Westchester artists, she knew that the theme of the show was to be abstraction. By setting her focus on the last six letters of that word, she has assembled a collection of artwork that, she said, offers a new perspective on abstract art. Opening May 15 at the Arts Exchange in White Plains, the exhibition is titled "AbstrACTION," with action in various guises its highlight.

Ms. Meyers-Kingsley, an independent curator who has organized many exhibitions, including 20 international media shows at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, said she wanted to move the work "off the canvas, with all due respect to painting."

Of the 15 artists in the show, only three are painters; the others work in sculpture, drawing, photography, animation, video, installation and mixed media.

Action is prevalent in "AbstrACTION" on several levels. Some of the artwork actually moves, like [Tom Sarver](#)'s three kinetic sculptures (one that's 18 feet tall), animations by [Dannielle Tegeder](#) and video projections by Kit Fitzgerald. [Kirsten Nelson](#)'s "Corner with Dry Wall" appears to protrude from a wall.

In other cases, action is implicit in the processes involved in creating the work. For example, three pieces from [Tricia Wright](#)'s "True Value" series are composed of patterns made by pricking hundreds of pinholes into paper. [Henry Mandell](#) is wrapping one of the gallery's movable walls in what he calls "artwork skin," created from digitally designed large-scale prints. "The Problem of One Thing Existing Simultaneously #4," by [Tavares Strachan](#), displays the pieces of a shattered beer bottle laid out in a vitrine alongside handmade copies of each shard. Jason Repolle's intricate drawings can take a year to finish; Ms. Meyers-Kingsley described them as "obsessive." In [Lori Nozick](#)'s "Window," fishing line is threaded through 42 holes in one of the gallery's large window shades, converging into a single point on the floor below.

"Of course, anything you make entails action," Ms. Meyers-Kingsley said, "but in these selections, that action is more apparent. By highlighting the processes that take place when creating the work,

I'm hoping to help viewers to find a way in, to make sense of the piece." She said she also hoped that viewers would actively engage with the works, which will fill both floors of the Arts Exchange.

"I could have doubled the number of artists with the space we have," she said, "but I like leaving room around each piece. This is artwork that is experiential and interactive. It necessitates a more active form of participation than just looking."

Even some of the artists will become part of the action. A series of drawings by Steven Gwon, titled "six months," will grow to 18 panels from 8 as Mr. Gwon adds artwork he will create over the course of the exhibition. From June 2 through June 12, the painter Mike Childs will transform part of the Arts Exchange into a studio to paint a mural directly on one of the gallery walls. [Donna Sharrett](#) has built a sculpture of forsythia branches sown with indigenous plants and vines that will grow in the Arts Exchange's open-air interior courtyard. A live performance by Ms. Fitzgerald, her husband, Peter Gordon, and members of the Love of Life Orchestra is planned for June 25.

Ms. Meyers-Kingsley lives in [Usonia](#), an enclave of houses designed by [Frank Lloyd Wright](#) and his disciples in Pleasantville, and all the artists featured in "AbstrACTION" live, work or were born in Westchester.

Some are represented by Chelsea galleries and have been shown in major museums. Mr. Strachan, of Pelham, currently has a solo exhibition at the [MIT List Visual Arts Center](#) in Cambridge, Mass. Work by Ms. Fitzgerald, an assistant professor of new media at [Concordia College](#) in Bronxville, has been shown at the [Whitney Museum of American Art](#) and is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. The painter Erik Hanson of Peekskill also has work in the Museum of Modern Art's collection, while the painter Creighton Michael of Mount Kisco has work in the collections of the [Brooklyn Museum](#) and the [Neuberger Museum of Art](#). Mr. Repolle's drawings are on display in "IN.FLEC.TION," now at the [Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art](#).

A preview of "AbstrACTION" is part of ArtsWestchester's Arts Bash Preview Party, held annually in conjunction with the Arts Exchange's spring exhibition of Westchester artists. The more than 400 guests expected to attend will partake of an array of food prepared by 10 local restaurants under the direction of Anthony Goncalves, the chef at nearby [42](#). Guests can also participate in Open Studios, visiting the work spaces of the 13 artists who rent space in the Arts Exchange.

"Once a year we open up our building for two reasons," said Janet Langsam, ArtsWestchester's executive director. "One is to showcase local artists; we try to present new talents whose work has not been shown here before. The other is to showcase the artists who have studios in our building. It's a focus on Westchester art — new work, new artists, new ideas."

"AbstrACTION," May 15 through Aug. 14; Tuesday through Saturday, 12 to 5 p.m.; admission is free.

Arts Bash Preview Party takes place on Friday, 6:30 to 9 p.m.; tickets are \$65. Open Studios: May 14, 6:30 to 9 p.m., for Arts Bash ticket-holders only; May 15, 12 to 5 p.m., free and open to the public. At the Arts Exchange, 31 Mamaroneck Avenue, White Plains. For Arts Bash tickets and more information: artswestchester.org or (914) 428-4220.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: May 16, 2010

An article in some editions last Sunday about “AbstrACTION,” an exhibition at the Arts Exchange in White Plains, N.Y., misstated part of the name of the musical group that will perform on June 25. It is the Love of Life Orchestra, not the Love of Light Orchestra.



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