

TheoGanz Studio

Joe Radoccia and the Portraits



Beacon, NY - TheoGanz Studio invites you to join artist Joe Radoccia on Saturday April 30th from 2-4 pm to celebrate his two most recent portraits (*Gabrielle Bell* and *Joe Weber*) which are installed in the gallery through May 8th; both works are mixed media, on gessoed paper, each measuring 60 x 42 inches.



left to right: Bob, Richard, Phil (*Portraits of Men* exhibition)

Everyone who saw the artist's *Portraits of Men* exhibition at Two Way Brewing a few months ago knows that he was working on a series of large monochromatic portraits. A recent visit to Radoccia's studio a couple of weeks ago however, revealed how busy and prolific he has been since then as the original series opens up and adds new, more diverse subjects.

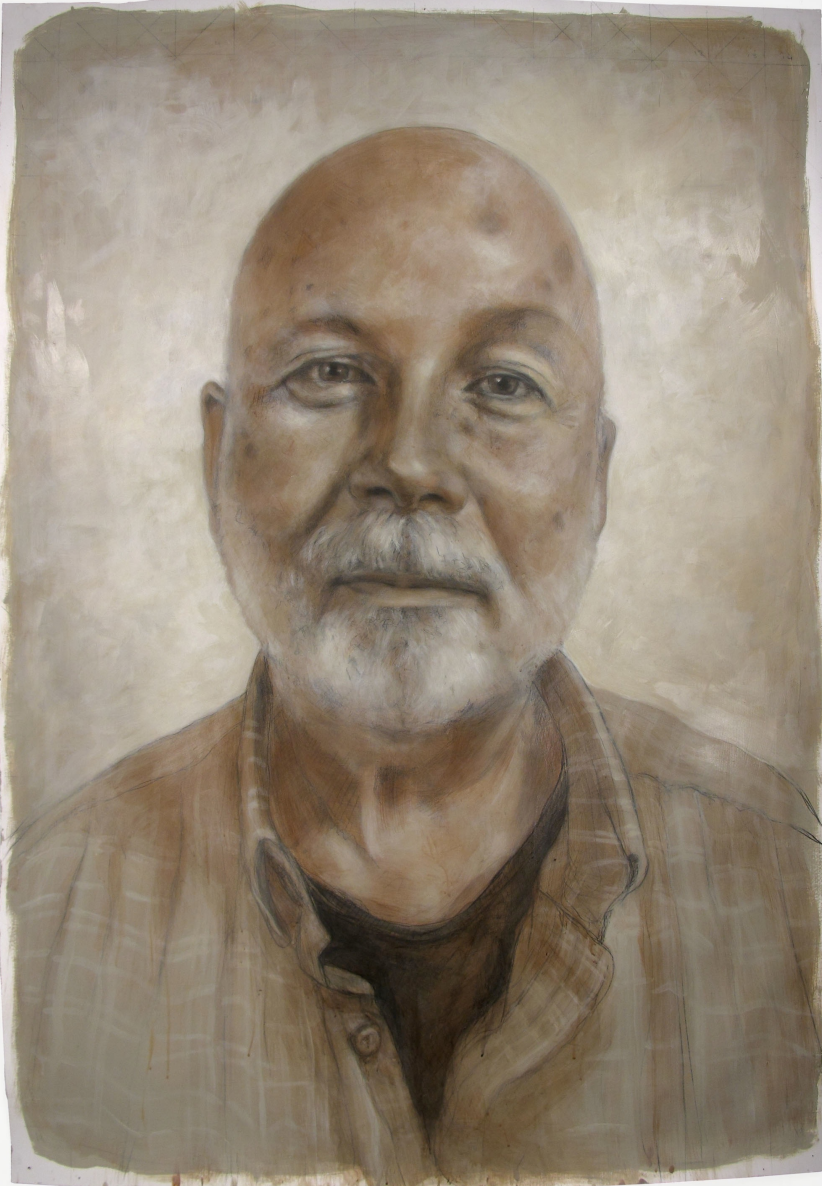
(Radoccia, who is originally from Buffalo and has an MFA in Painting from the University of Buffalo, moved to Beacon from NYC about 4 years ago and now works in a studio at Spire).

Joe describes the genesis of the portraits:

"So I started with people in general. I started with men. I wanted to do them large but vulnerable - that was my goal. I started by just hiring people to model. Strangers. Without a lot of editing. And then I decided let me do people I know because what I found when I would hire just anybody (a stranger) I would draw them and then I would just stop not knowing whether or not I had captured their character. Phil was the first portrait I did of a person I knew, then I did Richard. And from there I continued asking

only people I knew - people who were important to me. So originally the focus was not about LGBTQ Elders at all. That series evolved later when I was applying for a grant that required creating art engaging an underrepresented community. I chose LGBTQ Elders. Although I didn't get the grant, I am continuing with the LGBTQ Elders, keeping them stylistically consistent even as I am exploring another direction on other work over here.....I have a line up of elders that I am painting but I slowed the pace down while I look for more diversity. I first defined LGBTQ Elders simply by age 65+, then it broadened to the people who self-identified as gay pre-stonewall. You know - people who have been out a long time. (The Stonewall riots of 1968 are considered a

pivotal moment bringing into the open the fight for LGBTQ rights in the United States.) I was thinking about all the changes since the 70s and how it could be bittersweet for someone of that age range, who has lived so much of their life. And how, although all of this great stuff is happening now (for LGBTQ rights and acceptance), a huge portion of their lives has passed in a climate that was so very different, so less tolerant. I want to somehow convey their dignity and endurance in these big portraits."

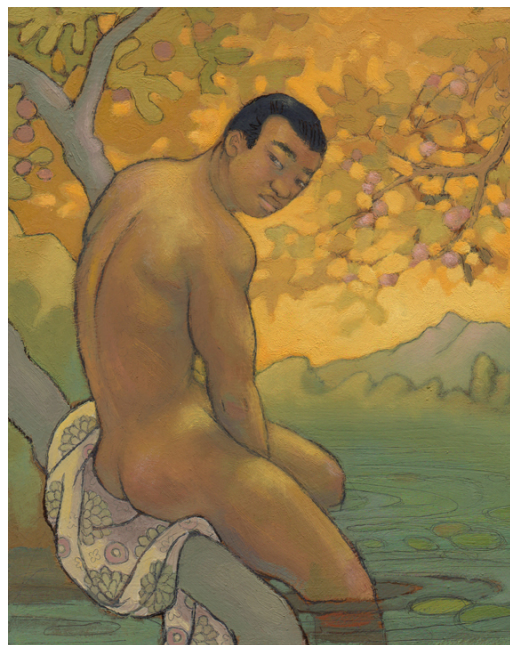
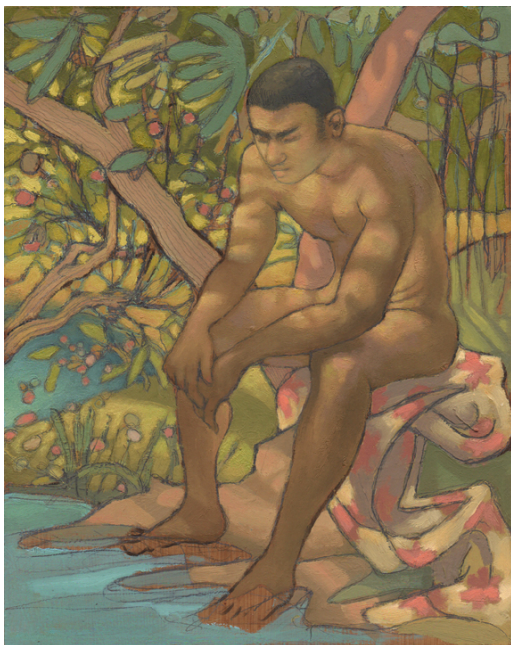


Joe Radoccia
Wayne Snellen,
2015
LGBTQ series
pencil and acrylic
on paper,
60 x 42 inches

The initial portraits have a sheen to them despite the fact they are on paper. There is a richness to the surface and up close, each individual pencil stroke and mark that has not vanished from the layers of washes is revealed. The paper has been gessoed on both sides and the artist uses the softest pencils - typically 8B - and layers of washes of housepaint and tinted matte medium. Radoccia explains that if he loses too much of the pencil detail after a wash, he will go back into the portrait and repencil the details he doesn't want to lose. So it becomes a drawing within a painting and a painting within a drawing. It is a back-and-forth reworking and the artist is okay with letting parts of the process remain visible so that it becomes a detail of the finished work; in several portraits, the viewer finds remnants of the initial grid.

Ideally the portraits are viewed in a large expansive space - where one can see them from a distance and then be allowed to approach and view them at close range, literally face-to-face, to take in all the details. It doesn't matter that you may not know the subject - one takes away the feeling, after holding their gaze for a time, that you know something of their spirit. It's all in the eyes.

Besides the scale, Joe's recent work is a big jump from his previous focus, a series he calls *The Water's Edge*.



Left:
Joe Radoccia,
The Pond, 2014,
oil on panel
10 x 8 in

Right:
Joe Radoccia
The Lake, 2014
oil on panel
10 x 8 in

from *The Water's Edge*

Joe Radoccia:

“These portraits are very different from what I was doing before because they are much larger and monochromatic and I was very much into color before. But what happened - I was doing this series of miniatures for quite a while and underneath each of them was a loose monochromatic painting that had this unfinished underpainting feel to it. Then I would paint in oil over that painting and stylize the finished product. As much as I liked the final painting, I missed the loose drawing at the beginning - the underpainting - so I decided with these big giant walls (of his present studio), I would do large-scale work and let the spirit of underpainting remain the focus.”

When the artist finds himself getting bored or restless, he questions and explores what's missing for him in his studio practice. In the case of moving from exotic miniatures to large-scale portraits, he seems to have found an answer - for now. Sensing a nostalgia for the looseness of sketching and drawing and feeling constrained by the stylized tightness of the miniatures, Joe moved to a much larger scale and has put the colorful palette away - turning instead to a monochromatic field of graphite, burnt sienna, raw umber and charcoal.



He explains his process:

"I work from photos. First I shoot about a hundred photos of the model here in the studio. What I'll do is I'll shoot them here 180 degrees a hundred times - boom boom boom - (pivots to show the angles of the head and body turning) - with them looking 180 degrees over and over again. And then I pull from those photos a cluster of them and make a composite."

Radoccia's latest portraits - the two here in the gallery of *Gabrielle Bell* and *Joe Weber* - have a matte quality to the surface and appear lighter, looser and more spontaneous. (There are fewer washes of housepaint and less filling in of the features). Finding himself increasingly restless with the highly sculpted and finished portraits of the *Elders* and realizing, once again, that he was starting to miss the loose sketching and drawing aspect that originally motivated the portraits in the first place, Joe stopped working on these two younger subjects and deliberated for several days whether to take them any further. He decided they were done.

And now, he states, "I find I'm getting itchy for color...again."

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Contact: Eleni Smolen, 917.318.2239 or theoganzstudio@tds.net
or
Joe Radoccia, joejoerado@gmail.com