



Working With The Clown A Tour Of New York Arbor



By Elizabeth Holzer

Earlier this year, George Turner opened New York Arbor, an artist run center in the former Fecund Clown Studio. The gallery and work space is scheduled to have four seasonal themed shows.

A week into the first annual summer show, Turner talks about the artists and the process of opening the gallery.

"Christopher Saucedo, what a narrative. He is amazing. He is literally unsinkable." Turner describes the local sculptor and metal worker. "It was an absolute blessing to have him."

The theme of this installation and Saucedo's most recent work is increments of water. Composed of metal cut-outs of cups, quarts, and gallons the mobiles represent different volumes of liquids.

"Even before the storm, he was obsessed with water. In fact, this is a self-portrait," Turner described the mobile at the entrance of the gallery. "It uses various vessels to show the volume of fluid his body displaces."



In a statement about the installation Saucedo expanded on the idea, "this enormous scale difference, between the incalculable sea and a knowledge of a cup of water interests me."

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"So here he is showing the increments of water. Four cups equal a quart and four quarts equal a gallon. It's how we try to control the element by measuring it out," explained Turner.

Saucedo's sculptures and tapestries have recently been gaining more attention. A survivor of Hurricane Katrina and Sandy, art has helped Saucedo cope with living through the worst natural disasters in recent U.S. history. The storms destroyed both his home and studio on two different occasions.

At New York Arbor a series of mixed media cups hang in the front room. Saucedo handmade the vivid blue and pink paper and designed the cup shaped metal branding irons. He then heats the brand and burns the paper to create the effect.

"Some other versions just burn straight through the paper but with these ones a damp sponge is blotted over the brand to prevent that," Turner explains the technique.

Now Saucedo teaches at Adelphi University but has maintained a relationship with New Orleans. "He did this amazing 6,000 pound monolith memorial for Katrina," Turner described. "His work is great."

"So now he and his lovely wife still live in Rockaway and they're raising their house. They are all about upper floors now," Turner finished.

Linda Brandwein, who has lived in Rockaway for more than 25 years, has her textiles on display at New York Arbor. She mainly does fiber and metal work.

"These textiles are totally amazing," Turner says as he shows off the fabric pieces that range from three-inches-square to six-feet-tall. The weaving is both tight knit and chaotic depending on the piece. Each of the five works represents a unique element of Rockaway. This summer Brandwein is showing her work at the Bojagi Forum in Korea. She is involved in the Long Island Craft Guild and the Textile Group of New York.

"She kind of rides the line between

decorative and functional," Turner says describing her work. "She makes these lovely pieces and they are just fun and funky. It's clear she's got an eye and a knack for it."

Susan Graham's Electric Ocean (Rockaway) stands alone in New York Arbor. Graham, who is primarily a ceramic artist, used a few different printmaking techniques to create a collage of Rockaway that includes the familiar sight of airplanes, the Dayton Towers, and Seaside Goldenrod which is indigenous to the area.

"She's very Rockaway, she's a surfer girl," Turner says. "She has this upcoming really killer show on guns. She has this whole thing where in order to come to terms with her father's very hearty gun collection reproduced them all in porcelain. It's very cool."

Also hanging are the paintings of Roberta Lawson, a Brooklyn-based

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Turner described a listing for the only feasible commercial space on the Boulevard he'd found.

"There were no pictures which is a red flag but I went to go see it anyway. When I get there I was like 'oh my god, it's the clown place.'"

For nearly 20 years the "Fecund Clown" has been stationed above



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Finally, Joel Stoehr's, Mossbunker, is another standalone print of fish that has already sold.

The mix of different artistic styles, mediums, and techniques adds to the eccentricity of New York Arbor.

"It's a little bit of everything," Turner says, "that's what makes it work."

While there is not an official theme Turner says that the gallery is biased toward people that are inspired by nature and natural phenomena.

"This is all kind of an experiment and an ongoing art project in itself, Turner adds. "I'm trying to get other people involved, that's why I'm calling it an artist-run center. My concept is that it will grow to include other artists and makers."

New York Arbor is one of many on the wave of revitalization but it almost didn't happen.

The process of getting the show to-

what is now New York Arbor. The large wooden clown face was once named "the most disturbing image on Google Maps" by jalopnik.com.

"My first instinct was to chop it up. Maybe I'd offer the pieces to whoever in the community had a special relationship with the clown. But the clown is definitely coming down."

"Then I came around. The clown was retouched and repainted. When I got this place everybody was like, 'you can't take the clown down,'" Turner recalled.

"It's a landmark! You know what, I'll work with the clown. Next year is going to be her 20th anniversary."

"So the idea is I gave the clown a little Statue of Liberty type feel. I kinda incorporated the idea into the gallery. It's all evolving but I want it to be a space for immigrants and transplants as well as locals."

The current show culminates Aug. 15 which will be followed by a month long open call for Fall themed art.

New York Arbor's next opening will coincide with the Fall Equinox in late-September.

Photos by Elizabeth Holzer

