JOEZUCKERR SSCROLLLSS

HOUSATONIC
MUSEUM OF ART



JOE ZUCKER: AVOIDING THE ISSUES OF THE REALIST PARADOX by Max Blagg

"Some people think I love sailing ships, but for me they are just part of a visual strategy: they are wood and canvas, as are the stretcher bars and canvas painting surface. I have diversity in my work, but I also have control of it. I rarely paint things that I like." - Joe Zucker, Bomb Magazine Summer 2007

"The pistol shot of the painter's eye dislocates the real" -Robert Bresson

Photo credit, Thomas DuBrock

Joe Zucker is an American pioneer. An agitator and instigator, builder and pourer of paint, fearlessly deploying all manner of materials and subject matter. These paintings dislocate imaginary scenes from the "Golden Age of Piracy," Zucker's sidelong "slipping glimpses" at the men and ships who terrorized the seven seas in the early 18th century, and ended up, most of them, dancing at the end of a rope. What's so jolly about the Jolly Roger?

A longtime student of the movements of fish and water, each summer Joe spends a month in Minnesota, chasing walleye pike, while the pike dream of evading his lures when the familiar shadow of his "Meshugganasota punt," a modified bass boat, glides above their heads. He smokes out the pike and eats them later, smoked. Returning East to catch the shimmering light of Long Island's autumn, Zucker intercepts the striped bass on their run up the Atlantic coast, wrangling keepers from the chaotic schools beneath the waves, their peregrinations threatened from all sides; by larger predators, by men with elaborate lures and wire lines, haul seiners with giant nets.

By November, in his studio in the East Hampton woods, surrounded by canvas and wood, acrylics and oils, brushes of badger and Japanese nylon, black crow quills, and magical markers, Zucker prepares to confront another long East Hampton winter, strangling the realist paradox, mopping the bourgeoisie, steering paint into alluring configurations. Evoking in a few swift strokes, sensual abstractions that flow and reverberate, unraveling like tourniquets, Chinese landscape scrolls, the Torahs he studied as a boy at temple in Chicago.

The curve of the lowly cannonball, for example, that simple sphere, solid, unremarkable, its essential heft

transformed by Zucker's hand and eye. The artist points out how, in one painting, the cannonball pierced the picture plane when it perforated the mizzenmast, revealing the landscape behind, something this viewer might not otherwise have noticed. In reality, the iron sphere was deadly in its effect when it struck the opposition's ships -- it wasn't the ball itself so much as the spray of splinters it created when it connected with the sturdy but yielding wood of the boat; splinters that pierced the fragile flesh of the powder monkeys, mere boys who tended to the guns. Those cannonades prefiguring the infernal weaponry in use today and every day by men at war, projectiles designed by mild mannered sociopaths to explode in midair, spraying a deadly rain of bomblets that lay waste to everything, animal, vegetable and mineral, in their wide-ranging path.

Zucker was about the same age as those sacrificial powder monkeys when he avoided a potentially fatal, certainly fateful, trip to the Mekong Delta by applying himself savagely to art, his fluid lines filling a thousand pages of expensive Arches paper, traversing the seven seas of a wild imagination, ecstatic visual texts laid end to end, a rhapsodic paper chain that he would revisit for the next four decades, refining his multiple takes on American origins: cotton and slavery, boats and fish, water and sky, and the slow grinding effects of colonial power slowly ruining this green planet. In every dream home a heartache, on every pirate ship real human misery behind the gorgeous blossoming sails, the grinning skulls of their Jolly Rogers.

Although these renegades and buccaneers have been hailed for their democratic principles, terrorists are what they were, the oars of their longboats wrapped in muslin as they rowed silently toward another defenseless coastal village. Taken by surprise, the innocent men women and children soon found themselves bound for a distant country where they would be sold as slaves. One group of captives was

taken from the American town of Baltimore, and sold as human chattel in the North African port of Algiers.

Pirates supplied the black market of many ports with their loot. Backroom deals with crooked politicians. On the coast of Ireland, some farmers arranged for cattle to be traded for plunder, under cover of darkness, the local constabulary having been paid off to stay off the beach that night. Lion Gardiner may have made similar clandestine arrangements with Captain Kidd, another subject of Zucker's eloquent pen and brush, when he sailed for several weeks around Long Island Sound, looking for a safe place to hide his treasure, (which, despite advances in metal detection and ground piercing radar, still has not been found).

Kidd is famously remembered as a violent, avaricious pirate seeking to enrich himself with the contents of defenseless ships, yet he started out a quite legitimate seafarer, a privateer under contract to the British Government. Kidd, who thought himself protected by the British, eventually found himself at the mercy of an early version of Smiley's people, neatly framed when he finally returned to London. Although his wife was a fixture in high society, and he had friends in high places, he was a threat to the status quo. After being confined in the miasma of Marshalsea prison, his health failing, he was tried by a corrupt high court, [the trial notes read like something out of Kafka] and publicly hanged at Execution Dock. Zucker has detailed his last minutes in several dark drawings and a massive diptych rendered in acrylic, sash cord and wood, in which Kidd's wife and his parrot glumly observe his corpse, which was tarred post mortem to preserve it as it swung in the wind, a warning to all those who would mess with His Majesty the King's income.

It seems the Royal Navy's brutal code of discipline was directly related to hundreds of decent English seafarers becoming pirates. In the early days of sailing ships there was a strict demarcation among the ranks --the so-called "top-men" spent most of their time high in the rigging, expertly furling and unfurling the massive sails. Noted for their stylish dress, these independent

mariners (whom Errol Flynn as Captain Blood would later mythologize) did not fraternize with the midshipmen or other, more lowly, crew members, indeed they rarely descended to the deck, except to retrieve a fallen axe or marlin spike. Such rebels were more likely to be recruited to piracy than acquiesce to the brutality of life in the Navy, whose unofficial motto was, and perhaps still is, "Rum, Sodomy and the Lash."

Long before Johnny Depp exhausted the *Caribbean* franchise with an excess of ham as Captain Jack Sparrow, Hollywood pirates always seemed more authentic. In the film adaptation of R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Robert Newton *was* Long John Silver. You could never tell how drunk he was; he resembled a lot of the artists Zucker first encountered down at Fanelli's on Prince Street in the early 70's, shaking off Picasso's looming shadow like young dogs shaking fleas, shambling, loquacious, funny, pissed as Newton, with a tendency to sudden violence that would often leave a trail of broken glasses and blood on the floor of the old saloon. Artists, like pirates, have always had that ambivalent allure, intimidating but oddly attractive.

Zucker evokes these bawdy nautical scenes as vividly as Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, in the vibrant and voluble collection assembled here in Bridgeport's Housatonic Museum of Art; pirates, pirogues, parrots and widows, rough wooden ships abstracted to the canvas, billowing sails, scrolls that tell dead men's tales.

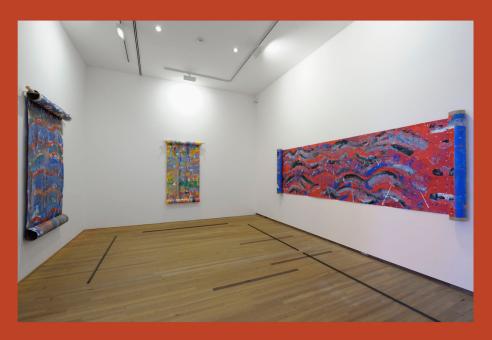






Sail 2007 Latex on paper and cardboard tubings 162" x 84"

Installation photos courtesy of Texas Gallery, Houston.





Installation photos courtesy of the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands (2009)

Untitled (Sail) 2007 Latex on paper with cardboard tubes Vertical: 42 1/2" Horizontal: variable



BIOGRAPHY

Born in Chicago, Illinois, 1941. Education: The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, B.F.A., 1964; M.F.A., 1966. Lives in East Hampton, New York.

SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

1965 1966	Heistand Hall Art Gallery, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. "Paintings". Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, Illinois. "Recent Paintings". Adele Rosenberg Gallery, Chicago. "Systemic Paintings".
1968	Collector's Gallery, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota. "Paintings".
1971	University of Montana, Missoula, Montana. "Recent Paintings".
1974	Jacobs Ladder Gallery, Washington, DC. "Ships".
	Bykert Gallery, NYC, NY.
	Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas.
1975	Daniel Weinberg Gallery, San Francisco, California. "Recent Paintings".
	Bykert Gallery, NYC, NY.
1976	The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland.
	Protetch Gallery, Washington, DC.
	Bykert Gallery, NYC, NY. "New Paintings".
1978	Young/Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, Illinois.
	Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC, NY.
	Galerie Gillespie-Laage, Paris, France.
1979	Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC, NY. "Recent Paintings".
	The Mayor Gallery, London, England. "Eli Whitney and the Cotton Gin".
	Galerie Bischofberger, Zurich, Switzerland. "Neue Bilder".
1980	Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC, NY.
	Pace Editions, NYC, NY. "Toucans".
	Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
4004	"New Drawings".
1981	Pace Editions, NYC, NY. "Candles".
	University Art Museum, Berkeley, California. "Matrix/Berkeley 41 – Joseph
	Zucker: Candles". Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC, NY.
1000	The Mayor Gallery, London, England. "Right and Left Hand Devils".
1982	La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, California. "Joe Zucker Paintings – Collection on Loan from the Rothschild Bank AG, Zurich".
	Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. "Surfacing Images".
1983	Daniel Weinberg Gallery, San Francisco, California. "Recent Paintings".
1903	Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas.
1984	Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles, California. "Ponce de Leon
1301	Painting".
	Vollum College Center Gallery, Reed College, Portland, Oregon.
	The Mayor Gallery, London, England.
1985	Queens Museum, Queens, New York. "Ponce de Leon in Search of the
	Fountain of Youth".
1987	Hirschl & Adler Modern, NYC, NY.
1988	The Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.
	Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas. "Paintings 1965-88".

1989	Hirschl & Adler Modern, NYC, NY.
1992	Aurel Scheibler, Köln, Germany. "Backdrop Paintings".
	Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, New York.
1993	American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington, DC.
	"Spider Chronicles".
	Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas. "Pegmen, Rubberband Men".
1994	Aurel Scheibler, Köln, Germany. "Canoe, Walleye & Axe Lake".
	Nolan/Eckman Gallery, NYC, NY. "Tofte Journal".
1997	Danese Gallery, NYC, NY. "Plimsoll Line".
	Nolan/Eckman Gallery, NYC, NY. "The Making of Jolly Roger".
1998	Galerie Fred Jahn, Munich, Germany.
1999	Nolan/Eckman Gallery, NYC, NY.
	Aurel Scheibler, Köln, Germany.
	Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York.
2003	GBE Modern/Gavlak Projects, NYC, NY.
2004	Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC, NY.
	Nolan/Eckman Gallery, NYC, NY.
2005	Aurel Scheibler, Köln, Germany. "Interior/Exterior".
2006	Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC, NY. "Open Storage".
	Nolan/Eckman Gallery, NYC, NY. "Container Ships".
	1500 Dragon Street, Dallas, Texas. "No Fun Intended".
2008	Scheibler Mitte, Berlin, Germany. "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly".
	Susanne Hilberry Gallery, Ferndale, Michigan. "See/Sea".
	Nyehaus, NYC, NY. "Plunder: 1977-2008".
2009	Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas. "Scrolls".
2010	Galerie Steinek, Vienna, Austria. "Joe Zucker: Drawings".
	Mary Boone Gallery, NYC, NY. "Tales of Cotton".
2011	Mary Boone Gallery, NYC, NY. "A Unified Theory". (Fifth Avenue)
	Mary Boone Gallery, NYC, NY. "A Unified Theory". (Chelsea)
	Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago, Illinois. "The Grid Paintings".
2013	Mary Boone Gallery, NYC, NY. "Empire Descending a Staircase".
2015	Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York. "Joe Zucker: Life & Times of an
	Orb Weaver".
2016	National Arts Club, NYC, NY. "Joe Zucker: Armada".
2017	Maccarone Gallery Los Angeles, California
	"1000 Brushstrokes"
	The Drawing Room, East Hampton, New York "Neo, Neo, Neoclassicism"

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SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

- Pace Gallery, NYC, NY. "GRIDS: Format and Image in the 20th Century".

 Mary Boone Gallery, NYC, NY.

 Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, NY. "New Image Painting".
- 1979 Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC, NY.
 Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, NY. "1979 Biennial Exhibition".
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois.
 Leo Castelli Gallery, NYC, NY. "Drawings".
 Neue Galerie Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen, Germany. "Les Nouveaux Fauves/Die Neuen Wilden".
 La 39 Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy. "Drawings: The Pluralist Decade".
 La 39 Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy. "Art in the Seventies".
 The Museum of Modern Art, NYC, NY. "A Penthouse Aviary".
- The New Museum, NYC, NY. "Celebration III".

 Leo Castelli Gallery, NYC, NY. "For Trisha Brown Dance Company".

 The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. "Morton G.Neumann Family Collection: Selected Works".

 Sidney Janis Gallery, NYC, NY. "New Directions: A Corporate Collection Selected by Sam Hunter".
- 1982 Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover, Germany. "New York Now".
- Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, NY. "From Minimalism to Expressionism".
 Kunstmuseum Lucerne, Lucerne, Switzerland. "Back to the USA".
 Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, NY. "1983 Biennial Exhibition".
- Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC. "A
 Contemporary Focus 1974-1984".
 Leo Castelli Gallery, NYC, NY. "Artists Call: 50 Artists/50 Collectors".
 Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC, NY. "The Innovative Landscape".
- 1985 Grey Art Gallery, New York University, NYC, NY. "Precious: An American Cottage Industry of the Eighties".
- 1986 La 42 Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy. "Alchemy". Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "An American Renaissance: Painting and Sculpture Since 1940".
- 1988 Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Ángeles, California. "Artschwager: His Peers and Persuasion, 1963-1988".
- Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland. "The Landscape Observed".
 Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. "Word as Image: American Art 1960-1990".
- 1993 Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado. "Western Myth: 20th Century Update".

- 1995 Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, NY. "1995 Biennial Exhibition".
- 1999 Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, Colorado. "Confluence: Art and the Trout Fly".
- 2002 Museum de Paviljoens, Almere, The Netherlands. "It's Unfair!".
- 2003 Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC, NY. "The American Landscape".
- 2008 CCS Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. "Second Thoughts".
- Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, The Netherlands. "Exile on Main St."
 Mary Boone Gallery, NYC, NY. "Image Matter".
 Zach Feuer Gallery, NYC, NY. "Jr. and Son's".
- 2010 Karl & Faber, Munich, Germany. "Exhibition VI: American Drawings and Selected Prints".
- 2011 Aurel Scheibler, Berlin, Germany. "Twenty: 20 Jahre/Years Aurel Scheibler".
- 2012 Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado. "More Scapes".
- 2013 Industry City, Sunset Park, Brooklyn, New York. "Come Together: Surviving Sandy, Year 1".
- 2014 Mixed Greens and Pavel Zoubok Gallery, NYC, NY. "Horray for Hollywood!".
 Paul Kasmin Gallery, NYC, NY. "Bloodflames Revisited".
- The Rachofsky Collection/The Warehouse, Dallas, Texas. "Geometries On and Off the Grid: Art from 1950 to the Present".

 Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Villa Reale, Milan, Italy. "Don't Shoot the Painter".
- 2017 Midtown Lever House, New York City

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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Finch, Christopher, "Joe Zucker: The Fabric of the Painting", ARTS MAGAZINE, April 1976, pp. 97-99.

Smith, Roberta, "Abstract Image, New Image Painting: Whitney Museum, New York", ART IN AMERICA, March 1979, pp. 102-105.

Kertess, Klaus, "Joe Zucker's Tales of Cotton", ARTS MAGAZINE, March 1980, pp. 161-165.

Kertess, Klaus, "Figuring it Out: Figuration and the Human Figure", ARTFORUM, November 1980, pp. 30-35.

Cohen, R.H., "Joe Zucker at Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo", ARTFORUM, December 1982, pp. 81-82.

Moufarrege, N.A., "Joe Zucker at Holly Solomon Gallery, New York", FLASH ART, January 1983, p. 64.

Cohen, R., "Joe Zucker at Holly Solomon, New York", ART NEWS, February 1983, p. 153.

Cohen, Ronny H., "Paper Routes", ART NEWS, October 1983, pp. 78-85.

Upshaw, Reagan, "Joe Zucker at Holly Solomon Gallery, New York", ART IN AMERICA, February 1985, p. 144.

Morgan, Stuart, "Joe Zucker at Holly Solomon Gallery, New York; Mayor Gallery, London", ARTFORUM, March 1985, p. 103.

Brenson, Michael, "Art: Joe Zucker Cycle", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 30 August 1985.

Smith, Roberta, "Joe Zucker", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 20 March 1987.

Johnson, Ken, "Foursquare and Square-Rigged: New Coordinates in the Imagery of Joe Zucker's Art", ARTS MAGAZINE, Summer 1987, pp. 25-27.

Schwartz, Sanford, "Joe Zucker's New Work", ARTFORUM, Summer 1987, pp. 107-109.

Adams, Brooks, "Joe Zucker at Hirschl & Adler Modern", ART IN AMERICA, April 1990, pp. 267-268.

Yau, John, "Joe Zucker at Hirschl & Adler Modern", ARTS MAGAZINE, October 1991, p. 78.

Smith, Roberta, "Joe Zucker", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 30 September 1994.

Myers, Terry R., "Joe Zucker", NEW ART EXAMINER, Summer 1995, pp. 47-48.

Johnson, Ken, "Richard Artschwager and Joe Zucker", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 28 November 1997.

Smith, Roberta, "And When He Was Bad, He Was Certainly Very Busy", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 30 March 2001.

Smith, Roberta, "A Star of the Underground in Separate Constellations", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 23 January 2004.

Dunham, Carroll, "Joe Zucker's Fiber Optics", ARTFORUM, April 2004, pp. 116-121.

Berwick, Carly, "Joe Zucker: Paul Kasmin and Nolan/Eckman", ART NEWS, May 2004, p. 154.

Westfall, Stephen, "Zucker's Color Constructions", ART IN AMERICA, May 2004, pp. 130-133.

Myers, Terry R., "Joe-in-a-Box: Joe Zucker on Art and Illusion", MODERN PAINTERS, December 2005, pp. 52-55.

Saltz, Jerry, "Saint Paint: A Stellar Topographer in an Introspective, Foxy Mood", THE VILLAGE VOICE, 10 February 2006.

Kuspit, Donald, "Joe Zucker: Paul Kasmin Gallery and Nolan/Eckman Gallery", ARTFORUM, April 2006, p. 249.

Close, Chuck, "Joe Zucker", BOMB, Summer 2007, pp. 46-53.

Smith, Roberta, "Post-Minimal to the Max", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 14 February 2010, pp. AR1, AR23.

Staff, "Joe Zucker", THE NEW YORKER, 12 April 2010, p. 13.

Johnson, Ken, "Joe Zucker: 'Tales of Cotton'", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 30 April 2010, p. C27. (illus: "Paying Off Old Debts", p. C27, B/W).

Panero, James, "Gallery Chronicle", THE NEW CRITERION, May 2010, pp. 50-52.

Tariq, Syma, "Joe Zucker", GLASS MAGAZINE, June 2010, pp. 182-185. (illus: "Five Mosaics: Figure on Camel", pp. 182-183, C. "Amy Hewes", p. 184, C. "Gang Plank", p. 184, C. "Study for Amy Hewes", p. 185, C).

Bui, Phong, "In Conversation: Joe Zucker with Phong Bui", THE BROOKLYN RAIL, December 2010, pp. 24-27. (illus: "Conway's Game of Life", Cover, C. "Feynman's Rainbow", p. 25, B/W. "The Villa at Fermion", p. 25, B/W. "The Boson Volcano", p. 25, B/W. "The Atrium at Baryon", p. 27, B/W).

Mac Adam, Alfred, "Joe Zucker/Mary Boone", ART NEWS, March 2011, p. 108. (illus: "Orange Roof House", p. 108, C).

Smith, Roberta, "Joe Zucker: 'Empire Descending a Staircase'", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 29 March 2013, p. C24. (illus: "Russian Empire", p. C24, C).

Lee, Nathaniel, "Critics' Picks: Joe Zucker", ARTFORUM.COM, 9 April 2013. (illus: "British Empire", C).

Bacon, Alex, "Joe Zucker: Empire Descending a Staircase", THE BROOKLYN RAIL, April 2013, p. 42. (illus: "Mughal Empire", p. 42, B/W.

Rosboch, Lili, "Joe Zucker Bought Into \$100,000 Building in 1960s New York", BLOOMBERG.COM, 24 April 2013.(illus: "Mughal Empire", C. "Qing Dynasty", C. "Mongol Empire", C. "Russian Empire", C. "British Empire", C.

Smith, Roberta, "A Dealer's Eye, and Life", THE NEW YORK TIMES, 17 January 2014, pp. C33, C37.

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Hinkle, Annette, "Joe Zucker: In Consideration of the Spider", THE SAG HARBOR EXPRESS, 17 March 2015.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Housatonic Museum of Art (HMA) is pleased to present the exhibition *Scrolls*. With a career that began in the mid-sixties, Joe Zucker remains one of the most innovative contemporary artists working today. His inspired ingenuity interweaves history, subject matter and the physical materials of his work to create an inventive iconography that exerts its own swashbuckling energy. My deepest thanks to the artist for sharing his work and singular vision with us.

The HMA is equally grateful for the energetic poetry within the prose contributed by author and poet, Max Blagg. His text beautifully entwines the biography of this iconoclastic artist with the brief and brutal history of seafaring fortune hunters.

A very special thank you to Britta Le Va for her help in planning the exhibition and keeping it on course. We also appreciate the help of Ian Glennie, Fredericka Hunter and Jordan Pfaff of Texas Gallery in Houston and the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, Netherlands.

The HMA also would like to thank its numerous donors but we are especially indebted to Deborah Bachard and the Werth Family Foundation which funds, among other programs, Special Exhibitions in the Burt Chernow Galleries. In addition, we deeply appreciate the generous support of Housatonic Community College's President Paul Broadie and Dean of Administration, Rose Ellis, and her team, for their commitment to excellence and their contributions to ensure that the gallery looks its best for every show.

Last, but never least, my heartfelt thanks goes to the people that work side by side with me in the preparation, installation and marketing of every exhibit to ensure the success of every show: Courtney Linderman, Collections Manager; Grant Johnson, Preparator; Laura Roberts, Laura Roberts Marketing and Megan Cacioppo, Graphic Design.

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SCROLLS