

MEDLEY

DERRYFIELD GOES FOR THE GOLD

"MEDLEY," a group exhibition at the Lyceum Gallery at Derryfield School in Manchester, N.H., brings together four talented artists from four decades of Derryfield graduates. To celebrate the school's 50th anniversary, Derryfield art teacher Andy Moerlein (artscope magazine, September/October 2011) has developed a series of exhibitions featuring alumni artists that will extend through the entire academic year.

To enter the gallery, a visitor first rings the doorbell at the front entrance to the school and is buzzed in. After checking in with the receptionist, you are directed to follow the corridors to the gallery, composed of two hallways adjoining at right angles. Each body of work is accompanied by information about the artist and their reflections about their education as artists at Derryfield. Wall signs with titles, media and comments for each work would have been appreciated.

The first body of work you encounter will be luminous landscapes and townscapes in oil by painter M.J. Blanch-

ette of Kittery Point, Maine, a 1982 graduate of Derryfield who continued her education at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her paintings combine a textural, painterly quality with delicate and precise lines. A group of tree trunks appear as simple scratches through thickly applied paint. But they are perfect scratches. Her imagery is the world around her, a landscape with the roof of a house peeking over a clump of bushes, clouds over the ocean, a dark and reflective river winding between overhanging trees. Particularly striking was a view of old buildings seen from across a parking lot and behind a roadside guardrail – Hopper-esque but with looser brushwork and brilliantly layered color.

Turn the corner and you encounter a collection of cartoon-like yet substantial heads sculpted in bronze by Brady Bonus. These heads are much more impressive than their description would suggest. Think Easter Island meets classical Roman portrait statuary meets the futurist sculptures of Umberto

LYCEUM GALLERY
DERRYFIELD SCHOOL
2108 RIVER ROAD
MANCHESTER,
NEW HAMPSHIRE

THROUGH
JANUARY 10

M.J. Blanchette, *Scale*, oil
on board.



Boccioni without the manifesto and with a sly sense of humor. Two heads are large; one, "The Senator," is on a pedestal and one is on the wall, joined by a cluster of five small heads on miniature shelf-pedestals. The features are exaggerated and very humorous, but the shapes are elegant, stylized yet filled with motion. After graduating from Derryfield in 1990, Bonus continued his education at the University of Michigan and today leads the UX design team at Boston Interactive. A resident of Milton, Mass., Bonus is also known as an illustrator and cartoonist.

Linn Krikorian, class of 1972, brings a graphic quality and sophisticated color sense to her still lifes and landscape paintings. In "For Wyatt," Krikorian used the placement of a simple pot of flowers on a table to tell a story of curves, lines and hue. In another still life, geometric forms create an internal frame and simultaneous backdrop for three spherical vases. It takes a second look to see that one of them does not contain flowers. A tiny painting of three tomatoes on a single stem takes a more realistic turn – like a little lost painting by a northern Renaissance master. Also included were several small landscapes, more in the vein of traditional realism than the still lifes, but with a decided graphic rhythm. Krikorian is well-known in the state as program manager for the Currier Museum's Art Center, where she teaches classes in painting and in portfolio development for high school students.

Some of the most striking work in the exhibit is by Mary Jane Peabody, who was a member of Derryfield's first graduating class in 1968. She uses the time-honored craft process of rug hooking to create works of art in a variety of styles. Some are geometric patterns – squares of

graded color or overlapping arcs surrounding circles of color. Some are more organic – lupins that seem to radiate movement, another like the structure of an unrecognizable cell. One rug shows a domestic scene of great complexity and detail in a style that appears influenced by primitivism and folk art. Peabody is a long-known and respected member of New Hampshire's artisan community, and her work has been featured in several publications devoted to design and rug hooking.

PEABODY WAS ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF A DERRYFIELD FOUNDER, INDICATING THAT THE SCHOOL HAS BEEN TAKING THE ARTS SERIOUSLY FROM ITS INCEPTION.

Peabody has said, "Making rugs to me is about transformation – from wool and linen to something new which carries my own creative spirit in its pieces. I use the elements of design, color and texture. The repetition of making rugs is for me close to meditation, and the energy I get from watching the rug grow – watching my design change as I choose each strand of wool – is related to my childhood sense of play." Moerlein mentioned that Peabody was one of the daughters of a Derryfield founder, indicating that the school has been taking the arts seriously from its inception.

Brady Bonus, *Senator*, bronze.



Linn Krikorian, *For Wyatt*, acrylic.





Mary Jane Peabody, *Resolution*, wool.

Because the Lyceum Gallery is in a school, it needs to serve an academic as well as artistic purpose, Moerlein explained. He values the placement of the gallery in such a high-traffic area. "Everyone sees the work, notices it and talks about it," he said. His goal is to support mid-career artists and show bodies of work for each exhibit, rather than merely individual pieces. This gives the Derryfield students the means to grasp each artist's overall approach. Students also have the opportunity to meet the artists and "hopefully, be inspired."

(Full disclosure, this writer was part of a two-person exhibition at the Lyceum Gallery in 2011.)

Marcia Santore

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