

Blanchette

Bruce's Studio News

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STUDIO 8 • Prospect Hill Road • Walpole, NH 03608 • 603-313-0359 • www.bruceblanchette.com

Good News -- Very Bad News

No sooner had I received a nice award for a juried artwork, also accompanied by a future exhibition at the AVA Gallery in Lebanon, NH next year than my artist friend Harry Bernard excitedly let me know that he too had been approached by a gallery director friend of mine about an exhibition next year, in Rutland, VT's Downtown Gallery. We were amused by the fact that we had each introduced the other to the contacts that made each other's exhibition possible.

Then tragedy struck on August 1 and Harry was stricken with a fatal heart attack. This was a grievous loss to me and all who knew him. Harry was a wonderful friend with whom I enjoyed talking about art, discussing our own art and supporting each other, as well as playing chess together over the last few months.

I'm therefore dedicating this newsletter to my friend, whose work many of you might not know. His style is somewhat biographical but influenced by some of the same artists who we both found influential in certain ways. Artists like Cy Twombly & Jean-Michel Basquiat were among his favorites.

Harry was 80, therefore only slightly older than me. We grew up in the same general period of time with a lot of the same experiences with music and artistic heroes. His paintings express a unique approach to the figure and often draw imagery from the street (literally captured by camera as figures found in oil spills, stains, and even bird droppings) But it's not what they are, as what he does with them that I enjoy. His paintings are not necessarily pretty, but his application of paint is luscious and richly textural. His titles like "was here also" reflect a time in our youth when "Kilroy was here"; a kind of egalitarian graffiti signature of the unseen masses!

Some of Harry's paintings may be found at www.saatchiart.com/art/Painting-WasHereAlso



Harry Bernard



*The news is sudden
and throws me down
shocked...
shattering my day
in a flash that leaves me speechless—
I am numb from head to toe.*

*In the vacant blankness
of the moment
comes a dreadful density like a black hole
absorbing all the sound and light around me
leaning on me
compressing me into deep cushions
almost suffocating me with darkening dismay
I feel myself lost for a long while
contemplating an alternate universe
with gravitational forces that make it hard to
stand*

Harry was my friend.

*So I supposed that Pam
the poet partner of his life
instinctively knew
an unintended cruelty of words
sometimes abides in metaphor
or over indulgent phrase
and in her need to share her anguish
did not choose to say that he had "passed away"
(a phrase I hate)
but simply e-mailed me and said he "died".*

*Life ends sometimes like a slamming door—
but Harry wouldn't choose to leave in such a huff
a vexing wind perhaps came up
and pushed him through before he could resist.*

*And I'd like to think
as he glanced back
perchance for one last look
that he revisited his entire life
and though unsatisfied for sure
with only eighty years
he knew happiness was there
with dearest family
and friends
and in his love and in his art.*

Harry was my friend.

August 1, 2017

