



WEEKENDER

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Intersections

Crary exhibition will celebrate both the art and the psychology — ‘clouds and weather become mood and personality’

By STACEY GROSS

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The science of psychology and the, well, art of fine arts may seem worlds apart. In truth, though, both rely on perception and feeling. Both focus on reaching insight and truth of perceptions, and both work toward the expression of those authentic perceptions and emotions in creative, eloquent ways that both reveal the truth of the artist or person as well as connecting that individual's truth to the greater, universal truth to which all of humanity is connected. An artist who does well is one who presents a finished product that's both intimate and personal as well as universally relevant. A successful piece of art must be able to mean as much to the audience as it does to the artist who created it.

The new exhibition at Warren's Crary Gallery is a celebration and a spotlight on the intersections between psychology and art.

Both Janet Boltax and Nicole Renee Ryan use their position as artists to explore the universal truths of humanity.

Boltax, who earned her BFA in Painting from SUNY Buffalo and attended Art Students League in New York on scholarship for three years, currently teaches painting at the Montclair Museum in Montclair, N.J. A resident of Montclair, Boltax teaches and exhibits, as well as produces commissioned portraits. Her current exhibition, *Aging In America*, has been shown at Monmouth University, Atrium Gallery in Morristown, N.J.,

and Michigan University Health Center in Ann Arbor, Mi. The recipient of first place and best in show awards in juried shows, Boltax has been actively showing her work in both solo and small group exhibitions.

For Boltax, not only does Boltax have an affinity for the complex and nuanced landscape of the aging person's face - so much so that portraiture of the same comprises the visual portion of her Crary exhibition - but she recognizes that the nuance comes from the life each of her portrait subjects has lived. Lives rich in history, each a wealth of unique narrative make up the subjects of her portraits, and rather than ignoring the narrative part of each subject, Boltax has both captured their visual image and also painted each subject's story in words through interviews. Excerpts of each interview accompany every portrait in her exhibition, adding a new dimension to the traditional collection of portraiture.

“While some elderly are unable to enjoy their later years due to illness, poverty, isolation, or for other reasons, many still take great pleasure in their lives well into their nineties,” says Boltax in her artist's statement. Boltax's interviews with her subjects touch on their enjoyment of life, their methods of coping with the aging process, and how they continue to savor each moment well into their eighth, ninth, and tenth decades.

Boltax goes on to say in her artist's statement that a



The portraits of Janet Boltax.

Times Observer photo by Stacey Gross

depth of feeling comes with the process of painting each portrait, and that an empathy - different from sympathy in that it involves an essential understanding of, rather than a feeling about, each - becomes the hallmark of her process.

“What has been particularly interesting is that as I paint them, these people don't look old to me; it is as though their character and spirit is a constant that grows in prominence and belies the physical deterioration of aging.” A new septuagenarian herself, Boltax goes on to say, “I try to remind myself of that as I be-

gin my 7th decade.”

Her earlier collection, *The Creative Process: Portraits and Commentary*, followed a similar structure, with Boltax focusing on other artists, writers, dancers, and a host of creative individuals to discover and express how creative people are, and continue to be, creative.

Says Boltax in her statement, “my best work is accomplished when I can achieve an optimal balance between emotion and intellect, control and letting go. I continually strive to push

INTERSECTIONS / D-2



Times Observer photo by Stacey Gross

Nicole Renee Ryan centers a piece on the wall of Gallery C at the Crary Gallery.



Times Observer photo by Stacey Gross

Nicole Renee Ryan and Thomas Paquette hang Ryan's work in Gallery C.