

Most art being made today resists classification. We are equally apt to encounter abstraction (both controlled and painterly) and figuration (both naturalistic and free-wheeling), sometimes all in the same work. We are regularly presented with disquisitions on the series, riffs on vernacular culture, private narratives, politically charged commentaries, and intimate responses to actuality, and a great deal more, embodied as paint on canvas, assemblages of improbable and/or ephemeral objects, photography and video. We see carving, glass-making, ceramic, and stitchery; diaphanous pours, crisp delineations, space-greedy mixed-media installations, and many other things. These days, too, we are likely to discover the work of self-taught artists integrated with that of traditionally "schooled" artists. The critic Arthur Danto characterized this unwieldy situation as the end of art history, a time when there are no commonly agreed upon desiderata and when just about anything is possible. This doesn't mean that works of art made today are not stamped with the characteristics of our era. With the clear vision provided by the passage of time, future viewers will look back at present day work that appears all-but unclassifiable to us and find it absolutely characteristic of the first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but that's another matter.

The submissions to Studio Montclair's ViewPoints 2017 exhibition reflected today's ungovernable multivalence of conception, approach, and medium, so the selection of work to be exhibited had to honor widely differing possibilities without compromising aesthetic values. I strove to remain open to all propositions and allow myself to respond, without preconceptions, to whatever struck me as particularly strong, resolved, inventive, felt, or any of those other words we fall back on to account for fundamentally inexplicable, wordless aesthetic decisions.

The result is an exhibition that includes such divergent efforts within the category of – for example – abstraction as Madalyn Marcus's blunt variations on geometry, Michael Paquette's over-scaled calligraphy, Jeanne Wheaton's sharp-edged bands and planes, Lisa Sanders's sensuous collages, and Becky Yasdan's brushy layering. This wide-rangingness extends to all disciplines. Works with recognizable imagery are as explicit as Dean Fiorellini's soft-edged glimpses of the everyday and Sasha Silverstein's homage to Pierre Bonnard or as playful and apparently "artless" as Jennifer Anne Moses's brightly colored interiors, Susan Fudim's pared-down portrait, and Ruth Geneslaw's little polychrome tableaux – a broad spectrum of evocations of domesticity. Among the sculptors, David Cann and Walter Early embrace metal's ability to create linear, open forms, reminding us that the "new tradition" of modernist construction has not yet been exhausted, while Elizabeth Knowles fuses stone, papier maché, and color, and Meg Bloom explores "soft" materials not traditionally associated with sculpture. Samar Hussaini fuses painting and dress-making into yet another idea of what "sculpture" can be, with strong allusions to femaleness and the role of women in non-Western cultures. Shuvashis Das animates her hard-to-define work with a video component that suggests an oblique narrative of relocation, while Rachel Kanter's ambiguous boxes of clothing?

bedding? discards? provoke associations with everything from our consumer society to the plight of refugees, among other things. The photography selections range from essentially formal compositions, such as Glenn Wright's and David Bartlett's confrontational views, to Peter Tilgner's evocative images of a society very different from our own.

This rather erratic list, presented in no particular order, is intended simply to underscore the variety of approaches embodied by the work in Studio Montclair ViewPoints 2017. Each of the exhibition's selected artists could be have been singled out in some way. At the very least, however, I feel certain that ViewPoints 2017 accurately reflects the diversity, energy, and commitment of the many artists who participated in the project.