

Out of the Studio
Hudson Valley Artists 2004

Joel Griffith

Painter from Tivoli.

Selected by Carolee Schneemann of New Paltz.

Roman Hrab

Painter and multi-media artist from Kingston.

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Henrietta Mantooth

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Pete Mauney

Photographer-and installation artist from Tivoli.

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Joyce Robins

Sculptor and ceramist from High Falls.

Selected by Catherine Murphy of Poughkeepsie.

Sal Romano

Sculptor from Jeffersonville.

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Christopher J. Seubert

Painter from High Falls.

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Illustrations in Original Publication
(not pictured)

1. Joel Griffith, *Scism Road*, 2003. Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 inches.
2. Roman Hrab, Detail from Untitled (*Wave Pattern Stills*), 2004. One of twenty color inkjet prints, 4 x 6 inches each. Collection of the artist.
3. Henrietta Mantooth, *Migration*, 2003. Fluid acrylic on muslin and pins, 93 3/4 x 87 1/2 inches. Collection of the artist.
4. Pete Mauney, from the series *Weeds*, from the project *Invasive Species*, 1995-2004. Gelatin silver print, 20 x 16 inches. Collection of the artist.
5. Joyce Robins. *Open Circle*, 2003. Clay, glaze and ink, 14 x 14 x 1/2 inches. Collection of the artist.
6. Sal Romano, *Temples*, 2003. Ink on paper, 42 x 30 1/2 inches. Collection of the artist.
7. Christopher J. Seubert, Figure study (for *Solace*), 2002. Black and white charcoal on toned paper, 19 x 14 inches. Collection of the artist.

Printed at SUNY New Paltz Print Shop.

Designed by SUNY New Paltz Publications Office.

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Out of the Studio

Hudson Valley Artists 2004

Each summer, the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at SUNY New Paltz mounts an exhibition of work by artists in the mid-Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountain region. Following a format begun in 2003, several established artists in the New Paltz area have been asked to recommend an artist who lives and works in the region. The exhibition gives emerging, mid-career, and under-represented artists an opportunity to share new developments in their studio work. This year, seven local artists of international renown were each asked to recommend for exhibition an artist that they have followed and admired. It is particularly fortuitous that artists from several generations are included in this year's exhibition—a tribute to the wealth and diversity of artistic activity in the region that makes this project possible.

The sculptor Mel Edwards from Accord, the metalsmith Pat Flynn from High Falls, the painter and sculptor Mary Frank from Lake Hill, the painter Catherine Murphy from Poughkeepsie, the multi-media artist Carolee Schneemann from New Paltz, the photographer Stephen Shore from Tivoli, and the sculptor Ursula Von Rydingsvard from Accord generously agreed to take time from their own pursuits to help with this project. All those asked took great care and interest in recommending an individual for the exhibition. In addition to giving artists of extraordinary merit an opportunity to exhibit their work, these nominating artists have provided great viewing pleasure to the community that visits the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art.

This look at contemporary art from the Hudson Valley includes the painter Joel Griffith from Tivoli, the painter and multi-media artist Roman Hrab from Kingston, the painter Henrietta Mantooth from Lake Hill, the photographer and installation artist Pete Mauney from Tivoli, the sculptor and ceramist Joyce Robins from High Falls, the sculptor Sal Romano from Jeffersonville, and the painter Christopher J. Seubert from High Falls. Many thanks to these exhibiting artists and the distinguished artists who selected them—this project could not have been achieved without their generosity of time and effort. The work of these accomplished artists exemplifies the range of creative endeavor that takes place within studios across the mid-Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains

Dr. Karl Emil Willers
Curator, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art
State University of New York at New Paltz

Joel Griffith

Painter from Tivoli.

Selected by Carolee Schneemann of New Paltz.

Joel Griffith's paintings are on-site productions—and the artist truly relishes his extended outdoor painting sessions in and around Tivoli, New York. Painting along the village's main street that extends to the railroad tracks and the banks of the Hudson River, or on the side streets that branch off to the north or south, or along one of the winding roads outside of town to the east. The artist craves to be on the spot—constantly encountering the people that live and works on a particular block or those that pass by at a certain time of day. "When you work on a painting for a few months," Griffith reports, "you get to meet all the people. They honk from their cars to say hello, and then stop back by to let me know whether I've made some progress—or, or to let me know that I haven't done a thing." When Griffith first started painting on site, he worked quickly to complete a canvas in a single hour. By the artist's own admission, Catherine Murphy's example encouraged him to devote more time and expend more effort on each painting. "She will take seven years on a painting," he says, "and contact with that kind of effort slowed down my work."

There is a wealth of detail to peruse in a Griffith painting, and part of the appeal in viewing his work is noticing the non-picturesque qualities. Griffith can revel in the non-descript places that do not usually claim attention and do not appeal to conventional tastes. In *Tivoli Tracks*, for example, the snow cover is mixed with frozen mud, the railroad lines are littered with electric switching boxes, and telephone poles regularly punctuate the landscape's deep perspective. In *Kidd Lane*, the backside of a stop sign and the clutter of electric lines are visible. In *Montgomery St. and Washington Ave.*, the neon light spells out "Budweiser" in the window of a bar already closed for the night, and the greenish glow of a TV set is seen through a second story window long after most have gone to bed. I ask how he manages to paint outdoors in the middle of winter on a work like *Scism Road*, depicting two mobile homes set on a hillside covered in deep snow. Griffith admits that he prefers to work on balmy summer nights, but for winter he has a pair of heavy-duty socks and felt-lined boots that, along with a thermos of hot coffee, allow him to paint for an hour or two at a time. "After a while one gets the spirit of the thing," he says, "and then one can always work out a few of the details in the studio." For Griffith, getting into the spirit of the thing is certainly more—much more—than merely recording the visual array with a certain exactitude or precision. This is evident in the way that he captures and records a site, somehow the cultural milieu and social tenor of a locale seeps into the very

fabric of Griffith's canvases. It is a subtle and rare quality that cannot be described, but only appreciated while standing before one of the paintings. The history of the place, the life that goes on there from day to day and from generation to generation, is visible in Griffith's work. Every detail seemingly has a story to tell, right down to how the pavement was (or was not) repaired, why different street lamps were installed over time, and when certain types of house siding were popular. It's all there, but seeing it (or recognizing and appreciating it) requires knowing about it. Knowing his subject is part and parcel of what Joel Griffith does as a painter, it is his artistic work, a job that he practices day in and day out in Tivoli and its environs.

Griffith has come to be something of a local celebrity in Tivoli, as much a feature of the town as the street scenes he depicts. The village has recently commissioned four views of the town by Griffith for the newly restored town hall. This is an astute acquisition, for Tivoli of the early 21st century may one day be known from a Griffith painting—the way we know downtown Chicago of the 1940s from an all-night diner in *Nighthawks*, or the way we know 1930s New York from a stretch of Seventh Avenue storefronts in *Early Sunday Morning*. These iconic works by Edward Hopper offer telling precedents for Griffith's painting: there is a lack of occupants in Griffith's work (as is the case in Hopper's de-populated *Early Sunday Morning*); there is Griffith's refined ability to produce nocturnes (as is the case with Hopper's *Nighthawks*); and there is Griffith's proficiency at capturing specific effects of light—at different moments of the day, at different seasons of the year, from natural or man-made sources, on different surfaces and textures, or from all these factors combined.

Griffith's effort to achieve just the right lighting effect can border on the obsessive. The artist will point out that some of the street lights in Tivoli are more yellow and others are more white, depending on what kind of bulbs will fit which fixtures. Griffith revels in the challenge of getting the precise sheen of these lights reflecting off and through the leaves of the same tree on a still summer's night—and of course it matters whether the moon is full, or whether the cloud cover is low, or whether the tree is an oak or a cedar, healthy or diseased. That kind of careful attention to his subject is apparent even on cursory inspection of Griffith's canvases. The paintings are executed with a dexterity of touch that catches one's eye and sustains one's interest. Griffith's deftness of handling compels one to return and look again, and one is always rewarded when one spends a little more time before these works.

K.E.W.

Roman Hrab

Painter and multi-media artist from Kingston.

Selected by Ursula von Rydingsvard of Accord.

Everyone should go to Rome to see the Caravaggios. There are wonderful paintings by Caravaggio elsewhere, but Rome has more than any other city, and several of them remain ensconced within the chapels for which they were originally commissioned. The Contarelli Chapel in Rome's Church of San Luigi dei Francesi holds Caravaggio's great altarpieces depicting the life of Saint Matthew -- the *Calling of Saint Matthew* and the *Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* on opposing side walls, and the *Inspiration of Saint Matthew* over the altar. One must visit the Cerasi Chapel in Rome's Santa Maria del Popolo to see the *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* and *Conversion of Saint Paul*, or the Cavalletti Chapel in Rome's San Agostino to admire the *Madonna di Loreto* (sometimes referred to as the *Madonna of the Pilgrims*). There are also Caravaggios scattered throughout Rome's magnificent museums and public galleries—the Galleria Borghese offers the disturbing *Madonna with the Serpent* as well as the erotic *Boy with a Basket of Fruit*, among other examples of the artist's work. The Musei Capitoline displays the mischievous *Fortune Teller*, while the Galleria Doria-Pamphili exhibits both the languorous *Repentant Magdalene* and the sumptuous *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. The Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica has a wealth of Caravaggio treasures, including *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, *Narcissus*, *Saint John the Baptist*, and *Saint Francis*—and the Vatican's Pinacoteca contains the magnificent *Entombment*. Created in the late 1500s and early 1600s, these are works of art that announced a shift in western art from Mannerism to what is known as the Baroque.

Well-versed in new visual technologies, Roman Hrab has adopted the role of a 21st century *Caravaggisti*, the name given to Caravaggio's immediate followers and imitators. Much of Hrab's past work has been in sculpture and installation, which he studied as an undergraduate at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Hrab creates carefully and intricately crafted multi-media constructions frequently inspired by the distant places he has lived and his travels abroad. A work called the *Beautiful Blue Danube*, for example, commemorates the artist's experiences in Hungary during the mid-1990s, where he taught American studies to English translators in Budapest and pursued graduate studies in painting at Pecs. Though he employs a variety of media and methods in his three-dimensional constructions, Hrab has no problem turning his attention to oils on canvas when indulging his fixation on the art of Caravaggio. The artist's fascination with Caravaggio takes on a very high-tech look as he isolates passages from the Baroque painter's large compositions and digitally manipulates

them on a computer. Hrab usually concentrates on details of clothing and drapery in Caravaggio's paintings - the sumptuous folds and swags of materials that punctuate the original compositions with splashes of bloody crimson or pungent orange or brilliant white.

Caravaggio is known for his tenebrism, or his skill in rendering forms as they emerge from deep shadow. The undulating surfaces of richly colored velvets and satins in Caravaggio's art provide a prime vehicle for the artist's signature lighting effects. Cropped from their original context and blown up in scale by Hrab, these fragmented segments become abstractions of liquid color. Contemporary advertising frequently deploys similarly magnified close-ups—and Hrab's paintings can take on the look of ads for pure aesthetic radiance. Digitizing the image allows for infinite variations and alterations that Hrab exploits, personalizing the imagery and make it his own. The computer-manipulated images are like working drawings, made by Hrab in the process arriving at a final composition. Indulgence seems to be a leitmotif of Roman Hrab's paintings after Caravaggio, and this seems appropriate since indulgence (both physical and spiritual) could also be considered a salient theme within Caravaggio's art. Maybe this is why Hrab's idiosyncratic interpretations of the Baroque appear so convincing and alluring—they demonstrate once again that which is so compelling and forceful in the original. The part isolated and repainted by Hrab succeeds in conjuring up the whole in all its fullness. In this way, Hrab's fascination (one might call it an obsession) with certain aspects of Caravaggio's art borders on the fetishistic. In another work, Hrab achieves similar visual results, but working from an alternate direction. Videotaping the surface of a stream reflecting and refracting the evening light results in a pattern of shifting forms that take on an appearance not unlike Hrab's magnified details of a Caravaggio. Still images from the videotape appear akin to the computer-generated studies for Hrab's paintings. These congruencies in Hrab's art provide insight into the power of Caravaggio's imagery—his drapery mesmerizes and fascinates the eye like the flow of shimmering water.

K. E.W.

Henrietta Mantooth

Painter from Lake Hill.

Selected by Mary Frank of Lake Hill.

Henrietta Mantooth begins a recent artist's statement with the words: "My start as a young woman was as a journalist. Soon afterwards I became a painter and now, as over the years, I am painting the news." She means this literally, for the images in her large series of works on refugees are lifted directly from newspaper and magazine photographs that accompany reports of homeless, dispossessed, itinerant people from around the world. Mantooth culls the images from a multitude of sources: daily papers, weekly magazines, monthly journals, and other news media. She collects images of homeless and destitute people displaced by the ravages of war or other disasters—and is quick to confess a deep regret at finding so many disturbing images from so many available sources. Even a summary search for recent news on the plight of refugees rums up a daunting number of references: the BBC News reports "Congolese Refugees Flee Fighting," AllAfrica.com reports "Trauma of War Resurfaces, Often Among Women Refugees," National Public Radio reports "Refugees Flee Violence in Central Nigeria," the Associated Press reports "Refugees Endure Deprivation in Besieged Gaza Strip," the Washington Post reports "Chechen Refugees Ponder Their Next Move," Reuters reports "Sudanese Refugees on the Brink of Death in Chad," the Minneapolis Star Tribune reports "An Urgent Call for Aid for Hmong Refugees." Of course, this is a very brief sampling of recent articles on the plight of refugees around the world.

Experience as a journalist has made Mantooth an astute monitor of press imagery. The artist's re-rendering of photo-journalistic images serves to focus the viewer's attention on the genre, both its tropes and its variations. The repetitive placement of multiple images together forces an awareness of the growing number of refugees in the world today. The prevalence of women and children is immediately evident in Mantooth's designs—the homeless and impoverished are often burdened with a few precious items wrapped or packed in whatever is available. Fatigue and distress are conveyed in the slumped postures of Mantooth's figures - either at rest with no strength to go further, or moving frantically, with no certain destination in mind. Mantooth paints these scenes with liquid acrylic squeezed from a bottle onto gauzy swaths of muslin. It is a medium particularly appropriate for her chosen subject. The outlines run and bleed on the absorbent surface. This watery effect enforces the theme of constant motion and instability. The ragged and unevenly cut pieces of thin muslin, delicately pinned to a larger piece of the same material, also carry a

metaphorical intensity. The almost transparent and weightless quality of the fabric implies the fragile and tenuous existence of people left homeless.

Another work by Mantooth invokes language to deliver its humanitarian message. The work consists of a series of simple utterances painted in capital letters on sheets of sketchbook paper. They are unembellished words of suffering and isolation that might be spoken by a child caught up in the disasters of war. The words convey an existence without shelter from the natural elements, a life subject to social turmoil and political upheaval. Each sheet contains a poetic plea for family and home, food and clothing, safety and protection—the simplest of needs that allow human beings to live their lives with hope and decency. The words are almost crude in their simplicity and immediacy, giving voice to the desperation that plagues millions left without shelter as they flee from violence. In places, the text is difficult to read as the language itself appears to break down along with the collapse of civilization. Through a very visual means, Mantooth's text echoes Thomas Hobbes' infamous pronouncements on the destructive and ravaging effects of war upon humankind: "No Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short."

Mantooth frequently produces multiple small objects and groups them together to form a more complex and embracing work. In her appropriately titled *Signals*, several one-foot-square canvases are hung together to form a frenzy of activist slogans and political messages. Coming from a journalistic background, it is not surprising that words are manipulated to great political and strategic ends within Mantooth's paintings. Front-page headlines—or fragments of them—rise up from and sink back into a gooey mélange of vivid color abstractions: 24000 SLEEPING IN PUBLIC SHELTERS, DEATH, DEATH ROW TEXAS, MEXICO MEXICO MEXICO, BOMBED LAND. Deploying the look of 1960s psychedelic pop and 1980s wild style graffiti, these small canvases become fields of battle. Making good use of these most recognizable of counter-cultural aesthetics, Mantooth creates metaphors for larger political struggles and battling ideologies.

K.E.W.

Pete Mauney

Photographer and installation artist from Tivoli.

Selected by Stephen Shore of Tivoli.

Pete Mauney's black-and-white photographs called *Weeds* are a subset of the larger ongoing work *Invasive Species*. For this photographer, the question of why certain plants are designated weeds is a matter of great interest. All the photographs in the *Weeds* series have similar formats—a plant in the foreground is sharply focused, while the background is slightly blurred. Nevertheless, the out-of-focus backgrounds provide enough information to make out the general habitat of Mauney's invasive (or opportunistic) botanicals. One recognizes a preponderance of nondescript sites and generic locales—backyards in suburban housing projects, vacant lots and uncultivated fields traversed by power lines, the delivery area behind a strip mall, the unkempt edges of an asphalt parking lot, an architecturally undistinguished condo or apartment complex. Taken in and around the mid-Hudson Valley, these ignored landscapes reveal the incremental sprawl of commercial development within a once-rural domain—it is growth that points to the demise of the countryside. The blurriness of these backyards and vacant lots seems appropriate, since they are sites neither focused on nor especially noticed. These landscapes occupy the periphery of our vision and the edges of our attention. However, these ubiquitous landscapes are increasingly the backgrounds to our daily existence—the very look of America today.

While these photographs appear "documentary" much of that effect results from the viewer's assumption that such modest content would not be staged. Mauney does search for weeds in their "unnatural settings" and, when possible, photographs them in *situ*. However, to shoot at close range with a large format camera requires the subject to remain perfectly still. The slightest breeze will cause a stalk or petal or leaf to move—and ruin the shot. To achieve many of the images, cut and dried specimens were held in place with a rigging apparatus to guarantee absolute immobility. Mauney reveals that seeded dandelions are his most difficult subjects. He has to run a wire up their delicate stems to keep them from swaying in the breeze, but the seedlings inevitably blow away even if the stem remains stable. The pains of proper lighting can be an even greater challenge. If you think all weeds look this good naturally, then you are sorely mistaken. To achieve that certain *je ne sais quoi* often requires an artificial strobe flash to boost the natural daylight. Mauney makes it clear that, given the full treatment, any back lot weed can hold its own against some hothouse rosebud. The system that "builds up" one and "pulls up" the other is not substantially different from the system that ranks people by the color of their skin, their religious beliefs, or their

sexuality. What makes one plant a weed and another not is a cultural determination, an arbitrary and shifting distinction—not a natural designation, and certainly neither consistent nor stable.

Mauney again undermines the viewer's expectations in his series of color photographs called *Peaks*. The photographer seeks out sites marked on geological maps and listed in sightseeing guidebooks. Finding the point of highest elevation, he takes a picture of that spot. As if to verify his findings, these photographs are titled with the exact longitude and latitude obtained with GPS (Global Positioning System) instrumentation. The precise altitude is also included in each work's title—secured using a barometric pressure device that is apparently more accurate in determining distances from sea level than the satellite-based GPS. This pseudo-scientific information reinforces and substantiates that the photographic image is an accurate and truthful visual record of a peak. The utterly mundane character of the sites photographed make such efforts all the more necessary. There is a notable absence of picturesque views of snow-capped mountains, or panoramic vistas from a strategic overlook. The highest point—a site that Mauney keeps in sharpest focus in each image—is as flat and undistinguished a location as any place that could be found. To emphasize this point, some of the peaks that Mauney records are literally anyplace, the uppermost level of a pile of dirt, for example. This "non-site" (to borrow a term coined by the artist Robert Smithson for many of his conceptual earthworks of the 1960s and 1970s) does not appear recognizably different from a height of some renown, such as Mount Everest in the Berkshires. Mauney's arm or hand or finger sometimes appears within the frame. This inclusion of the photographer's body provides further evidence that he was there—yet another riff on the use of photography in scientific expeditions to verify distances covered and destinations reached by explorers.

Photography can be a particularly powerful vehicle for questioning our basic assumptions about scientific truths and cultural norms. Pete Mauney's photography insists that we gaze steadily at aspects of the world that we normally glance right over or even turn away from. It asks us not only to acknowledge the simple and common features of everyday existence, but also to consider their profound significance and far-reaching consequence. Rather than exhorting audiences to reach higher and further for truth and meaning, Pete Mauney's images unpretentiously ask viewers to search lower and closer for falsity and nonsense—and this is a very important thing to do.

K.E.W.

Joyce Robins

Sculptor and ceramist from High Falls.

Selected by Catherine Murphy of Poughkeepsie.

Joyce Robins began her artistic career as a painter producing large landscapes of faceted and prismatic color—nearly abstract interpretations of dappled light within wooded glens and shaded coves. In these early works, interlocking shapes of vivid color produce the mesmerizing effect of stained glass. These kaleidoscopic panoramas conjure up the intense visual experience of sunlight seen through a canopy of shifting leaves. The play between figurative allusion and abstract form continues in Robins' prolific sculptural explorations. Her experimentations in ceramic have progressed through several notable stages, each successively—and successfully—building upon the last.

Robins' earliest ventures in clay revel in the malleability of the medium, chunks of glazed ceramic bear the results of her fingers clawing into the surface. Tearing into and scraping at the material with her hands. Robins exulted in a crude and essential form of mark making—registering her presence by leaving a physical trace. These abstract anti-forms created by violent gouging actions were followed by what Robins refers to as her "digit pieces"—finger-like appendages of clay painted a spectrum of chalky colors. These short stick-like forms were often strung together and draped into large abstract compositions, huge swags falling into random piles upon the floor. Other works composed of entwining or bending ceramic strands take on an almost calligraphic simplicity. One or two of these attenuated and nuanced strips of clay will dominate an entire wall surface. As if bodies moving in tandem to subtle rhythms and delicate vibrations, they rivet a viewer's attention like two dancers performing a *pas de deux* on an otherwise empty stage.

With time, the "digit pieces" became elongated into more vine-like extensions that twist and turn along the ground or curl upward to arch and sway in the air. Gaining bulk as well as length, Robins cast many of these organic forms and incorporated them into garden designs and landscaping projects that became an integral part of her artistic practice. Grouped together like sentries guarding a terraced slope, or winding through the leaves and foliage of a planted terrace, these patinated bronzes mix and mingle with the outdoor plants that surround them. Abandoning the smoothed and rounded surfaces of the "digit pieces", these sinuous and curvilinear forms developed a carefully worked texture that resembles the rough bark of aging tree trunks.

A dialogue with utilitarian ceramic objects is notable within Robins' works of the 1980s. Bowl and platter shapes woven from strands of clay like some esoteric form of basket weaving began to appear in her work. While consciously invoking craft traditions, Robins' sculptures remained adamantly nonfunctional—as if to emphasize their status as aesthetic objects rather than practical designs. More commentaries on the idea of a bowl or a basket, Robins' pieces functioned as a meta-critique on conventional ceramic forms. The artist skillfully references craft and design to analyze their presuppositions—domestic utensils and woven containers that question and rethink gender-specific associations. Robins placed these objects on the floor, arranging them into entire sculptural environments and installations. While successfully addressing feminist concerns, the artist desired her artwork to have more open-ended and wide-ranging allusions.

Robins' most recent pieces, though emerging out of her earlier work, embrace a vast new array of references and allusions. They skillfully continue to invoke various forms of "women's work"—intricately crocheted doilies or hand-worked lace. However, in their variety of form and color, Robins' newest constructions inevitably give rise to more sumptuous, even magical, associations; the artist speaks of them as constellations, calling attention to awe-inspiring images of faraway planets and distant galaxies made accessible through new space technologies. Robins' leaning and bulging discs, perforated and glazed so that light both penetrates through and reflects off their surfaces, also evoke the microscopic world of amoebas, microbes, and viruses visible only through powerful magnification. Hanging on walls, leaning on pedestals, and lying on floors, Robins' latest productions evoke extravagant coral reefs and exotic marine creatures from ocean depths. Inviting exploration and investigation, these brilliant rippling forms create their own worlds for exploration.

K.E.W.

Sal Romano

Sculptor from Jeffersonville.

Selected by Mel Edwards of Accord.

Drawings by sculptors are among the most fascinating productions in the history of art. Drawing can be the most economical of artistic processes or procedures requiring a minimum of tools—a mark-making instrument and a surface or support on which to place a mark. A lump of charcoal, pen and ink, graphite pencil, pastel chalk, oil stick crayon, and magic marker are only a few of the most advanced implements that civilization has developed to ease the task of drawing. The conventions of western art have adopted the blank sheet of paper as a standard support, but drawings can be made on almost any surface. A panoply of materials have been used to draw upon—everything from the stone walls of a cave to the cement sidewalks of a modern metropolis. To some extent, this ready accessibility of instruments and vast profusion of surfaces has made drawing the handiest of artistic endeavors.

Drawing is generally less time-consuming and strenuous than sculpture, whether that is taken to mean modeling clay and wax, casting bronze and alloys, chiseling marble and granite, carving plaster and wood, welding iron and steel, or assembling anything into a three-dimensional form. For sound reason, drawing has been preferred for recording the fleeting observation, to study different permutations, and to plan out a finished work. Common sense tells us that sculptors might be more likely than other artists to use drawing to accomplish such tasks. It would be laborious and time consuming to "work out" or "work through" a sculptural object via trial and error. This is a more obvious assertion for the applied arts of architecture and design—one needs scaled plans and diagrammatic specifications before embarking upon building construction or product manufacture.

The sculptor Sal Romano reverses this logic, for his drawings do not precede his sculpture: Romano makes meticulous drawings of his objects once they are completed. This transposes the traditional formula—from one perspective, the sculptures become studies for the drawings. In fact, Romano's drawings could not be made (or at least could never result in the forms that they take) if the sculptures were not first produced to act as models. This sculptor's drawings demand sustained attention: few examples of contemporary drawing so reward close scrutiny. For the most part, they are executed in black ink on large sheets of high quality rag paper that bears a slight grain, but no pronounced texture. These works are painstakingly constructed images—produced in full, exacting scale of the metal sculptures that

Romano welds and solders from cutout sheets of copper, steel, and bronze.

If the sculpture is predominantly a four-sided form, as is the case with a recent series of tower-like constructions, the drawing will carefully record each of the object's facades. The abstract pattern of asymmetric geometric plates is depicted just as an architect renders the front, back, and side elevations of a house. Sometimes each of the metal plaques that make up the sculptural form is outlined; occasionally they are inked solid, and in other cases they are shaded with crosshatchings or striations. At times the varied treatment of each section is used to indicate a different metal—as when both copper and steel are used to activate the surface of a sculpture. Such detailing results in densely built-up drawings that cover the entire sheet.

Other works remain vacuously spare, consisting of nothing but the attenuated outlines of the sculptural form. Because the sculpture has been completed before the drawing begins, Romano's procedure is one of steady and progressive execution. After sketching the basic outline, he begins slowly but surely to fill in the entire image. To unify the large compositions, he may go back to add a few touches, but for the most part he works inch by inch across the page, from one edge to the other. Each drawing is assiduously and scrupulously crafted in this fashion—almost as if each sheet were more a copper plate being steadily etched by an 18th-century master engraver, hired to render an artwork so that its image could be disseminated. The analogy is appropriate, for Romano's sculpture itself seems crafted from the metal plates used in conventional intaglio printing. An endless mirror reflection of the printmaker's art, Romano's drawings carefully reverse the patterned surfaces of his sculpture—as if to imprint them on the page and in the viewer's consciousness.

K.E.W.

Christopher J. Seubert

Painter from High Falls.

Selected by Pat Flynn of High Falls.

For modernists, the academic tradition in painting has been the aesthetic standard to reject. Bucking this trend, Christopher J. Seubert does not merely imitate the style of painting nurtured by the French *Académie des Beaux-Arts* of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but fully participates in the pedagogical system that produces and sustains what is now referred to as "academic art." By definition, painting is considered "academic" precisely because it was the product of a bureaucratic regimen of teaching, founded and supported by the patronage of a centralized government. In the French academy, the painting curriculum commenced with sketching plaster casts of antique sculpture (known as *bosses*) and concluded with the production of *tableaux* (or large-scale, highly-finished oils on canvas intended for public display at the officially sponsored annual salon exhibitions). First published in 1971, Albert Boime's landmark study *The Academy & French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, remains one of the best introductions to the studies undertaken when the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* was at the height of its prestige and power.

The challenges and travails faced by students of painting within the academy were many. The course of study was guided by rigid, non-negotiable rules of engagement. A finished canvas resulted from careful adherence to methods and procedures, beginning with the production of a *croquis*, what today would be called a quick sketch. The *croquis* recorded the artist's *première pensée* for a composition—his first thought or initial concept—and was rapidly executed so as to capture the essence of a pictorial idea before it escaped consciousness. The *croquis*—often little more than a thumbnail sketch—would later be worked up into a more finished drawing called a *dessin* or an *esquisse*. Usually executed in graphite, charcoal, ink, or gouache, an *esquisse* thoroughly established details of figural poses as well as the landscape setting or interior decor. This easel-size drawing would be followed by an *esquisse peinte*, or painted sketch, usually of the same scale, but executed in oils. This stage would begin to set an overall color scheme for the work, and was often marked by a bravura display of facile and rapid brushwork.

The *esquisse peinte* would usually be followed by a series of *études*, or full-scale renderings of specific sections of the composition. Such highly finished studies would often concentrate on particularly difficult or challenging passages within the larger composition. Essential details of the overall work—such as the expressions of portrait

heads for the central figures, the arrangement of hands and feet within a group composition, the specifics of a foreground still life or a background landscape—were worked out for later insertion into the larger composition. A particular kind of *étude*, called a *pochade*, concentrated on blocking out the most extreme and dramatic effects of light, establishing where the brightest highlights and darkest shadows would fall within a picture. Referring to such a study during the production of a finished work assured that the illumination of a scene remained powerful and unified. The *pochade* guaranteed that the drama and consistency of lighting effects would not be lost or diminished during the technically involved process of finishing a large-scale work.

Only after these preparations would work begin on the piece intended for public presentation, though there still remained many steps toward completing a painting. The overall composition was enlarged and transferred to the prepared canvas surface. Usually, the design was roughed in using an application of thin washes, referred to in French as the *ébauche*, or in Italian as the *abbozzata*. Though subsequent work would bury this initial layer of paint, the success of an *ébauche* was often thought to predetermine the quality of a completed work. Efforts to correct flaws of composition or errors in design within the *abbozzata* risked end results that appeared overworked. A confident demonstration of technique and touch was deemed necessary at every stage of the process. Continuously referring to the numerous sketches and studies made in preparation for this culminating effort, the painted surface was slowly worked up to a high level of finish. The characteristics and idiosyncrasies of an individual artist here became paramount. For the most part, the academic tradition encouraged the gradual application of *demi-teintes*—half tones or shades of each color progressing from darkest to lightest. These oils were applied in thin layers to create a proper *chiaroscuro*, or sense of rounded form and spatial recession. This method of applying translucent layers of oil paint, one atop another, favored production of a glassy surface, an effect further promoted by the application of a final varnish that obliterated any residual *facture*, or texture. Varnishing unified a composition, all parts of which were to appear as if executed with equal ease and facility. However, the deft wielding of a brush heavily laden with rich pigment also had its adherents within the academic tradition; when well executed, a thickly painted passage implied speedy execution, exaggerated movement, and informal spontaneity.

When addressing Christopher Seubert's painting, it is useful to outline this pedagogic tradition in detail, for his works reveal an unyielding adherence to both the means and ends of academic training. However, Seubert's sketches, studies, and paintings do not merely imitate an art of the past, i.e. his practice emerges directly from a refined system of art education. Many of the tenets of academic training were based on the premise that genres have intrinsically greater or lesser import. Subject matter was

ranked as being of higher (more spiritual) and lower (more material) status. Figure painting, portraiture, landscape and still-life were classified (in that order) from highest to lowest. At the pinnacle of this scheme was history painting—a form that subsumed within itself all the other categories. Each of the sub-genres were to be incorporated within a single composition to secure the grand achievement of history painting; and Christopher Seubert's careful inclusion of lesser genres into his large-scale work, *Solace*, expresses the ambitions of a master in the academic tradition.

Paintings were also ranked thematically. Heroic themes culled from classical mythology, religious subjects illustrating biblical passages, or royal imagery commemorating acts of nobility were determined to be of greater value than scenes of ordinary people or everyday life. Here, if anywhere, Seubert's work significantly departs from the strictures of a truly academic mode. Seubert attempts what that founder and promoter of modernist sensibilities, Charles Baudelaire, described as "painting the heroism of modern life." Seubert's art records the common details of contemporary existence—the way that figures live in their clothes (with Levis riding down at the waist to expose the elastic of Jockey shorts beneath), the way they occupy their rooms (the posture generated by a certain style of futon couch), the specific belongings they possess (art books and record albums casually scattered about the floor), or the way they interact or fail to communicate with each other. Such vivid details speak to a truly contemporary sensibility—and one made all the more evident by its presentation in the most historical of modes.

K.E.W.

Works in the Exhibition

Joel Griffith

1. *Kidd Lane*, 2003
Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches
Collection of the artist
2. *Montgomery Street and Washburn Avenue*, 2003
Oil on canvas, 30 x 48 inches
Collection of Steve Levine
3. *North Central*, 2003
Oil on canvas, 30 x 48 inches
Collection of Steve Levine
4. *North Road*, 2003
Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 inches
Collection of Peter Seidman
5. *Scism Road*, 2003
Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches
Collection of Amy Sillman
6. *Tivoli Tracks*, 2003
Oil on canvas, 28 x 30 inches
Collection of Peter Seidman

Roman Hrab

7. *o. s. m., no. 1 (drapery dissection highlight)*, 2002
Oil on jute, 38 x 38 inches
Collection of the artist
8. *i.o.s.m., no. 1 (study)*, 2002
Inkjet print, 11 x 14 inches
Collection of the artist

9. *i.o.s.m., no. 2 (six variations)*, 2002
Inkjet print, 7 x 11 inches
Collection of the artist
10. *i.o.s.t., no. 2 (burnt orange haze of doubt)*, 2002
Oil on canvas, 43 x 84 inches
Collection of the artist
11. *i.o.s.t., no. 2 (orange study)*, 2002
Inkjet print, 11 x 14 inches
Collection of the artist
12. *i.o.s.t., no. 2 (pink study)*, 2002
Inkjet print, 11x 14 inches
Collection of the artist
13. *Untitled (Wave Patterns)*, 2004
Digital video loop
Collection of the artist
14. *Untitled (Wave Pattern Stills)*, 2004
Twenty color inkjet prints, 4 x 6 inches each, approximately 6 x 80 inches overall
Collection of the artist

Henrietta Mantooth

15. *Signals*, 2002
Fluid acrylic on 40 canvases, 12 x 12 inches each, 64 x 116 inches overall
Collection of the artist
16. *Migration*, 2003
Fluid acrylic on muslin and pins, 93 3/4 x 87 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
17. *Story*, 2003
Fluid acrylic on paper from a spiral drawing pad, 10 sheets,
9 x 12 inches each, 90 x 12 inches overall
Collection of the artist

Pete Mauney

18. From the series *Weeds*, from the project *Invasive Species*, 1995-2004
12 gelatin silver prints, 20 x 16 inches each
Collection of the artist
19. From the series *Peaks*, 2004
5 digital C-prints, 20 x 24 inches each
Collection of the artist

Joyce Robins

20. *Leaning Circle*, 2002
Clay, glaze and ink, 13 x 14 x 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
21. *Red Bend*, 2002
Clay, glaze and ink, 4 x 11 x 8 inches
Collection of the artist
22. *Slipped Circles*, 2002
Clay, glaze and ink, 11 x 16 x 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
23. *Turned Circle*, 2002
Clay, glaze and ink, 11 3/4 x 9 x 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
24. *Bulging Rectangle*, 2003
Clay, glaze and ink, 11 x 14 x 1 inches
Collection of the artist
25. *Open Circle*, 2003
Clay, glaze and ink, 14 x 14 x 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist

26. *Orange Opening*, 2003
Clay, glaze and ink, 11 x 11 x 3 inches
Collection of the artist
27. *Two Balls*, 2003
Clay, glaze and ink, 2 1/2 x 5 x 2 1x1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
28. *White Vertical Oval*, 2003
Clay, glaze and ink, 8 x 15 x 3 inches
Collection of the artist
29. *Multiple Balls*, 2004
Clay, glaze and ink, 2 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches each, overall dimensions variable
Collection of the artist

Sal Romano

30. *Random Negatives*, 2001-02
Acrylic and ink on paper, 57 x 28 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
31. *Bulging Column*, 2002-03
Soldered brass, 35 x 6 x 8 inches
Collection of the artist
32. *Blast*, 2003
Soldered Brass, 30 1/2 x 30 1/2 x 1/16 inches
Collection of the artist
33. *Opposing Forces*, 2003
Ink on paper, 42 x 30 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
34. *Temples*, 2003
Ink on paper, 42 x 30 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist

35. *Topper*, 2003
Painted steel, 33 x 4 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
36. *Untitled #2*, 2003
Ink on paper, 42 x 30 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist
37. *White Reaches*, 2003
Ink on paper, 42 x 30 1/2 inches
Collection of the artist

Christopher J. Seubert

38. *Solace*, 2002 -04
Oil on linen, 50 x 66 inches
Collection of the artist
39. *Composition study (for Solace)*, 2002
Oil on paper, 12 x 14 inches
Collection of the artist
40. *Female study (for Solace)*, 2002
Oil on paper mounted on wood panel, 19 3/8 x 14 3/8 inches
Collection of the artist
41. *Figure study (for Solace)*, 2002
Black and white charcoal on toned paper, 19 x 14 inches
Collection of the artist
42. *Figure study (for Solace)*, 2002
Black and white charcoal on toned paper, 19 x 14 inches
Collection of the artist
43. *Figure study (for Solace)*, 2002
Black and white charcoal on toned paper, 19 x 14 inches
Collection of the artist

44. Figure study (for *Solace*), 2002
Black and white charcoal on toned paper, 14 x 19 inches
Collection of the artist

45. Figure study (for *Solace*), 2002
Black charcoal on toned paper, 13 x 19 inches
Collection of the artist

46. Still life study (for *Solace*), 2002
Black and white charcoal on toned paper, 19 x 25 inches
Collection of the artist

47. Study of back (for *Solace*), 2002
Oil on paper mounted on wood panel, 13 x 21 inches
Collection of the artist

48. Study of shoes (for *Solace*), 2002
Black and white charcoal on toned paper. 14 x 19 inches
Collection of the artist

This exhibition was organized by Dr. Karl Emil Willers, Curator at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at SUNY New Paltz. Special thanks are extended to Amy Pickering, Visitor Services Coordinator, for her care and thoroughness in editing and proofing the publication. The museum's entire staff contributed significantly to the realization of this project: Neil Trager, Museum Director; Wayne Lempka, Assistant to the Director and Collections Manager; Jaimee Uhlenbrock, Associate Curator of Collections; Judi Esmond, Education Specialist; and Cynthia Dill, Preparator.

SAMUEL DORSKY MUSEUM OF ART
State University of New York at New Paltz

June 26-August 8, 2004