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PAINTING TO SURVIVE: 1985-1995

BWAC Gallery - Open Weekends: March 18 - April 14, 2018

The Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition is proud to present *Painting to Survive: 1985-1995*, a remarkable exhibition of twelve painters who lived and created during the AIDS epidemic and the culture wars of the Reagan and Bush years.

The early '80s saw an explosion of possibilities in Lower Manhattan for young artists to make and show work. Taking advantage of the economic upheavals of the 1970's, these children of the so-called "Greatest Generation," artists **Audrey Anastasi, Jane Bauman, John Bradford, Suzan Courtney, Jean Foss, Joel Handorff, Richard Hofmann, Stephen Lack, Marc Lida, Michael Ottersen, Jonathan Weinberg** and **Fran Winant** viewed New York with a sense of great optimism.

But the devastation of the AIDS epidemic, and the collapse of the East Village art scene, cast a pall over many of their careers. In the case of painters Richard Hofmann and Marc Lida, AIDS ended their lives too early. The survivors, having lost friends, family and colleagues to the disease, created traumatized, emotive paintings that fell out of fashion. Their work could find no place in an art world that increasingly valued parody, appropriation and minimalism over expressionism. Yet these artists kept painting with marvelous results.

This exhibition provides a chance to reassess their large body of under-recognized work, both in terms of its formal qualities, and as a form of sanctuary in hard times.

For all of these artists painting was a means of expressing anger and mourning, while balancing qualities of beauty and harmony; an abundance of form to combat a society that seemed at times heartless and indifferent. In the post-modern, post-minimalist late 20th Century, there was a tendency to distrust anything that might seem sentimental, favoring the ready-made over the hand-made, the deadpan over the emotional. These artists however had little patience for the cool detached quality of their contemporaries' work. Vigorous brush stroke and passionate color was their way to respond to disease and death: painting life as it was felt.

Now, as we face a similar period in American history — one of intense anxiety, heightened animosity and fear, and newly focused attention to the issues of the underrepresented — the ways in which these artists used painting as a form of resistance and a means of salvation has renewed resonance. For all the emphasis on individual expression, there is a sense in which this school speaks of community with its urgent drive to communicate not only suffering and anger, but also the possibility of redemption through the generosity of paint.

"Painting to Survive: 1985-1995" is curated by the art historian and artist, **Jonathan Weinberg**. Weinberg teaches at the Yale School of Art and the Rhode Island School of Design and he is the Consulting Curator at the Maurice Sendak Foundation. His books include *Ambition and Love in American Art*, *Male Desire: the Homoerotic in American Art* and the forthcoming, *Pier Groups: Art and Sex along the New York Waterfront*.

Press Preview: Friday, March 16 10:30am

Coffee and Light Breakfast will be served. **RSVP**, please paintingtosurvive@gmail.com

Opening reception: Sunday, March 18, from 1-6pm

On stage will be music performances by **Spaghetti Eastern Music, The Frank Museum Project, Malcolm Smart** and poetry readings by **Philip F. Clark, Hilary Sideris, Anton Yakovlev** and **Don Yorty**.

"PAINTING TO SURVIVE: 1985-1995" is open to the public weekends from Sunday, March 18 through Saturday April 14, 1- 6 pm, and by appointment weekdays from March 13 - April 14. To arrange an appointment call 917-603-2154 or paintingtosurvive@gmail.com.

This exhibition is presented in 10,000 sq. feet of space at the BWAC Gallery, a 501c3 nonprofit arts organization. BWAC is located in a pre-civil war warehouse facing the New York Harbor and Statue of Liberty. Space for the BWAC gallery is generously donated by The O'Connell Organization and Kings Harbor View Associates. bwac.org/visit

For further information, contact: 917-603-2154 or paintingtosurvive@gmail.com.

BWAC Gallery
481 Van Brunt Street
Red Hook, Brooklyn, 11231

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Marc Lida, *The Saint*, c 1985, acrylic on paper, 18.75 x 47 in.



Jane Bauman, *AE*, 1990, mixed media on aluminum, 60 x 24 in.



Audrey Anastasi, *Carl with Dove*, c. 1989, oil on canvas, 16 x 17.75 in.



Richard Hofmann, *Last Kiss*, 1985, oil on canvas, 38 x 28 in.



Jean Foos, *Elmhurst*, c. 1995, oil on canvas, 72 x 54 in.



John Bradford, *The Butchering of Agog*, 1994, 84 x 108 in