

## RICHARD LYTLE: A RETROSPECTIVE

Fairfield University Art Museum, Walsh Gallery • Fairfield, CT • [fairfield.edu/museum](http://fairfield.edu/museum) • Through February 3, 2018

Another star has been added to Richard Lytle's (b. 1935) storied history. At Yale University (MFA, 1960) he studied under color theorist Josef Albers and then taught Albers's color class for 40 years, a connection reflected in Lytle's biomorphic paintings that glow like petals of stained glass. While still a student, Lytle's fiery earth-toned *Possessed* (1959)—with six of his other paintings—was exhibited, alongside paintings by other emerging artists including Louise Nevelson and Robert Rauschenberg, at the Museum of Modern Art's *16 Americans*, curated by Dorothy Miller, legendary champion of modern art.

Lytle's association with Fairfield University's bucolic campus began in 1965, when he was commissioned to design a concrete bas-relief sculpture for an exterior section of the Barone Campus Center. Inspired by mythology, the artist designed a series of overlapping, abstract forms to blend into the surroundings. One section of Lytle's initial proposal included an outline of a female figure. When asked, the artist deleted



Richard Lytle, *Selena's Barge*, 1994, oil on canvas, 54 x 68". Courtesy of the artist.

this reference, yet never lost interest in depicting "feminine" shapes.

While the relief was never signed, this carefully curated retrospective of Lytle's paintings, drawings and watercolors at the University's Walsh Art Gallery (on view through early February), presents the artist's lifelong quest to render, in varying degrees of abstraction,

botanically-based, sensuous forms. Throughout, the work is distinguished by Lytle's facility in conveying rhythm and motion.

Lytle's lyrical drawings, executed in velvety-black compressed charcoal, focus on the female nude and on root-like pods clustered around cavernous spaces. As a painter, Lytle explores biomorphic imagery in a range of palettes—*Blue Cluster* (1975) is a symphony of hues, from cerulean to Prussian blue. Forms undergo metamorphosis, becoming magnified: rendered in thinly applied oils, paintings take on the cast of a dream. The majestic *Selena's Barge* (1994) alludes to the moon goddess of Greek mythology, often depicted on horseback. Lytle's free brushwork generates its own frisson, lifting the goddess into endless space.

Lytle's mark on the university will endure. Rounding the circle, with a planned renovation of the campus center, the bas-relief will be reinstalled, and finally signed, becoming a permanent fixture as part of an indoor atrium.

—Susan Rand Brown

## ALIGNABLE ANGLES (degrees of points of view)

The Schelfhaudt Gallery, University of Bridgeport, Arnold Bernhard Center • Bridgeport, CT • [schelfhaudtgalleries.com](http://schelfhaudtgalleries.com) • Through January 20, 2018

*Alignable Angles (degrees of points of view)* at The Schelfhaudt Gallery shows the work of six artists whose practices stray from convention. Works by David Borawski, Joseph Fucigna, Elliott Katz, Adam Niklewicz, Amy Vensel, and Etty Yaniv encompass a range of media including painting, sculpture, installation and photography. Curator Peter Konsterlie explained the open-ended title matches the broad assortment of artmaking strategies on display. The perspectives, or angles, of these artists contain similarities, however incongruous the works seem on the surface.

Peculiar materials comprise many of the works in the show. For example, *Diver* (2006) by Adam Niklewicz is a petite sculpture composed of dead bees. (The insects were collected from a beekeeper friend after a fatal early frost.) Etty Yaniv works with discarded and recycled materials like scraps of paper and plastic. Pieces of plastic shopping bags evoke the landscape in Yaniv's low relief collages. Plastic and metal fencing provides the colorful armature for Joseph Fucigna's sculptural abstractions often suggestive of bellies, feet and other parts of the figure.

The three other artists use more conventional

materials in unexpected ways. Elliott Katz's *Helix* is a 64-inch tower of twisting gray cinder blocks made from cast concrete. This mishmash of construction and biology is one of several humorous juxtapositions, described on Katz's website as "a lumberjack aesthetic meets mid-century modern lampshade."

Amy Vensel never uses brushes to create the luscious surfaces of her abstract acrylic paintings. Influenced by observations from her daily life, Vensel is captivated by the saturated colors of a backlit computer screen. In *Remble* (2017) a toxic chartreuse clashes with a petal pink.

Finally, David Borawski's works offer a strident commentary on contemporary politics. The circular floor text reads "Long Live the King is Dead"—an abbreviation of the phrase "The King is dead, Long live the King!" Borawski draws a comparison between this assurance of the monarchy's stability after the passing of its leader and the stagnancy of American governance.

Offbeat materials and arrangements buttress the meaning of the works in *Alignable Angles* and together the artists proffer alternative viewpoints for contemporary art.

—Jacquelyn Gleisner

## REVIEW: *Connecticut*



Elliott Katz, *Helix*, cast concrete, 8 x 8 x 64". Image © 2017 Elliott Katz.