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ALJIRA

A Center for Contemporary Art

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DREAMtime



THE ALJIRA FINE ART AUCTION 2002

Going ...
Going ...
Gone! **SAVE THE DATE: ^{thursday} june 6**

The Aljira Fine Art Auction 2002 is in full swing. The popular annual event will be held on Thursday, June 6, in the Gateway Atrium, 100 Mulberry Street in Newark. Previews of the paintings and sculptures will begin Thursday, May 23.

If you're a newcomer to the Newark arts scene, you won't want to miss this evening of festivities complete with an assortment of wines and scrumptious hors d'œuvres. The Aljira Fine Art Auction is the perfect place to meet friends and view impressive works of art by the region's best artists. Tickets are \$50 per person. For advance reservations, call 973 643-6877.

Artwork top:
Lynne Allen, *My Winter Count* (detail) 1999,
Lithograph, linocut and silkscreen, 27 3/4 x 39 1/2 in.

Paul Keene, *Blues Band* (detail) 1990,
Offset lithograph, 21 1/2 x 30 in.

Pre-Auction Lecture:
*Buying the Art You Want
at the Price You Can Afford*

You won't want to miss this intriguing and informative lecture. Montclair Art Museum director Patterson Sims provides valuable tips to help you grow your collection or buy an occasional piece that you desire.

Saturday, June 1, 2-4pm.
Gateway III Concourse.

Admission is free of charge but requires a reservation. Call now to reserve a seat.



HEIDI POLLARD EMERGES

PHOTO: ARTHUR FAXTON

If you ask Heidi Pollard about Aljira's *Emerge* program, don't expect a short answer. The articulate painter is as expressive as she is artistic. During a recent interview with Judith Page, the project director of the *Emerge* program, Heidi talks about her experiences as an *Emerge* participant and her future as an artist.

A recent winner of a New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship Award, Heidi Pollard seems relaxed with her hard earned, but newly discovered acclaim. Born in the metropolitan Detroit area, Heidi credits her family's love of the arts for her keen interest in the field at an early age. In

Pollard... continued on page 6

ALJIRA AT THE ACADEMY YOUNG CURATORS

As opera diva Beverly Sills once stated, "Art is the signature of a civilization." It reflects the culture and times in which it was made. With this concept in mind, the Renaissance School's Young Curators, under the instruction of Joyce Korotkin, are taught to unravel the densely interwoven tapestry of the world around them.

The Young Curators view current exhibitions at Aljira at the Academy, Aljira's satellite exhibition space, located in Sharron Miller's Academy for the Performing Arts in Montclair. They then analyze the exhibition with regard to exploring the connections between the content of the exhibition itself, its relevance to their own lives and the cultural climate of today, and the ways in which it might connect to their academic curriculum. Emphasis is placed on context and what can be understood about the time in which the work of art was made.

At the same time, the Young Curators learn about the role of the curator in galleries and museums; where the art for exhibitions comes from; how exhibitions are designed within allotted gallery space; and how and what criteria are used for selection of work for exhibitions. Students develop curatorial skills as they plan and implement their own exhibition, from origination of concept and analysis of the space allotted for their show, to studio production, to the writing of wall text and artist statements, and finally to the design of their exhibit in the gallery. ❸

Joyce Korotkin, *Supervising Curator*

Time, Image and Imagination an exhibition curated by the Young Curators of the Renaissance School, will be on view from April 22–May 18, 2002. Aljira at the Academy, 427 Bloomfield Avenue, Montclair, NJ. For more information please call 973 643-6877



DIRECTOR'S VIEWPOINT

New Jersey Arts Annual: Fine Arts exhibition for Winter 2002, sponsored by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, featured some of the best contemporary art in the state. On view at the Jersey City Museum through April 28, the exhibition was augmented by *Art Talks*, a series of related discussions organized by the Museum. Associate Curator Rocío Aranda-Alvarado, Ph.D. and I served as moderators for the talks. Participating artists described their approach to art and the relationship of their work to a number of topics. *Art, Beauty and Seduction* included artists Henry Sanchez,

Clifford Owens, Betty Guernsey and Matt Schwede. Sanchez, who has a graduate degree in political science from Rutgers University, Newark, views his choice of material and the surface treatment of his objects as part of a larger strategy to draw audiences into a deeper relationship with his creations. His piece, *Bouquet*, is a construction of vinyl and mylar. Glitter and flash of color belie the real message encoded in its formal structure.

Two short videos by Clifford Owens, entitled *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me* and *Love Serenade*, are fragments of a larger work. Through the manipulation of time, the framing of images and their movement in space, Owens controls the viewer's experience of the work. A graduate of the Masters of Fine Art program at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, his work was recently included in the exhibition *Freestyle*, at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

Viewpoint... continued on page 3

PHOTO: MANUEL ACEVEDO



Still from *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me* by Clifford Owens

Victor L. Davson and Helen Stummer at the *New Jersey Arts Annual: Fine Arts*.

Betty Guernsey, painter turned photographer, constructs photographic images that recall the deserted cityscapes and faceless mannequins of Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978). Her cibachrome prints, *Rainbow Vamps 1 and 2*, depict images of rows of mannequin heads wearing brightly colored wigs, and raises questions about the comodification of beauty.

Matt Schwede's contribution to the discussion is the duality of attraction and repulsion. Is it dinner or art? The two objects displayed in the exhibition, *Heart and Lungs* and *Femur and Fragment*, are crafted with exquisite skill and anatomical accuracy. Schwede's dispassionate presentation of his content is formed by childhood experiences when he would accompany his father on hunting parties. Schwede received his graduate and undergraduate degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and continued his studies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.

The value of cultural institutions such as the Jersey City Museum and Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, in provoking dialog on civic society is underscored by the *New Jersey Arts Annual: Fine Arts* and its related presentations. The Museum and its staff performed a remarkable job in transforming three exhibition galleries, its community gallery and atrium space into what may be one of the best installations of the *New Jersey Arts Annual: Fine Arts* ever presented. ❸



Femur and Fragment
by Matt Schwede

PHOTO: MANISA K. MUSSA



W R E V I E W

Brothers, an exhibition celebrating cultural and political icon Amiri Baraka, demonstrates his artistic talents in a new field. According to a *Star-Ledger* article, Newark's unofficial poet laureate is "...the best known African American artist working in this country." Baraka made his formal debut as a visual artist in 1999

with his exhibition, *Word Pictures*, at Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art.

In fact, it was Baraka's blueprint for black art and struggle in the sixties that provided young Ben Jones with the philosophical underpinning on which to hang his early pictorial ideas. Rather than any similar aesthetic or formal concerns, it is this shared history of black struggle that is being acknowledged with the pairing of these two artists.

A major architect of the Black Arts Movement, Baraka's ideas helped Jones find his voice as an African American artist and allowed him to go on to establish a reputation as an accomplished art practitioner and college professor during the past 20 years. In *Brothers*, Jones honors Baraka, and in doing so, honors himself.

Using materials at hand—ballpoint pens, magic markers, pastels, the backs of invitations, political flyers, pages from notebooks and pieces of cardboard—Baraka constructs images of force, visually rendering street-corner advocacy and cultural commentary. Quick verse and acerbic statements complicate and deepen his observations. Political caricatures, self-mocking

cartoons and provocative portraits of musicians invoke African American vernacular visual tradition. The works also reference protest movements of the sixties, and underscore African American life and struggles today.

Few images are larger than the size of a framed notebook page. His vocabulary includes written and typed notations of text, doodles, marks scored into the drawing surface, and figures floating in blank space or in roughly sketched settings.

Ben Jones, a painter and printmaker, came of age in the intense political climate of the sixties. During the past three decades, he has created an impressive body of work that is inflected with vivid color, steeped in black consciousness and marked by his study of spirituality in the African Diaspora. In the watercolor on paper series, *Praise and Light*, Jones abandons his signature figurative style for a more formal abstract expressionist engagement with materials.

Praise and Light brings to mind such European masters as Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky and contemporary African Americans like Joe Overstreet and Richard Mayhew. The series relies heavily on elements such as edge, surface, light and color for a meaningful reading. As if in a moment of complete spiritual bliss, Jones surrenders his image of the figure, which becomes the source of light or collapses completely into the light. ❹

Victor L. Davson


Brothers, was on view at the Harold B. Lemmerman Gallery at New Jersey City University.

Top: Amiri Baraka (left) with Ben Jones

LarsonAllen Develops Aljira Plan

With its \$4 million program and capital expansion campaign already underway last fall, Aljira took on the challenge of preparing a strategic long-range plan to assure managed growth and to market its new educational programs and its new facility near the New Jersey Performing Arts Center. With the support of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Aljira hired the LarsonAllen Public Service Group to develop the plan.

LarsonAllen is a recognized leader in consulting, training, audit, and assurance services for nonprofits, foundations, educational institutions, and government entities. For the past 19 years, the firm has consulted with hundreds of nonprofits and foundations in areas such as financial and organizational assessments, program design and management, strategic and business planning, systems analysis and design, industry studies, and program evaluations. New Jersey clients include the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts in Englewood; New Community, Inc. in Newark; and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation in Morristown.

Managing consultants Douglas Winn and Susan Moore are leading the project and have responsibility for ensuring its quality and timeliness. 



Susan Moore



Douglas Winn

ALJIRA RECEIVES MAJOR GRANTS IN FISCAL YEAR 2002

The trustees and staff of Aljira are grateful for the following support:

\$125,000

The JPMorganChase Foundation

\$75,000 to \$50,000

Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation

Nathan Cummings Foundation

New Jersey State Council on the Arts

\$40,000 to \$25,000

New Jersey Cultural Trust

The Prudential Foundation

U.S. Housing and Urban Development

Community Development Block Grant
(administered by the City of Newark)

\$15,000 to \$5,000

Hyde and Watson Foundation

Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

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TAKING IT TO THE STREET

I WANT TO HELP ALJIRA ADVANCE WITH PLANS TO MOVE TO 591 BROAD STREET NOW.

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Signature

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DESIGNER SUPREME

Bambang Widodo at the New Jersey Arts Annual: Fine Arts opening.

When Bambang Widodo joined Aljira Design as its principal designer in 1999, his intention was to make his designs more “human.” Having graduated from Pratt Institute with a Master of Science in Communication Design, Widodo, who prefers to be called Chacha, felt his style was too technical and computer oriented, so he sought a job where art would be

the primary influence. That’s how he found Aljira.

“It was a perfect match,” recalls Aljira Design’s director, Cicely Cottingham, who was as impressed by Chacha’s portfolio as she was by his temperament. Chacha credits his calm disposition to his Indonesian heritage. Aljira Design’s wide range of

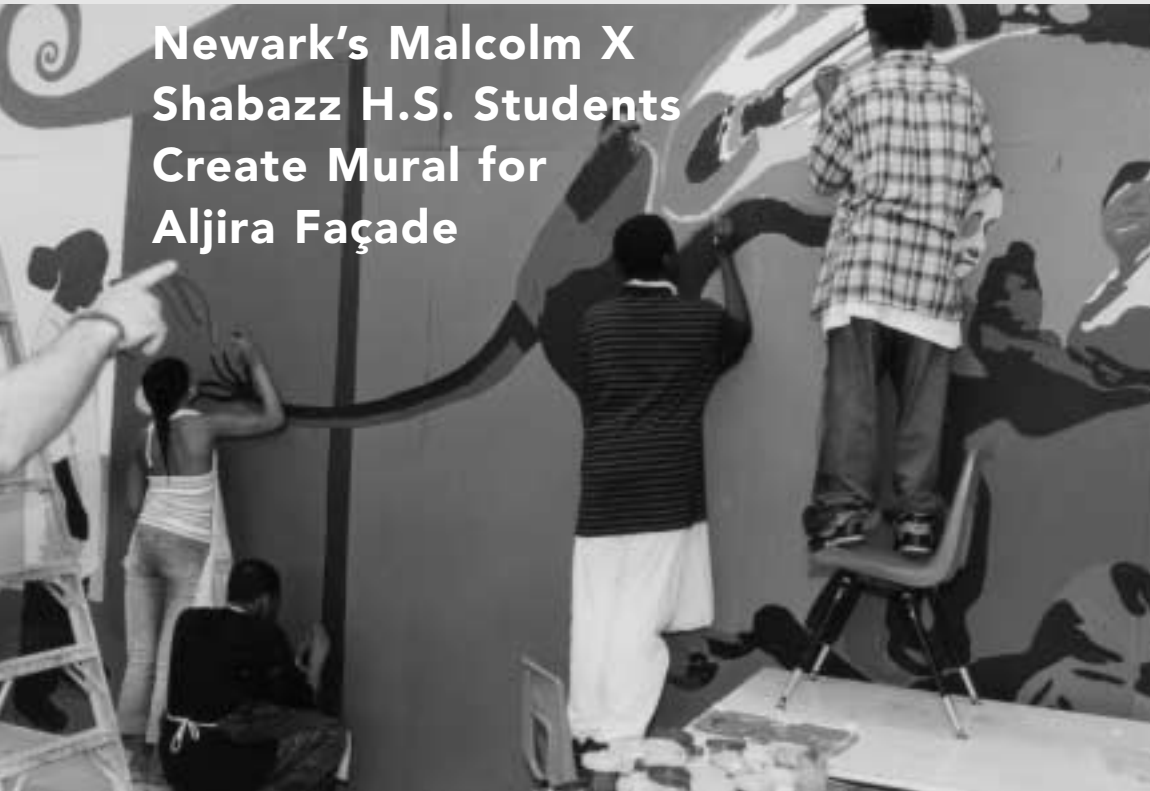
clients are wowed by Chacha’s fresh, vibrant designs. His use of color and intricate repeating details combine to create boldly sophisticated pieces.

Prior to graduating from Pratt, Widodo, 34, worked at an international, Indonesian-based advertising agency. He is married and is the father of two daughters.

“I’ve learned how to appreciate art since coming to Aljira, not just to see it, but to feel it” says Chacha. “I feel the color, and the brush strokes. Before I just looked at art. Design should be entertaining and it should communicate an idea.”

Aljira Design, a project of Aljira, provides design services to the cultural community and community at large.

PHOTO: MANUEL ACEVEDO



Newark’s Malcolm X Shabazz H.S. Students Create Mural for Aljira Façade



Under the instruction of Fausto Sevilla, Newark art students work on a temporary façade for 591 Broad Street, Aljira’s new space.

PHOTOS: ARTHUR PAXTON



Funding for Aljira has been made possible, in part, by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts; U.S. Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant (administered by the City of Newark); The JPMorganChase Foundation; Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Johnson & Johnson; Prudential Foundation; Nathan Cummings Foundation; membership and individual contributions.

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Pollard... continued from page 1

college she majored in art history before discovering that she was more absorbed with creating art rather than learning about the evolution of it. After a few semesters at the Philadelphia Academy of Art, Heidi moved to New Mexico where she lived for several years until coming to the East Coast. Settling in Newark offered easy access to New York City but with a lower cost of living.

One year later, that decision has begun to pay off handsomely. Last fall Heidi was selected to participate in Aljira's distinguished *Emerge* program, a course conducted by specialists to provide practical and timely career advice for emerging artists. Classes include arts management, exhibition strategies, financial and legal assistance, and marketing and public relations tips. The program concludes with a curated exhibition of the artists' works. *Emerge* participants are selected based on the artistic excellence of their work and their self motivation.

The experience, says Heidi, was invaluable. "We were able to learn from the presenters as well as from one another, passing along information and advice. This is an extremely important feature (of the program), that artists

should be able to carry into the world with them a sense of fellowship with artists they connect with...where they can get help and give help and feel (the security) of a community net underneath them."

Heidi also expressed her gratitude for the financial support offered by local corporations and foundations to arts organizations and to individual artists in New Jersey.

As for words of wisdom to young artists, Heidi advises patience. "It takes time to

become the artist you can be," she cautions. "That's all there is to it. You have to have a lot of patience and if you know from the onset that you're going to have to take some deep breaths out there, you're going to be OK," she adds. "Do it for the reasons you originally did it. Don't forget those. Hang in there. Get your work out. Network with other artists and enjoy it." **E**

Below:
Emerge artists with presenter, Arnold Mesches, and project director, Judith Page.



Looking, & Listening, & Collecting:

Art Notes from Nairobi
by William Jones

Galleries and museums from New York to Nairobi ease their tempo in August. They take a breather: they disassemble exhibitions, show work from their collections, and sometimes simply close down to clean up and to renovate, preparing for the new season. The Standard Street galleries would not have much traffic. Tourism is down nowadays. Gallery managers and owners sit in the dark and put on lights only when visitors walk through their doors. Their usual rosters of artists, of course, are for sale. I imagine that in the dark they pray, hopeful that a visitor will buy something.

Not expecting much on Standard Street, I made it a point to visit the Kenya National Museum. I had visited

the museum for the first time in the summer of 2000, not knowing it had anything to do with contemporary art. There was a gallery space attached to a gallery shop, but nothing was up. All I could see were the edges of canvases slotted in storage bins behind the shop counter. Imagine my pleasure then, this time in late August, when I walked into the gallery shop to find canvases on the wall and prints and other works on paper in the vee bins lined up in front of the shop counter. All the art was for sale. Prices were on the walls here, and works by artists I had seen elsewhere seemed oddly affordable. I lingered before a small squarish oil by Ament Soi, one of his sophisticated "naive" renderings of Masai life.

Standard Street galleries would sell such work for \$1,000 or more. That was not the price here, and the price was on the wall. In one Standard Street gallery, prices are only in the gallery owner's head. In another, prices are cryptic and coded. The gallery manager there takes a quick peek at labels on the back of works then quotes an outrageous price.

Beatrice Wangechi, manager of the museum gallery shop, herself a painter with work in one of the bins, told me something astonishing: at whatever price a work sells for in the gallery shop, artists get 75 percent of the sale. She pulled down canvases and even took me to a storage area that is projected to become a gallery. There I saw superb work by her neighbor, Rosemary Karuga, now in her mid-eighties. Intricate, delicately composed collages, this work was more striking than any I had seen since I first saw the Karugas that Paa Ya Paa, the first African-owned art center in Kenya, had helped assemble for Grace Stanislaus' 1990 exhibition, *Contemporary African Artists: Changing Tradition*, at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Given the prices I saw, I knew I could afford to add a Karuga and other work from the gallery shop to my collection, if not then, certainly on future trips. **E**

William Jones chairs Aljira's Board of Trustees. He is an art collector and frequently visits Africa. Notes from his latest trip will continue in the next edition of Dreamtime.