

Beholding Beauty. American Stars Shine in the Firmament of Art Capitolina...

Francesca Di Folco (May 08, 2013)



Where is beauty in art? What is beautiful? How does contemporary art respond to these questions? Does a sort of Unicum exist, a Common Principle which inspires artists to create their own art, or are all forms of art relative?

This is a broad theme that has for centuries animated the debate among philosophers, art critics and artists themselves. These are questions that drive us to investigate, to meet artists and art lovers, to discover the significance of beauty beyond time and space.

These are the topics that filled the evening of April 19th, in the midst of spring, at the [Artrom Gallery](#) [2], the first home gallery of Rome that indulged artists, painters, sculptors, and above all, lovers of different genres of creative versatility.

Elizabeth Genovesi and Art Manager Dafne Crocella presented the event introducing the cornerstones, the technical principles and the artistic essence of the protagonists of "Beholding Beauty," the ArtRom vernissage.

The exhibit, was very New York-like, held in a warm and friendly atmosphere, with the nuances and connotations of a Roman intimacy.

The ArtRom is a home gallery located in the heart of the Prati district, containing an inner artist presentation space. Over the years, the gallery has hosted many events and exhibitions. Having made a commitment to creativity, collaboration and experimentation, it has created alternative methods for artists and the viewing public to relate to the works, by offering "art experiences" within an intimate and congenial atmosphere.

The atmosphere gives the impression of a private apartment, with the advantage of being able to offer visitors a casual and warm welcome, the know-how alongside art exhibitions during cultural evenings, debates regarding creative courses and concerts. The diversity of approaches and styles of exhibitions has opened the gallery to countless intellectuals, musicians, NGOs and patrons from different backgrounds.

In front of us, the small jewelry-gallery is full of guests...Many people have just arrived and commented on the works of the painters. Others sit on the sofa listening music, while all are lost together in the rooms, discussing the art and issues related to it.

Events and vernissage at ArtRom gallery go from party to party...

i-Italy walks between the art pieces and artists and listens to the hustle and bustle of creative exchanges...

The Artist Talk with the painters is spontaneous...

"How is your art born?" asked Christine, an Erasmus student from Massachusetts.

Marella echoes her question, asking: "What feeds your art?"

"It seems a creative meditation, or a reflection" comments Lavinia in response.

The artists and spectators in front of paintings overcome their insecurities and hesitation dictated by shyness, immersing themselves into a direct comparison, open minded in its entirety.

The enlightened viewers approach the paintings on tiptoe and then launch into precise questions, progressing into engaging comments and stimulating responses.

One can witness unique moments of confrontation, the fruit of an interaction between the audience and the artists, rare pearls of analysis tout-court of reciprocal exchange between them, in a ballet-



association of perspective, double directions that hound one another.

It is the thirst of art that takes over ...

Wandering through the maze of the home gallery, we approach yet another group of people: there is [Katy Woodroffe](#) [3], extolling a compelling Story Telling.

The author talks about her four acrylics on paper, where the beauty of the human construction meets the nature mirrored within: an investigation of the links between the real world and imagination.

The "Story Telling" includes breakers of "told" art, split critiques of tested techniques, creative words and itineraries in frames of inspiration and stimuli, where the works are ideas for new oral and written creations.

Every corner of the venue comes alive and becomes an angle with an approach to the artistic experience: in front of the works of Canadian [Donna Balma](#) [4] viewers are putting into practice the technique of Slow Art.

Slow Art, is a slow and personal approach that allows one to not only to see, but to hear the work itself, to live it as a creation "creamed off" by the thinking of others, free from external influences, in a call for a new enjoyment, free from constraints and unshakable impositions.

The scenes exclaim, "Take the time you want, there's no rush, the work is also yours!"

A fourth pillar of the philosophy of Artrom Gallery is the pieces of creative writing that here, in this moment, are transformed into creative interpretation.

The whole evening is full of labs of creative interpretation.

The magic of the gallery consists in precisely this: giving the opportunity to those who attend to get lost in the labyrinths of themselves, even before the gallery, of their souls, even before that of reason, of his or her own psyche rather than the stylistic techniques, and find that life is already Art and Beauty in itself.

i-Italy has requested an interview with the two American artists, [Rene Romero Schuler](#) [5] and [Francene Levison](#) [6]. The different creative interpretations had us kidnapped, transporting us into their vision of art.

Is your art and your life more spiritualism and meditation or a preconceived idea, non-rationality experiences, intuition, insight or analysis of reality? Which of these parts is stronger?

Renè Romero Schuler I would definitely say that my life is more spiritualism and meditation. Though I don't put the latter into a formal practice, I have a very deep, spiritual nature that I try to tap into in every aspect of my life. The teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh have been very influential in how I approach my day to day philosophies.

My work, on the other hand, is, without a doubt, an extension of how I think and how I live my life. As far as which is stronger, I can only say that I hope my work conveys the same strength that I feel in my convictions. I am a very passionate thinker, and my work is my vehicle for expression.

Francene Levison I rely on my analysis of reality. I look for dynamic line, geometric beauty of the total form and unusual textures and patterns for my inspiration

To Renè Romero Schuler: In "Indian Ink on Paper" the canvas withdraws people, in "Transcendessense" there are only individual people and in "A world view," there is a mix of people and single people, but never scenery... In your statement, you have said that you are fascinated by and curious about the mystery of the Human Condition. So, is it the



Protagonist of your art? What is the most important element you get inspired by?

The different mediums I choose to work in, and the varying styles and content, are all very deliberately chosen for how they help me to say what I want to say. I am not done experimenting. As an artist, there is no end to the dreams and ideas and forces that drive me to the different types of work I do. The mystery of the human condition is, as they say, a mystery, wrapped in a riddle, wrapped in an enigma... There is no end. What inspires me most, however, is the strength that humans have. Beyond physical, and often beyond reason or understanding, the strength that humans innately possess is what fascinates and motivates me most. Pain, discrimination, oppression, and abuse are a paltry few of some of the hardships that we endure in this life, and yet, human nature dictates that we all not only survive, but become stronger and persevere. Our character strengthens. Our solitude is fortified. It is this that I paint and sculpt about.

On the negative side of human nature, we are quick to pass judgement on people, based only on face value. This is also what my work is about. I do not put emphasis on the physical attributes of the characters in the work, in order to portray them more like spiritual beings. In the words of Deepak Chopra, "we are spiritual beings in rented bodies....the body is temporary, but the spirit endures." My work is about what exists beneath the surface.

To Francene Levison

In "Bird Life Paper Sculptures" the canvas features birds, in "Ocean Life Paper Sculptures," there are a lot of plants, flowers and blossoms, but never any people.... So, are birds, plants and nature the protagonists of your art? What are the most important elements you get inspired by?

I am a resident of the state of Florida, USA. The natural environment sustains our lives. It is fragile and powerful at the same time. The sweep of a diving bird fishing for prey, the texture of shells and coral, the dancing forms of marine life are captivating to my artistic eye.

To Renè Romero Schuler

In "Indian Ink on Paper," your art has the power to make peace with the world around you and helps you see light in the darkness.

You are living and working in Chicago. Does the strength of reality and the hectic rhythm of the city conditions stimulate the fantasy in your art? Is it possible to consider your canvas a mirror image of American society?

I think that my life, overall, has influenced my work more than anything else. I have been through a lot in my life, and every bit of it is reflected in my work. The fantasy in the work is something that is absolutely intended to be a contrary point to the harsher realities in the world. I definitely play with many dichotomies in my approach to what I do. There is beauty, and stress; vivid color, and surface tension; sparkle, and texture.

To Francene Levison

With "Zhe Zhi" art, your sculptures have the power to make peace with world around you and helps you to see light in the darkness.

Knowledge of paper making and the technique of folding it to create forms was spread throughout Asia by Buddhist monks performing their rituals and ceremonies...

You grew up in Brooklyn and are now living and working in Florida. Does the strength of reality and the hectic rhythm of the city conditions stimulate the fantasy in your art?



Is it possible to consider your paper sculptures a mirror of the American society, influenced by Chinese philosophy?

Yes, the strength derived from the unity of many is a universal truth. We are all more alike than we realize. E Pluribus Unam is printed on American money. From many - one. Many societies base their collective strength on common ideas; ideals and rules. The Chinese ideal of the unity of many is not so different from western cultures. Many examples of modular thinking may be seen in ancient Chinese architecture and the production of identical modular building elements; automated production in the west began at the dawn of the 20th century. Chinese pictograph writing is composed of modular strokes recombined in a variety of ways; our western alphabet only has 26 letters recombined in multiple ways to form millions of words in multiple languages; the Chinese presentation at the opening Olympic ceremony was a wonderful example of the art of unified modular dance movement. So, modular paper folding is part of that same way of looking at forms. I have been greatly influenced by Chinese modular paper folding and look at forms in a mathematical way. Each separate unit of paper is a point on the circumference of a circle. The increase or decrease in the number of points on successive circles determines the slope. This type of sculpture is analytical. I am constantly trying to push the media beyond what I already know it can express.

Chicago and Florida, like New York, are kaleidoscopic, eclectic cities. The artists have the chance to enrich and improve their talents thanks to the multiethnic charms of these cities.

Are there any particular aspects of Chicago for Renè and of Florida for Francene that you get inspired by? What do you like best about living in this metropolis? How does it affect your art?

There are many things I love about my home, Chicago. This city has supported and embraced me immensely throughout my career, but that is something that Chicagoans "just do." We are "the biggest small town in the world." Despite any challenges we face in this city, people here always tend to find the positive. We persevere, yet another influence in my work, I suppose. I hadn't really thought of it before - that being in Chicago could impact my perceptions in this way. But it truly does. Chicago is a great place to live, and there is no place I would rather be.

The lush environment of Florida has been a greater influence on my creativity. I experienced the multi-cultural influence of the students in my Florida art classes and shared their art. That is how I learned of Chinese modular paper folding. My students taught me an art form I had never learned in art school.

To Renè Romero Schuler

You have already exposed your works around the world in Chicago, Parigi, Miami, Palm Beach Garden.

Is this the first time that some of your canvases are in Rome? What are the similarities and what are the differences between Italian and American modern art?

This is my first exhibition in Rome, and I am so honored to be a part of this show. I have always been told that my work has a strong European sensibility, and I always figured that was because I am Latin-American. I think that living in Quito, Ecuador as a child had a great deal of influence on how I think and conduct myself, as did having an immigrant father. We are all shaped by the things we experience in life. I believe that most American Modern Art has its roots in Europe, so while there are clear differences between American and Italian, I don't know that my work, in particular, is so easily categorized.

To Francene Levison

You are a member of [WITVA. Women in the Visual Arts](#) [7]. And you have been selected to exhibit at The Rosen Gallery "International Biennial Exhibit", Boca Raton, Florida in 2008. You are also a member of The Boca Raton Museum of Arts Artist Guild and a Juried Signature Member of this distinguished group of artists.



You have already exposed your works around the States... and you have an international experience about your artistic vision that you acquired through Chinese folk art. Constructing the dynamic lines of organic forms has given you the opportunity to share your contemporary paper sculpture with the world.

Is this the first time that your paper sculptures are in Rome? What are the similarities and what are the differences between Italian and American modern art?

Yes, this is the first time my paper sculptures have been recognized outside the United States. I am so happy to have the recognition of a Roman gallery. The essence of all great art is found in the principals of art. The great sculptors surround the artists of Italy. Their knowledge of the principals of art are infused into the contemporary artistic mind. The genres may differ, but the principles are eternal. There is good and bad art everywhere. The hunt for that essence is what makes experiencing art so important and enriching to our lives. Some American contemporary art has drifted from the ideals of great art. Only when they capture those basic principles, do they succeed in any media, any genre.

You have winner "Beholding Beauty 2012". So you can expose your Art in Artrom Gallery in Rome... What do you expect by this Italian exhibition?

Renè Romero Schouler My hope, with this exhibition, is to gain some notoriety within the city of Rome. I am very excited to be working with Elizabeth Genovesi of ArtRom Gallery, and I am looking forward to my experience of showing my work there, and hearing how the patrons of the gallery respond to the work. I am also looking forward to being there and meeting people and talking about my work with everyone.

After the closing of the "Beholding Beauty 2012" Show, I fly directly to Paris - where I will live through June and July - during my show at Galerie Boicos, which opens June 20th 2013. I will be showing with some very prominent and established American artists - Tony Fitzpatrick, Doug Stapleton, Michael Goro, Peter Ambrose, and Cindy Bernhard.

Francene Levison I am impressed with the jury process. Creating beauty is difficult, finding it is rare. I am honored to have my sculptures found.

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Links

- [1] <http://108.61.128.93/files/beholdingbeauty1368053921.jpg>
- [2] <http://www.artromgallery.com/>
- [3] <http://www.katywoodroffe.com.au/>
- [4] <http://donnabalma.com/>
- [5] <http://www.reneschuler.com/>
- [6] <http://www.francenelevinson.com/>
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