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Arts

State of Being

by Michele D. Maniscalco
Contributor
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Katherine Wildman standing by her work. (Photo by Michele D. Maniscalco)

An exhibit of painting, sculpture and photography at the Piano Factory gallery

Over 100 people flocked to the Piano Craft Guild's (PCG) new gallery at 793 Tremont Street on Friday, July 11 for the opening of "State of Being", a collection of two- and three-dimensional works by 22 artists, curated by painters Tom Acevedo and Danielle Festa. The exhibit

includes portraits, some with mixed-media three-dimensional elements; sculptures and torso casts in the traditional Italian cartapesta technique. One attendee, artist consultant and architect Jesa Damora, cut a dramatic figure in a wearable art piece separate from the exhibit called "Hive" by local artist Zoe McCarthy. "State of Being" is the third exhibit in the new art space at the storied artist-loft complex, and the new gallery is off to a running start, with exhibits booked well into 2015.

PCG gallery director Richard Inonog, himself a painter and photographer, recruited Acevedo, whose work tends to celebrate the male form, and Festa, whose paintings are derived from photos and "selfies", often adorned with fabric and fiber to explore images and notions of attire and appearance, to assemble "State of Being". Their markedly different approaches to their subjects contribute to a diverse collection of artists and work. "I had not met Danielle Festa before Richard introduced us. He knew both of us and admired our work. We both do a classic rendering of the figure," Acevedo explained. The two took to the Internet to recruit artists who fit their vision for the show. "Coming from our experience, we just did what we knew: We put out an open call on Facebook and social media for artists who work in figurative portraits," Acevedo explained. The two met in a café to evaluate the submissions. "She was kind of the brains of the operation. We had a good number applicants and could pick the best of the best. We looked at each e-mail and said yea or nay." Acevedo feels the publicity surrounding the new gallery's opening will attract more artists to request a show there. "The more people hear about the new gallery, the more they will submit," Acevedo said.

The show draws on both centuries-old and 21st century media, encompassing Festa's selfie-inspired paintings and artist Christine Palamidessi's "Thelma, Louise and Dina", a trio of female torso casts made in cartapesta, a papier-mache like medium using specially made paper practiced in the Puglia region of Italy for over 500 years. Explaining her work in an e-mail, Palamidessi wrote, "I am pushing the traditional

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technique to the edge, using the human body and other things with the medium. The molds for THELMA, LOUISE AND DINA were made from casts of people. The process captures the atman, or energy, of the person. I then use the resulting "form and energy" molds to create sculpture. My work revolves around extracting energy patterns and continuing the energy pattern into a sculpture."

The new gallery's first three exhibits, "Portraits of Boston", "The Abductee"s and "State of Being", have been distinct in style and media, giving the gallery a freshness that many in the community welcome. The debut exhibit, "Portraits of Boston", was a photographic exhibit taken from the on-line blog of the same name, which features photos and short descriptions of people of all walks of life captured by photographer Ivan Velinov. "The Abductees", a photographic and multi-media collection, explored the experiences of Barney and Betty Hill, a bi-racial New Hampshire couple who, in 1961, claimed to have been abducted on a UFO. The diversity of the shows has developed naturally, according to Inonog. "We respond to the feedback we are getting from the community," he said.

"State of Being" will be on view at the PCG gallery through July 27. The gallery is open from 6:00-8:00 PM on Fridays and from 12:00 PM-5:00 PM Saturdays and Sundays. More information on "State of Being" and upcoming exhibits can be found at <http://pianocraftgallery.org/>.

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