

The Sag Harbor Express.

Small Scale in a Big Show at Silas Marder Gallery in Bridgehampton

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By Dawn Watson



Casey Dalene is one of several artists highlighted at the Silas Marder Gallery in Bridgehampton.

With more than 50 artists and 150 pieces represented, the annual “Big Show” at Silas Marder Gallery in Bridgehampton is a monumental undertaking.

Having that many items to hang can be overwhelming, though fortunately the art is relatively easy to handle since it’s all created in an 8-inch-by-10-inch format, says exhibition organizer Jess Frost. But just because the canvases and panels are small, doesn’t mean that the statements made on them aren’t big, she adds. “There’s a breakthrough that can come from working on these smaller-sized canvases,” she says. “A lot of artists will experiment a bit, do something different than they have done in the past.”



Louise Eastman, Eaving II, 2015, Cotton on board, 8 x 10 inches

This year, for “The Big Show 9,” the creativity has gone wild, she adds. The variation in materials that many of the artists have used—including concrete, fur, tennis balls, copper, knitting, polymer “skins,” woven textiles, linens and more—and the messages they convey are quite extraordinary.

Louise Eastman, who usually creates large-scale weavings that bring to mind circa-1950s brightly colored woven potholders, chose to approach her “Big Show” work in textile form, she says. Having recently taken to working on a loom, she set out to weave her smaller canvases, “as surrogates for the paintings themselves.”

She got distracted during the process though, she reports, so she added color and pattern to the weave. She then dyed the panels using cochineal, a natural dye, achieving the effect of what she calls “paintings in reverse with no paint.”

The Sag Harbor-based artist found that she likes working in proscribed parameters, she says. From this experience in creating these pieces for this year’s Marder exhibition, she’s looking forward to making more of the same, even as she “struggles with how to make a painting by weaving.”



Casey Dalene, Seascape 3, 2015, Acrylic and embroidery on linen, 10 x 8 inches

Fabric also figured into Casey Dalene's work for the group show. For her pieces, inspired by the sand, water and sky of the East End, she used acrylic and embroidery on linen. Painting directly on unprimed natural Belgian fabric, Dalene used techniques with acrylic and gesso to create different textures and patterns, then collaged them together via embroidery.

The East Hampton-based textile designer and painter, who is used to working on much larger abstract pieces, said that adjusting to the scale limitations of this exhibit eventually inspired a whole new series of work.

"I am eager to continue this scale with a few pieces," she said of her smaller-scale seascape creations.

Christine Sciulli also found the exercise refreshing, she says. Known for her ephemeral three-dimensional installations, setting out to make something in two dimensions provided a new way of thinking for the Amagansett-based artist.

"I was challenged to step outside of my comfort zone to create more or less permanent two-dimensional work," she says. The result was "The Tangential series," which she adds is "literally tangential to my work."



Christine Sciulli, *Tangential*, 2015, Gesso, pencil and varnish on canvas, 10 x 8

The process became a way to explore tangential points of pencil traced circles in compressed space while slipping them under and ghosting them through layers of gesso and varnish, Sciulli reports. In her "Big Show" artwork, she purposefully steered clear of oil or acrylic paint in the body of the work in order to use basic tools to examine the geometry of the circle resting liminally within the planes coating the canvas' surface.

The presentation materials didn't change quite so much for photographer Laurie Lambrecht, but the subject matter and scale did. Best known for her figurative work, such as her "Roy Lichtenstein In His Studio," this exhibition will showcase her most recent passion—the natural landscape.

Taken during a four-week residency project in the foothills of the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming, the images that Lambrecht is showing are of “shed” deer antlers that she found during her walks in the wilderness.

The Bridgehampton-based artist became as fascinated by the natural occurrence as she is by scale, she says. As a result, being able to exhibit her antler photographs in the “Big Show,” with its smaller canvases, has definitely struck a chord.

“Small or large, isolating the subject and removing it from its background, and how our perception reacts to it, has always been of interest,” she says. And creating something in the 8-by-10 format helped her to focus in on the subject. “It’s really great to have parameters, which was freeing because it made me zone in.”

While breaking boundaries might not be possible every single exhibition, it’s certainly a welcome endeavor, says Ms. Frost. Working alongside series creator Silas Marder in corralling this vast universe of experience and variety is what makes “The Big Show” go-round.

“The idea is to bring together an eclectic group of artists and see what happens,” she says. “It’s interesting to see the work grouped in a way, from artists who live far and wide all over the world, as well as from here. It’s a mirror of how the art world continues to evolve.”

“The Big Show 9” opens at the Silas Marder Gallery in Bridgehampton on Saturday, May 16, with a reception from 4 to 8 p.m. The exhibit will hang through June 21. For additional information, visit www.silasmarder.com.