

PREMIERE  
ISSUE!

AMERICAN

PREVIEWS OF MAINSTREAM ARTISTS'  
UPCOMING SHOWS COAST TO COAST

OCTOBER 2005

# art COLLECTOR



*Which of the current instructors will paint the collectible classics of the future? Knowledgeable collectors will be scouting the 130th anniversary of the Art Students League of New York shows*

# Talent-spotting at the Art Students League anniversary exhibitions



**A SHRINE TO ARTISTIC EXPRESSION**  
*The Art Students League of New York is located on West 57th Street*

**T**he Art Students League of New York can easily claim the title of having the most famous instructors and students in American art in its 130-year history. A young Georgia O'Keeffe studied painting there with William Merritt Chase. Jackson Pollock and Fairfield Porter learned art techniques from Thomas Hart Benton, while Norman Rockwell, N.C. Wyeth and Robert Henri made their mark in drawing and portraiture.

From Thomas Eakins to James Rosenquist, the impact of the Art Students League on American painting is easy to see when studying the acknowledged masters. But who will be celebrated among the instructors and 2,500 students of the current era?

Savvy art collectors will get a chance to practice their talent-spotting skills when 18 of New York's top galleries salute the Art Students League's anniversary this fall.

Conceived by gallery owner Virginia Zabriskie, these city-wide exhibitions will reflect the diversity of artistic talent that has passed through the school's doors since its founding in 1875. (A separate historic retrospective, *The League Then and Now*, will be on display at the Art Students League headquarters until mid-October.)

Contemporary artists who teach at the League will be represented all across Manhattan. Paintings by Daniel Greene, Burton Silverman and Sharon Sprung are the subject of the Gallery Henoeh show. Watercolors by Frederick Brosen will be presented at Forum Gallery, and paintings by Robert Neffson and Timothy J. Clark will make up the Hammer Galleries show.

## **ACA Galleries showcases current instructors' work**

The largest group of current instructors will be included in the retrospective at the ACA Galleries from October 15 through November 26 in the *Continuum: Celebrating the 130th Anniversary of The Art Students League of New York Show*.

"ACA has a long history of exhibiting artists associated with the Art Students League and it seemed like a logical choice to honor artists of the past and present together who had studied or taught there," says Mikaela Sardo Lamarche, curator for this show.

Since the ACA Galleries (American Contemporary Artists) was founded in 1932 by Herman Baron, it has often been the first to show art by the likes of Louise Nevelson, Alice Neel, Barnett Newman, Stuart Davis, and Rockwell Kent from the League school.

Putting the past masters next to the current group of artists will allow collectors to judge their ability to discover the future greats.

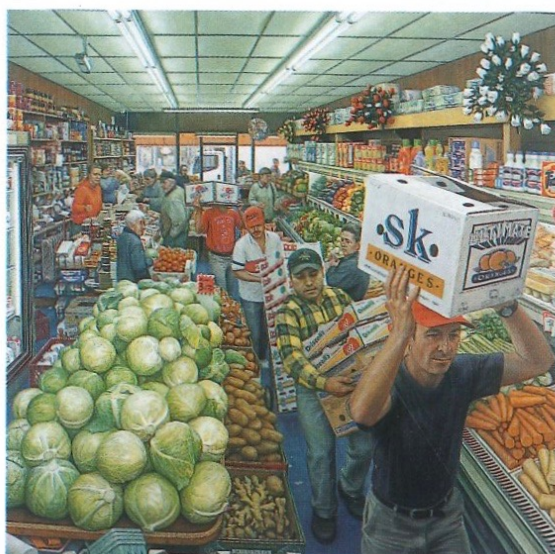
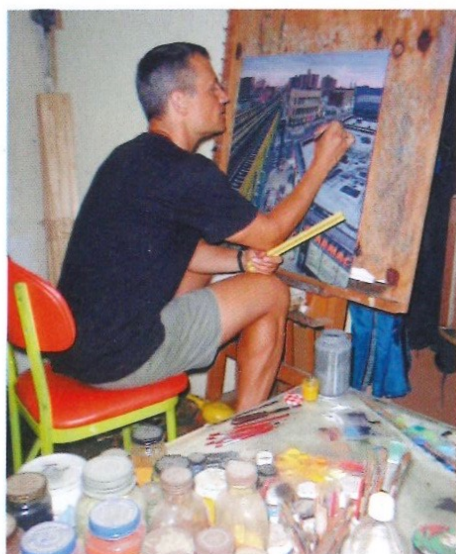
Following is a preview of just some of those paintings and the inspiration behind them.

## **UPCOMING SHOW**

*Over 70 works on show*

**October 15 thru  
November 26, 2005**

**ACA Galleries  
529 West 20th Street,  
5th Floor  
New York, NY 10011  
(212) 206-8080**



**DOUG SAFRANEK, TOPLESS IN BROOKLYN, EGG TEMPERA ON PANEL, 24 1/2 X 25"**

*This work depicts the green grocery that's around the corner from his studio in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. "I shop there regularly and asked the Polish girls who work the cash register if I could do a painting of the interior. They were wonderfully helpful, letting me take a number of reference slides and giving me an assortment of boxes and so forth that I took back to my studio to work directly from," he explains. "I had friends model for most of the figures, and I used myself for the rest, recreating the various poses in a large mirror set up next to my easel."*

## Doug Safranek

Doug Safranek began his relationship with the Art Students League when he studied anatomy and figure drawing there in the mid-1980s. "I remember being impressed at how inexpensive it was to study at the League with first-rate instructors compared to the cost of taking comparable classes at a university," he says. "So many of the artists whose work has inspired me over the years – George Bellows, John Sloan, Paul Cadmus, Reginald Marsh – all worked or taught at the League."

Doug admires their paintings because they depict life in New York City as it was when they were part of it earlier in the last century. "I hope that 100 years from now, people will look at my pictures and get a sense of what one might have observed on the streets of NYC during the late 20th and early 21st Centuries," he adds.



**ANDREW CONKLIN, WAKAKO WITH HER FEET UP, OIL ON COPPER, 8 X 10"**

*This work was inspired by 18th Century French painter Fragonard's "La Gimlette." That series of racy paintings shows a young woman in bed lifting her lapdog into the air. "I have always intended my small painting (done on a copper plate) to be one in a multi-figure scene. My paintings evolve through several stages," Conklin says. "First, I look for inspiration. I believe in the perennial nature of the arts, in their existence both within and beyond their time. If I rely on the images or ideas of a predecessor to spark my imagination, it is because a work seems to challenge me to exceed it, if I can."*

## Andrew Conklin

Andrew Conklin attended the Art Students League in 1985, studying with Hilary Holmes. Today he teaches classes on drawing and design at Harrington College of Design and anatomy at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

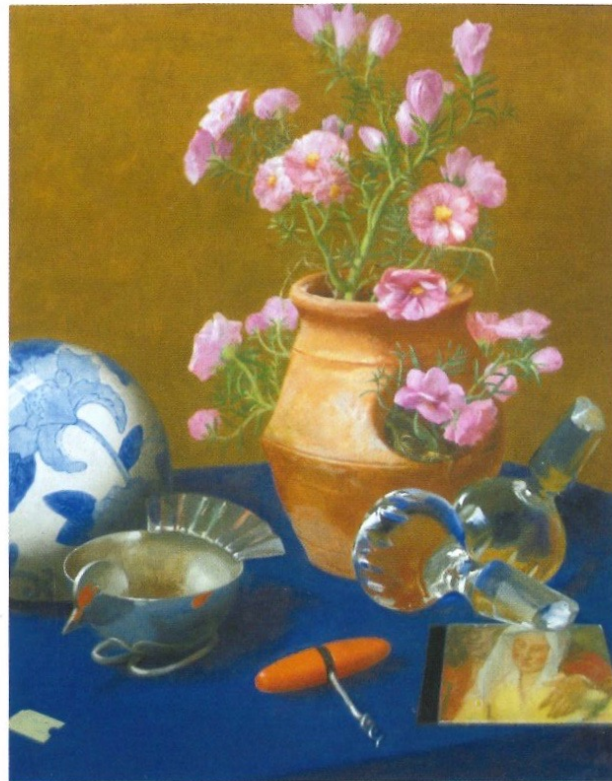
From a historical perspective, Conklin believes that although the variety and styles taught at the League have increased, the founders would probably recognize this as a natural evolution. "Certainly the continuity of naturalism in the figurative arts is a direct result of the school's initial direction," he says.

"While the human figure has remained the focus of my oil paintings, its treatment has evolved in both form and content," he adds. "My technique has changed from a direct, or alla prima, approach of a single thick layer, to one inspired by Baroque Dutch artists using several thin applications of paint." This change in approach has steered his choice of themes away from simple, confrontational images to more complex multi-figure compositions containing veiled mythological and psychological references.

## Helen Oh

For Helen Oh, one of the joys of growing up in New York City was attending the Art Students League from her early teens through her twenties. "I began figure drawing from live models in Lucia Salame's Saturday classes while I was a high school student," she says. "The League's enrollment policy allowed me to take up my studies without age restrictions typical of other art schools."

Fascinated with painting, she continued her studies at the League with Harvey Dinnerstein, and later enrolled in an anatomy class. She has been teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for the past five years. "We still paint still lifes that I set up, and these arrangements are the inspiration for my own paintings," she says. "While teaching is time-consuming, I also find the experience helpful in clarifying my ideas of subject matter."



HELEN OH, FIVE SENSES TOUCH, OIL ON PANEL, 20 X 16"

*This is the first of a proposed series highlighting the pleasures and discomforts perceived through our senses. "I hope to continue with paintings of Taste, Sight, Hearing, and Smell." "Touch" is composed of natural and man-made objects that she uses to feature a variety of interesting surfaces: The soft petals of field-roses, broken china stoppers, a metal ashtray, a wine opener, and a CD, whose jewel case contains an image of Vermeer's "The Procuress."*

## Costa Vavagiakis

Instructor Costa Vavagiakis began teaching painting, anatomy and drawing at the Art Students League in 1998. "Teaching in general has helped me get outside of myself, to visualize more clearly and articulate my concepts," he says. "This has helped with my technique and vision."

Vavagiakis found the origin of his aesthetic view in his childhood experiences with ancient Greek sculpture. "I remember particularly being awestruck by *The Charioteer of Delphi*, which my uncle took me to see as a young child," he recalls. He was fascinated by the volumetric wholeness and clarity of form in the way that the sculpture could command space and light. "I literally had to be pried away from the statue, and I realize now that all along I have been striving to recreate in my work the profundity I experienced in the presence of that sculpture."

The models for Vavagiakis' current works in the ACA show were both professionals working at the Art Students League. "I had an intuitive pull towards their physical presence," he says. "The initial attraction developed into a working relationship that has lasted for several years."

The goal for many of his artworks is "creating the illusion that the image has been sculpted out of the pigment," he adds.



COSTA VAVAGIAKIS, CONNIE XXV, OIL ON PANEL, 4 X 8"

*An example of a preliminary painting idea of a reclining nude concept that I have been working on with several female models," Vavagiakis explains. For him, "the portrait has been, and will continue to be, the focus of my work. I paint the sitter straight on and objectively, stripped of any narrative concept," he says. "The figures exist in confined spaces, lit from above, which maximizes the sense of intensity and reality."*

## Ephraim Rubenstein

Ephraim Rubenstein joined the League's teaching staff the year after Costa Vavagiakis.

Although he generally teaches drawing and artistic anatomy, lately he has begun to offer a reading class, the Seminar in the Literature of Art, in which he and his students study the writings of artists themselves.

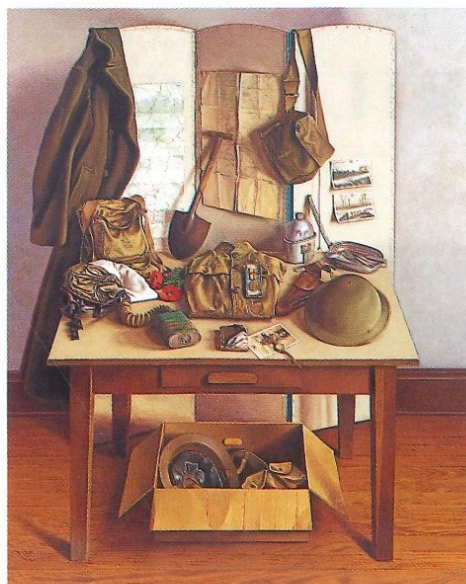
Rubenstein is particularly enamored of the League's atelier system, which means that the approximately 80 or so instructors are each sovereign in their own studios, and students voluntarily elect to study with whomever they want. "People come here for one reason only, because they want to learn to draw, paint, sculpt and make prints. While so many art schools today are spreading themselves really thin by trying to keep up with all of the new and emerging media like film, video, computer graphics and digital arts, the League is dedicated to the more traditional artistic forms that are made by hand," he says.

"Teaching at the League has definitely had a very positive effect on my painting and drawing," Rubenstein says. "Being surrounded and pushed by the work of excellent colleagues is extremely beneficial. Why else are we gathered together as a group, if not to learn from each other?"

Rubenstein knew from a very early age that not only did he want to paint and draw, but also he knew basically how he wanted to paint and draw.

"I always wanted to paint from nature, from the world of observation," he says. "I think that over the years, in addition to getting technically better, my work has gotten more personal, more specific to me. I hope that it has deepened in feeling, as well."

Rubenstein will be exhibiting two works in this October exhibition at ACA: A major still life painting, "*The Great War and Me*," and an interior scene, "*Studio Interior with Model*."



EPHRAIM RUBENSTEIN, *THE GREAT WAR AND ME*, OIL, 72 x 60"

*This picture is about Rubenstein's grandfather's experiences in France during the First World War. In the mid-1990s, Rubenstein discovered a journal that his grandfather had kept in France, and which he entitled, "The Great War and Me." It is that journal that one sees in the middle of the still life table, surrounded by his grandfather's military gear.*

## John Dobbs

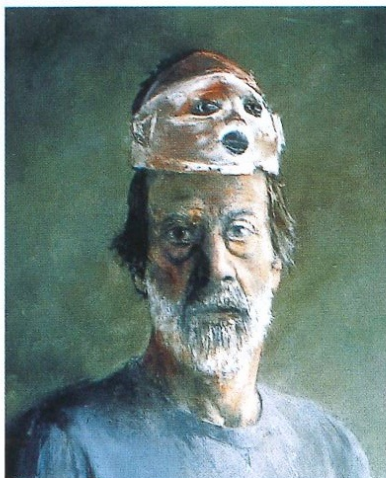
John Dobbs first came to the League school in 1982. Since then, he has often served on juries for the League's scholarships and student exhibitions.

He explains his working process with an anecdote. "It is said that Frans Hals asked for payment in advance for portraits because he could paint so fast, they felt cheated," Dobbs says. "It seems a lot of my paintings look great after the first hour. Then something happens and I spend the next six months or so trying to get back to the beginning."

Dobbs is currently working on 21 paintings, from 3 x 5" to 5 x 6 feet. "I work from ideas," he explains. "Certain themes re-occur. I don't work from life; I plan, I draw, I may refer to photos, but I don't copy them."

Reaction to his artwork has always been intriguing.

He rarely likes to discuss his own work. "I think the evaluation of a painter's work is a matter for others to discuss. David Lean, the film director, was asked once in a radio interview what he thought about the work of some of the younger film directors. He answered that he didn't follow the work of many others; he had enough problems of his own and they would not have the answers."



JOHN DOBBS, *WHITE MASK*, OIL ON LINEN, 28 x 24"



JOHN DOBBS, *APARTMENT IN PARIS*, OIL ON LINEN, 60 x 42"

*"Back in the Sixties I had a show in Paris. One critic referred to me as being a 'figurative avant-gardist' and not too bad for an American," Dobbs recalls. If asked to explain his work in his own vocabulary, he says: "I am a narrative painter. I work in oils. In the age of plastic, I sail in a wooden boat. We both may be relics, but there is a certain consistency... I hope."*