

# THE EAST HAMPTON STAR

SHINES FOR ALL

## Contemporary Portraiture at Southampton Arts

*An exhibition of work by 70 artists presented by the New York Academy of Art*

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The portrait of “Lacinda” was painted by Scott Avett, who is one-half of the popular band the Avett Brothers.

“About Face,” an exhibition of work by 70 artists presented by the New York Academy of Art, will open tomorrow at the Southampton Arts Center with a reception from 6 to 8 p.m. and remain on view through Sept. 17. Organized by the artist and musician Scott Avett and David Kratz, an artist and president of the academy, the show marks the second collaboration between the two institutions.

“The arts center invited us to do it again,” said Mr. Kratz, referring to last year’s show “Water/Bodies.” “I think that was one of the best attended shows they have had.”

The idea for this year’s exhibition came from Simone Levinson, co-chair of the center’s board, who suggested the subject of contemporary portraiture. “It’s something that is of interest to everybody,” she said, “and it is in keeping with the tradition of the academy,”

The show includes paintings, sculpture, drawings, and photography by 70 artists, among them Jean-Michel Basquiat, Will Cotton, Nicole Eisenman, Eric Fischl, Alex Katz, Alice Neel, Larry

Rivers, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, and Billy Sullivan. Works by academy alumni, faculty, and students will be also be on view.

The theme of portraiture is closely tied to the academy's founding mission of promoting the tradition of figurative work in the context of contemporary art. Of the two-year M.F.A. program, which is limited to 100 students, Mr. Kratz said, "The training is largely figurative, but students do all kinds of things besides that, including abstract work."

Mr. Avett is one-half of the Avett Brothers, a band from North Carolina that combines bluegrass, country, punk, pop, rock, and folk. They sold out the Barclays Center in March.

"Scott is a great musician, but also a very talented figurative painter," said Mr. Kratz. "I asked him to put this show together with me because I really respect his eye. We sat down and made a very aspirational list of the artists we wanted. Ninety percent of the people we asked agreed to participate." The works came from galleries, private collections, and the artists themselves.

"How you look at a face says a lot about who you are and what you're thinking about, and that is very apparent in the show," said Mr. Kratz. "We start with Alice Neel. For me, she represents the beginning of a certain through line of American portraiture. Hers are modern, very candid reflections of who the person is."

Among the themes of the show are racial and gender identity, social commentary, the subject of beauty, and the roles people play in society. Lyle Ashton Harris is represented by a photograph of two African-American waiters in uniform. "It's a haunting image. They look as if they're from another time, but he's a young, contemporary artist."

The show includes a selection of Basquiat drawings from his sketchbooks that have never been exhibited. Other works include Mr. Fischl's portrait of E.L. Doctorow, an early painting by Alex Katz with a lot of texture and gesture, and a photograph by Cindy Sherman. "I love that one because she's not dressed up. It's honest."

A light, almost transparent portrait by Billy Sullivan of the artist Keith Sonnier offers a stark contrast to a large painting by Steve Mumford of a solitary soldier on a vast battlefield in Iraq, where Mr. Mumford was embedded with Iraqi troops.



Both Mr. Avett and Mr. Kratz have works in the exhibition. "I torture my guests and relatives who expect a beach vacation by telling them they have to come to my studio and sit for three hours," said Mr. Kratz, who has a house in Southampton as well as in New York City.

"Afternoon" by David Kratz, who organized "About Face," is included in the exhibition.