



Johannes DeYoung, *Still from SEA [SIC]*.

NEW BEDFORD TODAY

NEARBY WATERS INSPIRE SERIES OF EXHIBITIONS

Two painters well-entrenched in the tradition of modern American realism, a computer animator working with experimental painting and drawing processes, and a sculptor with a site-specific work that will evolve over a period of half a year are in the spotlight in three spaces within the New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks!

Displayed in the Heritage Gallery, painters Art Ballelli and Roy St. Christopher Rossow make a formidable and complementary pair in their exhibition called “Warmed by Sunshine, Lit by Starlight.”

Ballelli, a native of Westerly, a perfect picture postcard town in southwestern Rhode Island, displays a series of acrylic paintings highlighting the Victorian era houses in his community.

His style is crisp, almost to the point of starkness, and his “painted ladies” are visually cropped in a thoughtful manner that highlights their exquisite architectural details. The gables, dormers, columns and arched windows that make up much of his compositions are rendered with exacting precision. The

REVIEW

**ART BALLELLI & ROY ST. CHRISTOPHER ROSSOW:
WARMED BY SUNSHINE, LIT BY
STARLIGHT
THROUGH MARCH 22**

**JOHANNES DEYOUNG: SEA SIC
THROUGH FEBRUARY 2**

**STACY LATT SAVAGE: ENTROPY
THROUGH MAY
NEW BEDFORD ART MUSEUM/
ARTWORKS!**

**608 PLEASANT STREET
NEW BEDFORD,
MASSACHUSETTS**





Art Ballelli, *Apricity*.

focus on each of those elements make each of those “ladies” unique.

His “Dormers at Dusk” flirts with geometry, as four windowed dormers race across a roofline, zigzagging like the teeth of a crosscut blade. It eloquently makes the most of negative space.

Ballelli’s wonderfully titled “Apricity” — a near obsolete word meaning “the warmth of the sun in winter” — depicts the underbelly of a porch roof supported by a majestic Doric column. A bare wisp of a tree branch intrudes from one corner, casting a delicate, even wispier shadow.

In some of his paintings, Ballelli works with a decidedly subdued pastel palette. The houses in “Last Light,” “In the Limelight” and “Sun Day” are respectively lavender, pale green and soft yellow, all as chalky and as sweet as Necco Wafers.

While Ballelli’s work demands a respect for the intensity of daylight, his co-exhibitor Rossow unflinchingly embraces the melancholy of the night.

He was born in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in 1975 and emigrated to the United States for better medical care after contracting polio. After receiving two degrees from Salve Regina University and working for over a decade



Christopher Rossow, *Emma Nicole*.

as a commercial digital artist, he relocated to New Bedford to pursue his master’s degree in painting from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

There exists something in his nocturnal marine oil paintings that is yearnful and quixotic.

In “Night Departure 2,” a small, three-masted fishing vessel chugs along to far off destinations as she departs an unknown port. It is clearly not the storied harbor of New Bedford as a distant mountain range traverses the background, beneath a purple night sky, nearly as deep in hue as an eggplant.

The lights aboard the craft glow with solar intensity and reflect with a rhythmic regularity upon the rippling surface of the water. It is the beginning of the journey, family is left behind, and the hard work is yet to come.

With understated elegance and a highly-refined hand, Rossow quietly celebrates the romance of labor on the sea with “Blue McKinley.” It is an ebon night and three boats are moored at the dock. Lights shimmer on each vessel. One can almost hear the lapping of the waves, the



mournful hungry cries of seagulls and the steady insistent humming of diesel engines.

"Container Ship Nocturne" is painted from the vantage point of a high window or the roof of a tall building. It looks over the silhouetted architectural structures in the foreground to a massive commercial vessel.

It is illuminated in somewhat unexpected colors: florescent blue, brilliant orange, a glowing orb of magenta. A crane is citrus green and pops off the blackness of the night, another is as yellow as a canary.

Rendered with great detail, a narrative emerges about — among other possibilities — the allure of hard work, the immensity of commerce and the economics of scale. But Rossow is not only a storyteller that taps into local lore, he is also a formidable formalist.

His compositional sense, dynamic use of color and clarity of vision come together to the point that if it were slightly reimagined, the painting would succeed tremendously even if it were stripped of narrative and pushed to the arena of the non-objective.

"Warmed by Sunlight, Lit by Starlight" will be on display until March 22.

In the museum's Fiber Optic Center New Media Gallery, a space devoted to media such as film, video, animation, poetry readings, performance art and the like, there is work by artist and animator Johannes DeYoung.

"SEA [SIC]" is a multimedia experience simultaneously played in two adjoining rooms that draws inspiration from the French Romantic painter Théodore Géricault's "The Raft of the Medusa."

Painted from 1818-1819, Géricault's masterpiece depicts the aftermath of the wreck of the French frigate *Méduse* when it ran aground a sandbank off the West African coast on the second day of July, 1816.

Unable to dislodge the frigate, the crew and passengers, that included the appointed French governor to Senegal and his wife and daughter, attempted to travel in six boats sixty miles to the coast. At least 146 men and one woman boarded a quickly built raft intended to be towed by the boats, but it was soon turned loose. Hell broke loose.

According to the critic Jonathan Miles, the survivors became "crazed, parched and starved, they slaughtered mutineers, ate their dead companions and killed the weakest."

Géricault's painting is monumental (193" x 282"). Its very scale with larger than life figures make it cinematic.

"Sea [Sic]," animated in astonishing detail in glorious and vivid black-and-white, is far more intimate but no less horrifying. On a small screen, a dozen or so survivors bob about like human flotsam on a tumultuous sea.

Close-ups reveal little panic. Bearded men, a woman in an inexplicable floppy sun hat and others show little fear — but also no hope. A kind of tranquility has settled on them, as if they have accepted that their fate has been determined. The lack of obvious emotion is more disturbing than screams and tears, long since passed.

Projected on a wall in a small dark room, as if a counterpoint or maybe a sequel, is an animation of an empty inflated raft, being tossed on the water as a full moon distorts into an egg shape. Flickering and mesmerizing, the sky and the sea danced long before we did and so they will long after we have all been plunged into darkness.

"Sea [Sic]" is on display at the museum until February 2.

Finally, it must be noted that it is difficult — and perhaps a bit unfair — to critique a work-in-progress. It's a bit like sampling the soup before the chef has added all the ingredients. But nonetheless, Stacy Latt Savage, the museum's artist-in-residence through May, is presenting an evolving site-specific sculptural drawing.

At the time of this writing, one could see the broad stroke blueprint of her concept, inspired by Divine Proportion or Golden Ratio, as a series of black-and-white shapes begin to form a spiral. I won't judge the soup yet.

It will be altered on the second Thursday evening of each month through May, to coincide with New Bedford's monthly AHA! (Art - History - Architecture) event.

| Don Wilkinson