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Transformations:
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Other Selves opens
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Transformations exhibit explores alter egos and more at Mills Pond Gallery



'The End of the Day,' watercolor, by Yuke Li

BY MELISSA ARNOLD

Did you ever have an imaginary friend or enjoy playing dress-up as a child? If so, then you've likely had an alter ego — another side to your personality or self-perception. Some people with alter egos share them openly with the world through socializing, music or writing, while others keep that “other self” a closely guarded secret.

'It's so fascinating to see how artists see themselves.'

— JUROR CAROL FABRICATORE

Allison Cruz, executive director of the Mills Pond Gallery in St. James, is constantly dreaming up unique and fresh ideas for exhibitions.

“My personal belief is the gallery is here to serve the art-going public, and my goal is to grow the art-going public. We do a wide variety of exhibits to give people a chance to connect with something of their interest,” she said in a recent interview. “This is a new generation of young artists, and how people view and access art is changing.”

The idea for Cruz's latest exhibit, *Transformations: Figures of Our Other Selves*, came as she

contemplated how young people today have embraced the concept of an alter ego, from multiple Instagram accounts for different facets of their lives to different personas in music and media. The subject intrigued the director, who said alter egos can be seen as dark and hidden or common and ordinary.

Around 10 exhibits are showcased at Mills Pond each year, roughly half of which are juried. Juried exhibits are curated by a guest juror who examines each entry for its artistry and how well it fits the chosen theme, ultimately selecting his or her favorites for exhibition.

“We all think about ourselves in different ways and sometimes consider what we'd rather be like,” said *Transformations* juror Carol Fabricatore, who lives in Westchester County. “A lot of us have an image of that perfect self or other self. It's so fascinating to see how artists see themselves.”

Transformations marks Fabricatore's first time serving as a juror, but she brings with her a lifetime of experience in creating art and spotting artists with great potential.

A graduate of the School of Visual Arts, Fabricatore has spent the past 25 years on the Visual Essay faculty of her alma mater, where she also assists with

admissions decisions. All the while, she has produced fine art and illustrations for newspapers, magazines, advertising firms and more. Her work has appeared in solo and group exhibitions across the country, including at Mills Pond, where she met Cruz in 2017.

“One of my favorite places to draw is Coney Island, and so I was a part of a Coney Island-themed exhibit Allison had curated,” Fabricatore explained. “She was so easy to talk to, genuinely curious and enthusiastic about my work. She asked right away if I would consider coming back sometime to jury for her. I took great care with my selections, but the process was so much fun.”

Fabricatore pored over digital images of artists' submissions for the exhibit for more than a week before narrowing the field to 34 artists and a total of 47 pieces created with a variety of media. Each artist portrayed transformation in their own unique way, including representations of animals, masks, transgender people and angels, among others.

Cruz said she was initially apprehensive to pursue the theme but was thrilled with Fabricatore's selections.

“I know this topic is out of the ordinary for a lot of artists. But I've been amazed with what I've seen,” she said. “We have reflections of how these artists see themselves at a deeper level. They have a

lot to say, and as I read the artists' statements and learn more about them, I've been so impressed with their willingness to share a different part of their personality.”

Northport artist Margaret Minardi is no stranger to alter egos. In fact, she's seen her own alter ego every day in the face of her identical twin sister, Ellen.

One of Minardi's submissions, titled “*Twins Lost II*,” is a colored pencil drawing of two sisters quietly sitting next to each other on a wooded path, their poses mirror images.

“For me, my sister has always excelled in the places where I struggle. We fill in each other's gaps,” said Minardi, a retired high school art teacher. “[Ellen is] literally my other self. It was an easy subject for me to explore.”

As juror, Fabricatore still has one more job to do. She'll choose first-, second- and third-place winners to receive awards at the exhibit's opening reception on Aug. 17.

“As a whole, this is a really strong exhibit because there are so many different takes on the theme, and people are represented from all ages and all over the country. It's a powerful, deeply personal show and it's going to be fascinating to see the work all hung together,” she said.



'Twins Lost II,' colored pencil, by Margaret Minardi

Transformations artists include:

Bill Brunken (PA), D Brian Burns II (Brooklyn), Sarah Cameron (WA), Lisa L. Cangemi (Mineola), Nan Cao (NYC), Maureen Ginipro (Smithtown), Donna Grossman (FL), Alley Horn (Brooklyn), David Jaycox Jr. (Northport), Melanie Kambhampati (Whitesboro), Kathee Shaff Kelson (Stony Brook), Devin P. Kish (MA), Bruce Laird (Port Washington), AnnMarie LeBlanc (PA), Yuke Li (Brooklyn), Linda Louis (S. Huntington), Maria Gabriella Messina (NYC), Sarah Miller (VA), Margaret Minardi (Northport), Roni Murillo (Valley Stream), Anne Darby Parker (SC), Sean Pollock (Stony Brook), Adelyne Rizzo (PA), Jennifer Scuro (New Rochelle), Tod Seitz (OH), Eileen Shaloum (Long Beach), Scott Sherman (NYC), Steven Sherrill (PA), Michael Spencer (Manhasset), Matina Marki Tillman (CT), Yuta Uchida (MN), Nicholas Valentino (North Babylon), Dominique Vargo (MD) and Holden Willard (ME).

Transformations: Figures of Our Other Selves will be on view at the Mills Pond Gallery, 660 Route 25A, St. James, from Aug. 17 to Sept. 14. An opening reception, featuring many of the artists, an awards ceremony and light refreshments will be held on Aug. 17 from 2 to 4 p.m. The gallery is open to the public Wednesdays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. For further information, visit www.millspondgallery.org or call 631-862-6575.

For additional images from the show, visit www.tbrnewsmedia.com.

On the cover:

'Hyper,' acrylic, gouache, digital, by Nan Cao
Images courtesy of Mills Pond Gallery