

7 PM 8 1 APRIL TALK ARTIST/CURATOR'S TALK

7 PM MARCH 2 1 OPENING -- RECEPTION



Gallery Connexion is pleased to present an exhibition featuring works by both Suzanne Hill and Rick Burns, curated by Peter Buckland. As we approach our thirtieth year in 2014, we are excited to feature this ‘conversation’ between founding member Rick Burns - in the gallery dedicated to his memory - and Suzanne Hill, an artist who has been an active member of Gallery Connexion since its earliest years.

Having worked with both artists over several decades, Buckland approached Suzanne Hill to create this new body of work – wanting to discover a fresh perspective and prompt new readings of Burn’s sculptural oeuvre - now nine years after his passing. As Buckland notes, the exhibition is a material manifestation of a conversation of mutual respect between these artists, over many years: one of a plethora of conversations that have formed, and continue to form, the fabric of Gallery Connexion as an artist-run organisation.

Suzanne Hill: in conversation with Rick Burns pairs five of Burns’ sculptural works, including *Lead Them To Water* (1999), with corresponding two and three dimensional work by Suzanne Hill. Approaching the chains, welded metal and sharp edges of Burns’ sculptures, and the sterility and frustration they might evoke, Hill’s response extends into soft, fleshy, organic forms – something perhaps suggested by Burns’ sculptures, though deliberately omitted.

SOPHIA BARTHOLOMEW : Going through the archives, your name shows up on lists of active members as early as 1987. How did you first become involved with Gallery Connexion, and what was it like at that time?

SUZANNE HILL : When it started it was essentially a way to provide studio space, I think. Rick had a studio, and Toby (Graser), and a few others. Incidentally they would show work: ad hoc, basically. And those who had studio space, they would also mind the gallery space. This was before artist run centres were so normal – before they had the national network they do now. Then there were also peripheral members from away – myself, Carol Taylor, Pat Schell ... Over the years it grew. I worked for a while on the board and on committees, and I would always come up for exhibition openings. As more people from the Fredericton area became active with Gallery Connexion it wasn't so necessary for me to come up from "down the road," so to speak.

What was appealing to you about Gallery Connexion?

Well, I knew Rick. And I liked the idea of a place that wasn't quite as formal as the public art galleries were at that time. It wasn't that hard to show in a public gallery back then – there was more money for public galleries maybe: I might be misremembering it, but it seemed more open. On the other hand, it was harder to get into a commercial gallery. Gallery Connexion was a place you could show work that didn't fit into either place.

I would bring my students up from KV (Kennebecasis Valley High School) and take them to Gallery Connexion, to the Beaverbrook (Art Gallery) and to Gallery 78: I wanted them to think about the different things they saw, and to be able to distinguish between these galleries. Even now I don't think people in the general public don't see the differences between these different kinds of spaces.

Gallery Connexion also brought in a lot of work from

away: people from Montreal, Toronto ... this was very important.

Why was it important, do you think?

Well, it was to serve both groups. I grew up outside of Montreal, then came down to Mount Allison (University) for school, then moved back to Montreal for awhile before coming back to New Brunswick and starting a family ... I thought, *I know there's something else going on out there, and I'm not going to have an opportunity to find out what it is until my kids are grown up.* For people who ended up in the backwoods – like me – it was important that Gallery Connexion brought in so many artists, so we could have a sense of what was going on. To experience – vicariously anyway – something of what was going on in Toronto or Vancouver ... If the public wanted to come, good on them. Sometimes the work that came through was god awful, and sometimes it was really exciting.

Also we were able to see things that were happening elsewhere in the

the province – like at Struts (Gallery) in Sackville.

You had an exhibition at Gallery Connexion – titled *Collages* – in May 1987. I was wondering if you could reflect on what it meant to show your work here at that time?

You know, it was neat. At that time Christina Sabat was the art critic for the (Daily) Gleaner, and she wrote a review. I had never had a “real” review – that one was the first, and I felt I had really achieved something by having that review. I couldn’t have had that same kind of objective writing about my work in St. John. That was a real plus for me.

In your notes on this new body of work you mention the notion of ‘the mask.’ Similarly, in an review of your collage works from the eighties (in our archives) Ermon Fay Duschenes says of your work, “the heart of the matter is the human condition – how we survive civilization, and the ‘mask’ that we present.” I wonder if you could speak to this? Have what you describe as “things that are hidden, repressed, masked” always been a consideration in your work?

When I look back, yes they have. An exhibition I did early on at the craft college (now the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design) was of masks. Also, my work for the first show I had at the Beaverbrook (Art Gallery) had had to do with this ... that skin you create to hide under.

One group of pieces in this show –

Façade – is about this surface, or Jungian *persona* in psychoanalytic terms. What we present to the world ... well, I’ve always been interested in what’s not visible – the sum total of your experiences that really informs your decisions and makes you operate the way that you do.

Everything I’ve done has been trying to get under that *persona*. When I’ve been successful, people say things about a work – what it made them feel – that is probably quite different than what I was thinking of when I made it. Because it spoke to that (Jungian) *shadow* underneath. That whole idea of having a common thread – that we all have insecurities, and things we regret – by talking about that, it presents the possibility that someone else felt these same things. Maybe people think, *well, I’m not the only one.*

When I was working on *Façade*, first I was thinking about tables, I then about tablecloths – we cover the table – now why would we do that? Kind of like the layers of protection we put over ourselves: the silencer, then the tablecloth ... The clothing we wear, the makeup ... it’s the stuff you put on to protect yourself.

Is a work successful to you when it accesses this shadow in different people?

It’s successful if it gets a response! If people hate it, that’s okay; if people love it, that’s great – that’s better. What you don’t want is indifference.

Has your understanding of ‘the mask’ changed over time? And in your mind, why are representations

the basement gallery of the N.B. Craft School and Centre in another display area that happily shows new creative ideas in-the-making, though these have related directly to subjects or fields of study taught at the school.

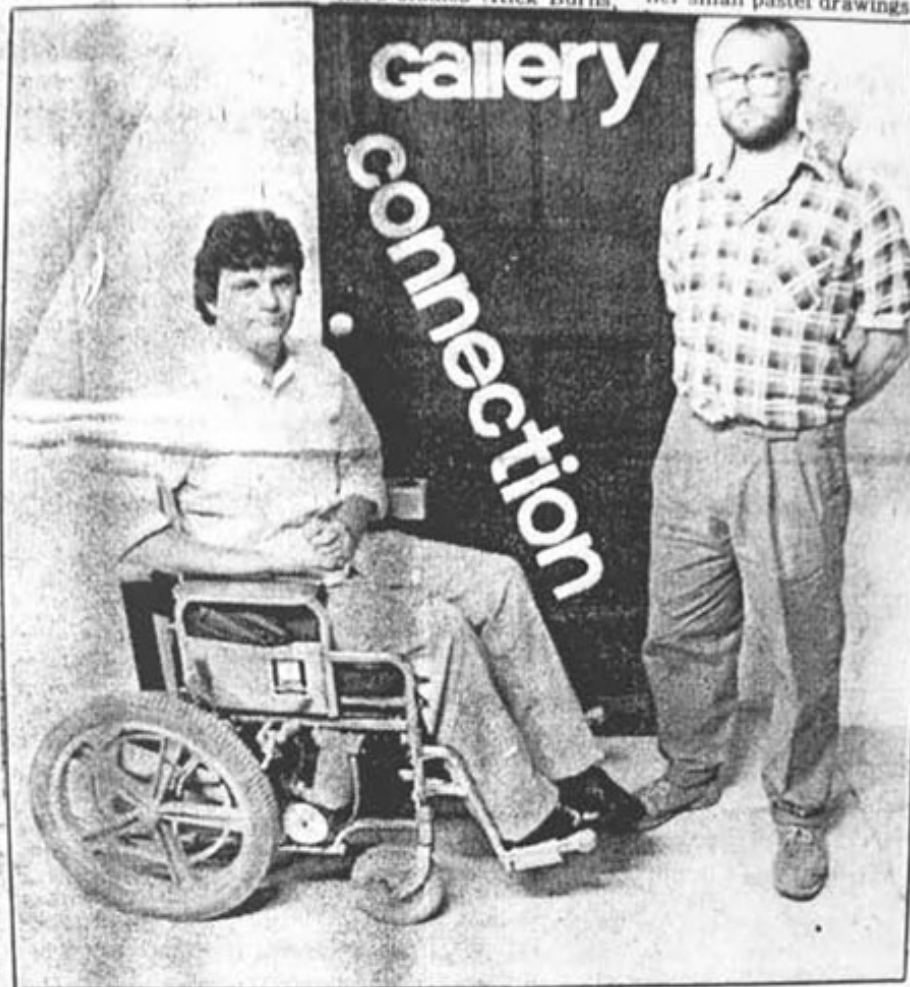
The "Fibreexplorations"

at the same location.

Under the initiative of Fredericton artist Rick Burns, seed monies from a Canada Council Explorations grant and the provincial development branch, the co-operative encompasses four separate artist's studios (Rick Burns,

of inspiration and ideas.

In "New Pranks," Rick Burns experiments with large-scale paintings that combine the solidity seen in his Tortuga series (now showing in the Spanish Lounge, UNB) and a freer, calligraphic quality of earlier small pastel drawings.



Rick Burns, seated, and Peter Gorm at Gallery Connectir part of an artists' co-operative in the basement annex of Justice Building

SUZANNE HILL

COLLAGES

gallery connexion
may 3 to may 28

opening: sunday, may 3
2-4

of the *persona* and the *shadow* important? Are the reasons different now than they were twenty five years ago?

It's always there. It's how I use it that changes. It's more complicated than it was initially. I know more about it now. I've read more about it. Though sometimes all of that knowledge can feel like a barrier. I don't think the work is more or less important.

Are there things about the world now – changes in advertising and popular media, also technologies changing the way people interact with each other socially – that have some bearing on your understanding of the 'self'?

I wonder. I hadn't thought about that. Well, you know what - Facebook is the *persona*, really. You control what you put up ... and often people forget that that's just their *persona*. And the kinds of shows on TV that people are attracted to – they're pretty graphic some of them. When there's so much visual material for us to access ... what part of our humanity do these shows appeal to? It's an interesting area of exploration.

I'm old in the sense that I don't want to learn new ways of presenting my ideas. It's enough work to present my ideas with the materials I've always used! But I'm fascinated by the new things people are doing. Real mixed media. The sort of work that your type of gallery (Gallery Connexion) will be showing – it's a more contemporary way of presenting ideas that have been around for ages and ages. The way we create around them is what's different.

The premise of the exhibition is an ongoing artistic conversation you shared with Rick Burns over many years. Do you have a sense of how that conversation influenced your artistic practice?

Well, just knowing him affected me. Just because of who I am – married with two kids, and not in an

artistic milieu – there were ten years where I didn't make any artwork – when I didn't know any artists here. I met Rick through Karol Partridge, who was New Brunswick's Cultural Programme Officer at that time. Part of her job was to go around the province and make connections between artists – because we were all so isolated.

(When I met Rick) it was wonderful to have a person who wasn't painting covered bridges and birch trees! We were in touch with one another ... probably once every six weeks. It was so good to talk to someone ... it would start your mind going. I wouldn't mimic any of his ideas per se, but sometimes an idea of his would be permission to do this other thing that I had been avoiding because it seemed too crazy. It was about having permission. My education had been very conservative. It was also about talking to someone who was going through the same sort of development at the same time. It was very useful for both of us I guess. It wasn't *pals*. It wasn't *collaboration*.

Peter was the one who approached me with this project. It was hard for

me ... trying to do art in response to someone else's sensibility. I was trying to be him and to be me at the same time. I wanted to take nothing away, and to add nothing that wasn't already there ...

SUZANNE HILL is a professional artist living in Rothesay, New Brunswick. She has exhibited extensively, and her work is included in many private and public collections, including the New Brunswick Art Bank, the Canada Council Art Bank, the University of New Brunswick and the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. A graduate of McGill and of Mount Allison University, Hill has also served on the executive of the NB Arts Board, the New Brunswick Museum Board of Directors, and was an active member of Gallery Connexion in the 1980's.

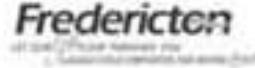
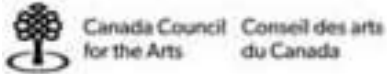
SOPHIA BARTHOLOMEW is a contemporary artist, and currently the Associate Director of Gallery Connexion.

GALLERY CONNEXION is an artist-run centre in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Founded in 1984 as the Organization for the Development of Artists, Gallery Connexion focuses on interdisciplinary, experimental, & socially engaged practices, supporting critical inquiry and the development of local artists, while exposing Fredericton and surrounding areas to contemporary art, through exhibitions, performances, artist residencies, talks, workshops and other programming.

**with
materials
from the gal-
lery
connexion
archives &
photos of
rick burn's
*lead them to
water* (1999)
and
suzanne hill's
correspond-
ing work
vortex (2012)
courtesy of
peter
buckland**







Gallery Connexion is a non-profit organization funded in part by the generous support of government grants and private donors, and through the fundraising efforts of our membership. Presenting *Suzanne Hill: conversations with Rick Burns* would not be possible without the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the New Brunswick Arts Board, the City of Fredericton, Kingswood Ventures, and Northhampton Brewing Company.

