



ABOVE: *Protect Yourself*, 2008, acrylic, india ink, hand-carved rubber block stamping on masonite.

BELOW: *You Simply Glow*, 2009, acrylic, gouache, india ink, hand-carved rubber block stamping on wood.



JESSICA GONACHA AT YES GALLERY AND STUDIO

146 Water Street
Warren, Rhode Island

June 17 to July 5

WHEN THE BOTTOM FALLS OUT OF THE ECONOMY, FEW ESCAPE FEELING THE EFFECTS. THAT'S CERTAINLY TRUE IN RHODE ISLAND, WHERE SMALL BUSINESSES MAKE UP MORE THAN 90 PERCENT OF THE PIE, NO SMALL PART OF WHICH ARE ARTISTS, CRAFTSPEOPLE AND INDEPENDENT GALLERIES.

In the Ocean State, every hard won sale, client or fundraised dollar feels like an endangered resource. Those making a living from the arts rely more than ever on the survival skills particular to the profession, from grassroots marketing to creative frugality.

Keeping a positive outlook in Warren's sales-tax-free arts district, YES Gallery and Studio represents

that spirit, along with a spectrum of local and far-flung artists who share the same ethos.

Defying the myth that art is always expensive or elitist, YES Gallery's inclusive model offers safe haven to collectors of all stripes in these lean times. "I think it's important for people to find a gallery that suits their personality," said owner Leigh Medieros. "We engage with everyone who comes in the door and educate them about the work. We still maintain a level of sophistication, but we don't ever judge anyone that walks in the door by the potential of their wallet."

Saving on traditional marketing costs, Medieros cultivates buzz for YES through alternative means. In a unique program, 5 percent of each exhibit's proceeds benefit a local non-profit. In turn, the organization will promote the show to their constituents, opening up new connections between artist, gallery and community. Open-source blog software and the "flickr" photo sharing service power the gallery's low-cost website, and e-mail marketing informs a growing audience of YES' exhibit openings, free music events and film screenings.

To stay afloat as a small business, flexibility is as key as outreach. When shipping costs skyrocketed this past year, YES pulled in the reins, tweaking the gallery's show schedule to spotlight more regional artists, and extending exhibition dates to guarantee more exposure for the work.

Of the future, Medieros is hopeful. "I'd like for us to be a place that not only Rhode Island collectors come (to discover emerging artists), but folks around New England. I hope we can become more of an educational resource by providing lectures, classes and workshops."

From June 17 through July 5, YES will host a solo show of Atlanta-

based artist Jessica Gonacha's mixed media paintings. These border on the cusp of illustration while retaining a mystery and richness of color and pattern that keep them just unspecific enough to engage on a deeper level. Gonacha's experience as an illustrator and commercial pattern designer clearly informs her compositional groundwork, which explodes in a kaleidoscopic playground of handprinted textures.

Masked and often faceless figures occupy Gonacha's semi-narrative landscapes, which according to the artist, "center around the idea of connection and of living in the moment."

"How do we connect with ourselves... our surroundings?" she asks. "How about the present moment? These are all questions that currently influence my work, and the paintings are how I answer these questions for myself."

True to form in these "survival by bandwidth" times, Gonacha runs an online business of her own, selling affordable reproduction prints of her original artwork on Etsy and her own website alongside commercial products and paper goods bearing her applied pattern designs.

Balancing studio time with running an online business is no small challenge, but through the overload Gonacha finds fuel for her creativity. "The online art world is so vast... inspiration comes easily with all that visual stimulation," she said. "I am constantly discovering new and exciting places that I would like to show, or ways I would love to see my work applied. The fact that I'm in charge of every aspect of my business is motivating in itself — all the different pieces of what I do influence one another and melt together into my own unique experience of running a creative business."

Meredith Cutler

Mayyim Hayyim Gallery
and the
New Center for Arts and Culture
present:

FRESH FRUIT

Photos by Wally Gilbert



Sculpture by Stephanie Chubbuck



April – June, 2009

The exhibit will run until end of June 2009
please call to schedule your visit:
617-244-1836 ext. 1.

Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters
Community Mikveh & Education Center
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