

Capturing the mystique of faces and figures

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Our fascination with the face and figure has inspired artists for eons. From cave paintings to Photoshop, recasting the living form has driven the quest to understand the human condition. It is the muse behind the upcoming show "Faces and Figures," a juried exhibit at the Stamford Art Association starting Jan. 16.



This popular show attracts numerous local artists who can submit work in any medium. Juror [Steven DiGiovanni](#), a well-known Connecticut painter and art professor at [Norwalk Community College](#), says the genre is compelling for artists.

"We choose these figures as our avatars. You are playing through them like a writer or film director. It has a certain power -- the power to represent things and make choices about how things appear. There is the whole narrative aspect of figurative painting."

SAA co-president [Ellen Gordon](#) says last year "Faces and Figures" received more than 120 entries; of those, 55 were selected to be in the show. "We always put out a call to all artists. You don't have to be an SAA member. Anyone can submit work."

This year Gordon submitted a piece titled "Fantastique," a florid, mixed-media work depicting an older woman swathed in rich fabric pelts. "We are intrigued by capturing the figure," Gordon says of artists drawn to recreate the human image. "It is the ultimate challenge."

Artists' submissions depict not only the human form, but any living, biological being, according to Gordon. In previous years images of animals or mythical figures have been among the entries in mediums ranging from sculpture to painting, drawing to photographs to mixed media. Three artists are chosen for first, second and third prize who are awarded cash. Other works receive honorable mention.



DiGiovanni expects a wide range of pieces to choose from. "I try to look for work that has technical merit. It's nice to see artists able to transcend the discipline and find a way of expression in using the figure that's compelling and thought provoking."

Among the entries is an oil painting "Maria Mulata" by [Hernan Restrepo](#). A languid lady pensive in the stillness of tropical heat stares at the sea with her back to us. Lost in the moment, her basket balances on a jutting hip while an arching arm

loftily suspends a piece of passion fruit over her head. [Susan Frey's](#) acrylic painting "Oh My" shouts imagined expletives at us in primary colors. Here Frey's primitive bent catapults us to delve into the human psyche of shock. Frey's other piece "Dottie's Dilemma" is a mixed media where swarms of colored dots implode in and out the dancing lines of a woman's caricature. Jabbed to her shoulder is a blue ribbon brandishing a "thank you" sign, splatted on edges of the frames are "X" ed out "Sale" signs.



The girl in Rosa Colon's oil painting titled "Lesly" holds a curious glance somewhere between acceptance and



suspicion. Her head tilts into a sideways glance and her mixture of emotions fascinate us to wonder what could be holding her gaze.

Most of the art is two dimensional and will fill the two floors of SAA's historic Townhouse Gallery on

Franklin Street. Gordon says there is limited wall space and they require that work be no more than 40 inches by 60 inches.

The winners of the exhibit will be revealed at the opening reception on Sunday, Jan. 16, from 4 to 6 p.m. The exhibit runs to February 10, 2011.

"Faces and Figures" is one of eight annual shows hosted by the thirty year old Stamford Art Association. Six of the shows are chosen by a juror. All of the shows draw submissions from local, regional, and national artists. Currently there are about 140 member artists.

"Faces and Figures"

From Jan. 16, 4 to 6 p.m., to Feb. 10 at the [Stamford Art Association Townhouse Gallery](#),

Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, noon to 3 p.m.,
39 Franklin St.

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