

RISD Reunion

Todd McKie, Richard Merkin, Karen Moss, Leigh Palmer, Phyllis Gay Palmer

SOUTH SHORE ART CENTER, Cohasset, MA

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September 16–October 30, 2011



SOUTH SHORE ART CENTER
Bancroft Gallery

Acknowledgments

South Shore Art Center has had many interactions with artists from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) through our exhibitions program and we often celebrate the extraordinary arts education that is offered there. Many of our high school scholarship winners have gone on to study at this highly-regarded art school. We are pleased to present a reunion of five artists who studied at RISD and whose art has brought them success and recognition as working artists.

Having met Phyllis and Leigh Palmer many years ago, I have personally followed their careers even though they moved from Massachusetts to New York. Todd McKie, a friend of the Palmers, was a juror here for our Remembrances of Things Past anniversary show in 2004. Through Leigh, we were introduced to Karen Moss and the work of RISD painting instructor Richard Merkin.

We appreciate the participation of the RISD Reunion artists and also thank The Victoria Munroe Gallery in Boston and Carrie Haddad Gallery in Hudson, NY for their cooperation on this project. Special thanks to Judith Montminy for the catalog essay.

Sarah Hannan
Executive Director
South Shore Art Center

RISD REUNION

In Art History, students are introduced to a variety of art movements—Fauvism, Impressionism, Realism, Abstract Expressionism, and more. The movements studied are considered “schools of art” shaped by their pioneers, their socio-political context and their institutions of higher learning.

In the spirit of this tradition in art education, RISD Reunion at South Shore Art Center showcases work by five artists who launched careers from one particular school of art—literally. In the 1960s, Rhode Island School of Design drew Todd McKie, Richard Merkin, Karen Moss, Leigh Palmer, and Phyllis Gay Palmer into its dynamic world of creativity.

After earning his master’s degree at RISD in 1963, Merkin taught painting and drawing at the Providence school—a stint that spanned more than 40 years. The four other artists participated in RISD’s European Honors Program based in Rome, where they found a unique base for independent reflection and personal development—pursuits the artists continue to embrace half a century later. And even though their mediums, subjects and styles are markedly different, their art shares a distinct vibrancy coupled with a steadfast commitment to individual exploration and growth.

Work by these artists can be found in noteworthy collections, including those of ABC, Boston Public Library, Citibank, Dana-Farber/Children’s Hospital Cancer Center, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, The Gund Collection, IBM, Microsoft, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, The Museum of Modern Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Pepsico, and Sprint Corporation, among others.

With RISD Reunion, South Shore Art Center is delighted to celebrate not only the five artists featured in the exhibit, but also Rhode Island School of Design, an influential and valued art education institution located only an hour away in neighboring Providence.

—Judith Montminy

Todd McKie

Todd McKie received his BFA from RISD. Since then, his seriously witty paintings, prints, drawings, and sculptures have been shown in galleries and museums throughout the country and are included in many public and private collections.

“My work grows out of looking at other art, from living, and from lots of drawing. The sources include pre-Columbian, African, Eskimo, so-called primitive art, art by mental patients, untrained artists, and children. The work looks, I hope, spontaneous. However, it ain’t that easy being simple; that’s where the drawing comes in. The drawings are made with pen or pencil on cheap paper and function as visual notes to myself, notes that can be altered as I move from idea to execution... Bodies, chairs, flowers, animals, birds, and trees are some of the many images, constantly refigured, that I love to make. Travel influences my work, too; places I’ve been, people I’ve met, meals I’ve eaten...”

McKie lives in Boston where his work is represented by Victoria Munroe Fine Art, Boston (drawings) and Gallery NAGA, Boston (paintings).

www.toddmckie.com



Beauty Rears Its Ugly Head



Dark Victory



Mental Patience

Richard Merkin

Richard Merkin enjoyed a reputation as a painter, illustrator and professional dandy until his death in 2009 at the age of 70. A *bon vivant* with a distinctive mustache, Merkin once said, “Dressing, like painting, should have a residual stability, plus punctuation and surprise. Somewhere, like in Krazy Kat, you’ve got to throw the brick.”

After receiving a master’s degree from RISD in 1963, Merkin taught painting and drawing at his alma mater for 42 years. During that time he commuted between Providence and his home in New York where he also worked as contributing editor to *Vanity Fair*, a columnist for *GQ Magazine*, and contributing illustrator to *The New Yorker*, *Harper’s* and *The New York Times Magazine*.

A prolific artist, Merkin practiced what he preached—he eschewed art trends and movements, convinced that artists must pursue their own paths. His own work often included unusual combinations of depictions of movie stars, sports heroes and personal allusions. His drawings and paintings can be found in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art.

Merkin’s work is represented by Carrie Haddad Gallery in Hudson, NY.



The Cubist



Nocturne: Alice Neel in Soho



Advice to a Young Artist



Carson McCullers



Nature Mort: Miss Otis Regrets



Dorothy Parker

Karen Moss

Ideas—rather than a single recognizable style—drive the work of RISD graduate Karen Moss. Each exhibition or project focuses on a specific concept and the materials are selected accordingly. Her ideas are inspired by a multitude of influences from her travels and flea market finds as well as by research and reading of natural sciences, history, exploration, social issues, and current events. Her art has been described as “playful and observant, contrasting what the world once was with what the world currently is.”

Moss has been awarded commissions for public spaces and private projects in a variety of media, including paintings on steel, ceramics and watercolors. For the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, she created an outdoor mural at North Station, Boston. Her most recent commission was an indoor watercolor mural for the cardiac floor of Children’s Hospital Boston. Moss, who has been the artist-in-residence at several Brookline schools, is included in the Boston Drawing Project housed at Carroll and Sons, Boston.

Moss’s work is represented by BCB Art in Hudson, NY.

www.karenmoss.com



Promenade



Aftermath



Strangeness in the Suburbs

Leigh Palmer

After receiving a BFA from RISD, Palmer has enjoyed solo shows in New York City, Nantucket MA, Cambridge MA, Hudson NY, Woodstock NY and other venues. His paintings are included in the Smithsonian American Art Museum permanent collection as well as corporate and private collections. A resident of the Hudson River Valley, Palmer bases his paintings on observation of the landscape where he lives.

“The images are found or discovered in my memory of familiar places and developed during the painting process. Human beings do not appear, but their presence is felt in the marks left on the ground—furrows, fence rows, roads—and in the air—smoke, haze. The Hudson River School weighs heavily on the landscape painter here, and the influence must be grappled with. I cautiously take energy from the tradition, but I choose humble locations and treat them more soberly, more introspectively....I use beeswax (encaustic) paint because, in its unruliness, it encourages the accidental.”

Leigh Palmer is represented by Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson NY.

www.leighpalmerart.com



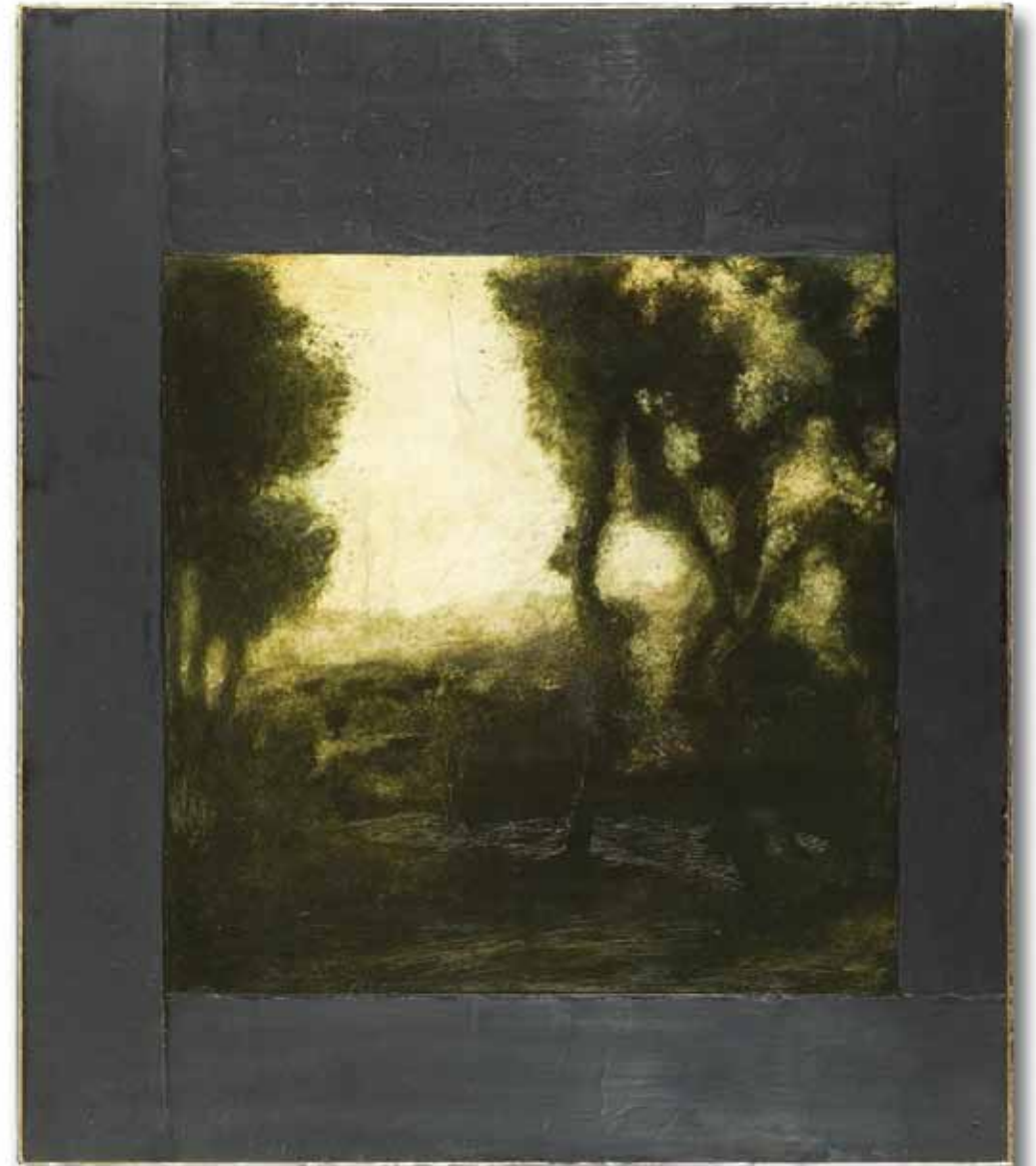
Opening No. 15



Opening No. 10



Opening No. 4



Opening No. 15

Phyllis Gay Palmer

After graduating from RISD with her BFA degree, Phyllis Gay Palmer served in the Peace Corps in Peru. Since then, she has focused on the figure and works directly from life.

“Nothing interests me more than the figure. Over the years I’ve made sculpture, paintings and drawings of people bathing, dancing, wrestling, having sex, skateboarding, primping, drinking, and playing music.”

A chance encounter inspired her series of Back Portrait paintings—oil on a sheet of copper that has been folded and crimped on the sides and fastened to wood.

“In 1973, I saw a beautiful woman unwrap her turban and reveal her bald head. She suffered from alopecia. A hairless head is mysterious and vulnerable, especially from behind. Heads are hairless because of age, spiritual belief, disease, protest, fashion, etc. Genders blur, our cues disappear, there’s quiet conversation. A story is told.”

Palmer, who lives in the Hudson River Valley, has received grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and New York Foundation for the Arts.

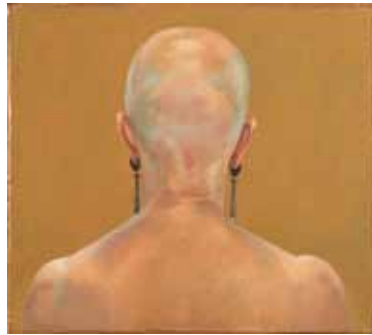
www.phyllispalmerart.com



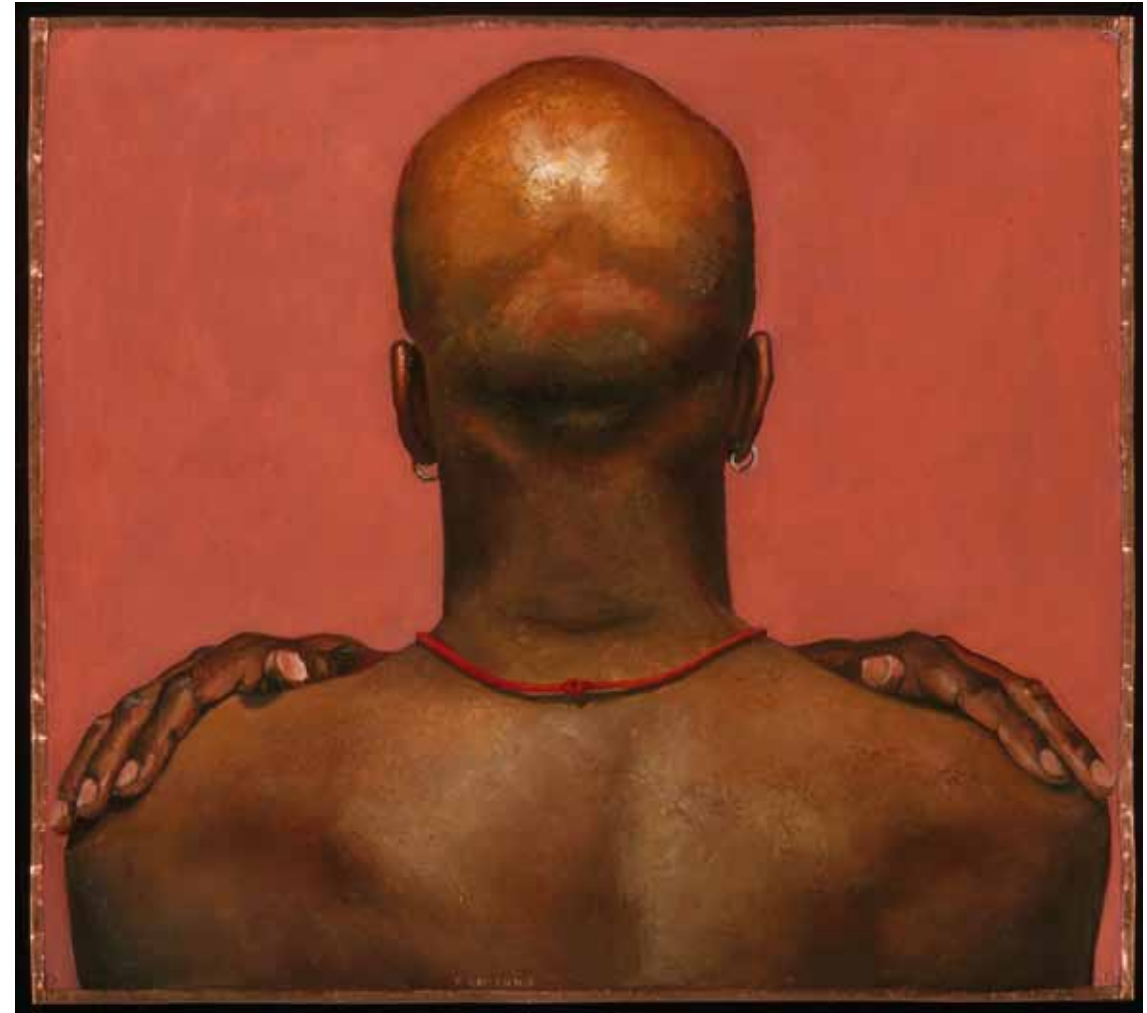
Back Portrait #6



Back Portrait #9



Back Portrait #12



Back Portrait #10

Exhibition Checklist

Todd McKie

Beauty Rears Its Ugly Head, 2010
28" x 34", Flashe/collage

Dark Victory, 2009
28" x 34", Flashe/collage

Mental Patience, 2010
34" x 28", Flashe/collage

Richard Merkin

Nocturne: Alice Neel in Soho, 2004
28" x 24", Oil/canvas

Advice to a Young Artist, 1987
44" x 66", Oil/canvas

The Cubist, 1982-1985
49" x 67", Oil/canvas

Carson McCullers, 2005
20" x 16", Oil/canvas

Nature Mort: Miss Otis Regrets, 1975
51" x 36", Tempera/board

Dorothy Parker, 2005
16" x 16", Oil/canvas

Joe and Paul Merkin, 2003
36" x 56", Oil/canvas

Karen Moss

Promenade, 2010
22" x 90", Acetate/collage

Aftermath, 2007
26" x 40", Acrylic/paper

Strangeness in the Suburbs, 2010
26" x 80", Acrylic/paper

Near Future, 2010
26" x 80", Acetate/collage

Greed, 2006
28" x 40", Walnut ink/paper

Transaction, 2006
27" x 40", Walnut ink/paper

She's Got The Money, 2007
30" x 22", Acrylic/paper

Leigh Palmer

Opening No. 15, 2010

12" x 14", Encaustic, oil, on canvas mounted
on board

Opening No. 10, 2010

18" x 24", Encaustic, oil, metal leaf/linen

Opening No. 4, 2010

19" x 14", Encaustic/board

Opening No. 11, 2010

28" x 24", Encaustic, oil, metal/linen

Lake, c. 2006

28" x 36", Oil/linen

Phyllis Gay Palmer

Back Portrait #6, 2000

17" x 19", Oil/copper

Back Portrait #9, 2000

17" x 19", Oil/copper

Back Portrait #12, 2000

17" x 19", Oil/copper

Back Portrait #10, 2000

17" x 19", Oil/copper

Back Portrait #7, 2000

17" x 19", Oil/copper



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