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A focus on the female form

The female form is explored in a highly personal way as Haynes Galleries in Nashville, Tennessee, presents its *Celebrating Art of Women by Women* exhibition, featuring more than 40 women-focused paintings, sculptures and drawings created by 25 female artists employing an array of styles. From captivating self-portraits, to ethereal nudes, to dreamy scenes with abstract qualities, viewers will

see a variety of female forms painted by those who know them best.

“Women convey empathy in painting women as subjects,” says **Lynn Sanguedolce**, from Danville, California, whose oil on linen *Art Devine* is included in the exhibition and was, she says, inspired by her admiration for the miraculous beauty of the human form. “As women, we understand each other’s stories. We know

each other’s roles. We are daughters, sisters, mothers and grandmothers. We have worn each other’s skins. With empathy comes great compassion and respect for humanity. Artists who are sensitive to those qualities can impart dignity to their subjects.”

Another artist who imparts her experience as a woman in her works is **Lauren Tilden**, whose oil on panel *Least of These* features a baby clutched by a much-older woman. The Monroeville, New Jersey-based artist says her portraits of women are often infused with a slight autobiographical bent.

“When painting a woman, I am interested in capturing those uniquely female experiences, or the female response to the general human condition, that shape the character of my subject,” says Tilden. “Using the physical as a metaphor, I am interested in the hopes and fears of childhood, childbirth, motherhood, old age and dying.”

Another artist in the exhibition, **Danielle Richard**, from Québec, Canada, has oil on canvas *Pour Toi Un Lac* in the exhibition, a scene of a contemplative woman sitting lakeside. The artist says portraying women in her art often prompts existential questions.

“As I work, painting a woman, I see my own fragile humanity and find myself asking, ‘Am I the artist? Am I the subject?’” says Richard. “It is almost a challenge between each other. When I explore in detail how contemporary women artists are handling women as subjects, I have another question, ‘Could a man have painted this?’, because feminist art and art by women are challenging the exclusionary territory, which had been an ‘all-boys club’ for decades. I feel the result of the influx of new points of view expressed in this show will bring bright new possibilities in painting.”

Artist **Holly Bedrosian** depicts herself in the colored pencil on paper work *Self Portrait with Martini* and has three other works in the show. The Salem, New Hampshire-based artist says she finds it fascinating to view artwork of women created by female artists, due to their unique insights and points of view.

“As a woman in today’s society, I have experienced simultaneous pulls in different directions and at times have questioned my decisions,” says Bedrosian.





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1
Agnieszka Pilat,
Time 005, oil on linen
panel, 36 x 36"

2
Lynn Sanguedolce,
Art Divine, oil on linen,
36 x 30"

3
Holly Bedrosian, *Self
Portrait with Martini*,
colored pencil on
paper, 20 x 16"

4
Danielle Richard,
Pour Toi Un Lac, oil on
canvas, 29½ x 35½"

"From talking with other women and also reading firsthand accounts, it seems this is a common feeling. Women can be very hard on themselves and can empathize with other women's struggles and have a great respect for their accomplishments."

An artist who shares that sentiment is **Lea Colie Wight**, who has been working on a series of women enrolled in a rehab

program in Philadelphia over the past few years. Her work in this exhibition is titled *Self Portrait: So Far*, an acknowledgement she is constantly changing, and her life is a work in progress.

"I hope this piece encourages introspection," says Wight, who worked on the painting during a difficult time last year when both her parents were ill.

"I began the painting without a real plan, but as so often happens, the painting began to breathe and have something to say beyond my original intention."

Other artists in the show include **Victoria Novak** and **Suchitra Bhosle**. Bhosle's *Backlit in Jade* juxtaposes warm and cool hues to enhance the subtle elegance of her figure's pose, while Novak's *Scelta* features floating women draped in fabrics, depicted using an Old Masters technique inspired by Caravaggio.

"I do not want to provide a direction on how people should react to my works; instead, my approach is to depict something honest and beautiful," says Novak, based in Rome, Italy. "I try to inject my own feelings at the time of its creation into each piece."

Another artist in the exhibition, **Agnieszka Pilat**, says the young subject in her *Time 005* is an allegorical symbol of choices that make up individual existences. All the artists say they're looking forward to exhibiting with other women who are expressing their unique voices in the artistic space.

"The show offers a great insight into the contemporary scene of some of the best figurative contemporary women painters," says Pilat. "It is amazing how the world of fine art has changed. These women are professional, full-time artists who chose a career in a field that until recently was very male-dominated, and they are exceptionally good. I think this exhibit proves we can compete with the best of our male colleagues." ●



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