

# 'The Art of Collaboration'

Holly Gordon, a Bay Shore-based photographer, talks about the five-year process behind IAM's latest exhibit

BY ANTHONY PERROTTA

**EAST ISLIP**—The Islip Art Museum held an opening reception on Saturday, Aug. 3, for its latest exhibit, "The Art of Collaboration."

The exhibit's program notes the creative partnership between Arthur Dove and Helen Torr, who spent seven years sailing on their houseboat before coming to Centerport Harbor in 1924 and deciding to stay on Long Island's North Shore, which is believed to have provided a great deal of inspiration for their paintings.

Nearly 100 years later, a similar partnership has taken root between Holly Gordon and Ward Hooper, who met on Facebook in 2014.

Gordon, the exhibit's curator, is a photographer from Bay Shore. Hooper is a painter from Northport. Together, they created the Brush/Lens Project, a collaborative effort between the two artists that inspired IAM's latest exhibit and has since grown into a soon-to-be published book, entitled "Parallel Perspectives: The Brush/Lens Collaboration."

"Collaborative synergy is infinite, and this was an exponentially creative and complex open call that challenged artists to extend and expand beyond themselves to seek one or two other artists to engage with and see what might develop... and put it all together in a cohesive visual flow," Gordon writes in her curatorial statement.

During the exhibit's opening reception, Gordon elaborated on these comments, describing the open call as "gutsy."

"There's usually a theme [for an exhibition] and artists are supposed to meet that theme," she added. "There was no theme for this [exhibition] but artists were encouraged to collaborate with others."

Gordon said she wasn't sure what she would see in terms of submissions. "It was like compiling a jigsaw puzzle," she said, and noted that while looking for the artworks' necessary qualities, she started thinking about how they could be "woven together."

The curator also said she was looking for artwork that deals with controversial issues. "Artists do more than just create pretty pictures," she said, with a laugh.

Linda Prentiss and Mark Proper created the piece "Border Crossover" specifically for this exhibit, about six weeks before the due date.

Prentiss, a Ronkonkoma resident, said they "wanted to do something political," which is "traditional" for block print.

Proper, a Patchogue resident, said the piece is meant to "highlight the suffering" of those leaving their country of origin for the United States. The piece also includes the famous lines, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," from Emma Lazarus's sonnet "The New Colossus."

Gordon also said she was looking for works that crossed multiple mediums, including audio and video.

Juan Lopez Espantaleon and Jeffrey Allen Price's piece "This Is How I Say Potato" includes a vinyl promotional poster and video accompaniment, which shows dozens of individuals being interviewed and saying the word "potato" in a wide variety of languages, ranging from English and Irish Gaelic to Albanian and Russian.

Espantaleon couldn't make the opening reception, being that he was in Spain, but Price, a Mastic resident who teaches in Queens, explained that the majority of people who appear in his piece are either fellow artists, friends or students of his. Price's wife, Miat, provides the Thai-speaking portion of the project.

Price said there's a long, drawn-out story as to why potatoes were chosen as the centerpiece, but he feels the root vegetable is "very inviting" for people. "Everyone likes them," he said. "They're also funny, but abstract at the same time."

The creative team hopes to develop the piece into a feature-length documentary, with more questions, in the future. "The piece [on display] is more of a sample," Price said.

Gordon said she never would have known that meeting Hooper online, five years ago, would lead to such a close friendship, which turned into an artistic collaboration, which turned into IAM's current exhibit, which is scheduled to become a book. "And I still don't know what will come next," she said.

"The Art of Collaboration," which began last month, runs until Saturday, Aug. 24. ■



The exhibit's curator, Holly Gordon (center), with Islip Town supervisor Angle Carpenter (left) and the Islip Art Museum's executive director Lynda Moran (right).



ABOVE: Jeffrey Allen Price stands beside his piece, "This Is How I say Potato." AT LEFT: Mark Proper (left) and Linda Prentiss (right) stand beside their joint effort, "Border Crossover."

All photos  
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