

Ceramic Wood

Limner Gallery owner Tim Slowinski's wild ride of a year as curator of the Woodstock Artists Association & Museum solo shows screeches towards a stupendous close this month with the Saturday, November 21 evening opening of "The Time is NOW! The Ceramic Art of Craig Wood," alongside main gallery and downstairs' juried shows, the big one with a holiday theme.

Wood, who splits time between Woodstock and Oklahoma, is a ceramic artist who makes wittily ebullient stoneware plaques and tiles that explore themes of self-identification, transcendence of the ego, and living in the moment. Although his work has been shown and sold at Clouds for years, this is his first major local exhibition.

Thank you, Timothy, for another graphically-bold and stylistically innovative addition to the local art scene!

"I am generally speaking a very happy person. Sometimes I think about my own death; and what that means, if anything. And about yours, too," Wood says of himself on his website. "Oh, I'm also a diabetic and have prostatitis. I'm currently suffering from a urinary tract infection, and my right toenail has fallen off from being stubbed about a month ago. The fourth fingernail of my right hand is similarly bruised. I love Spam and chocolate and, well..."

To get a sense of where the artist is coming from, and what in his work would have attracted Slowinski, whose Hudson-based gallery (formerly in his home town of Phoenicia) has a tendency to focus on a neo-pop surrealism with graphic arts elements, consider this. Among Wood's stated influences, at least for the moment, are his visit to the major retrospective of British provocateurs Gilbert & George last year, (I was particularly struck by their idea of including as much of 'yourself' - whatever that is - in the art; and of making the art as accessible as possible); Dutch Golden Age crafts, as well as Byrdcliffe-era Arts & Crafts stylization; and the teachings of Eckhart Tolle (particularly his ideas of disassociation from your mind and living in the now).

"I have a strong conception of how I want the show to look," Wood blogged enthusiastically this week of his last-minute preparations to fill the WAAM solo space starting this Saturday, and speak about his work in an Artist's Lecture on Sunday, November 22. "I'm hoping for a strong visual presentation that reinforces the themes of the work. We shall see."

Most definitely.

Next year's list of solo shows, filled with such prolific local names as Pat Horner, Susan Togut, Yale Epstein and Loel Barr, has been curated by Andes-based gallery owner Zoe Randall, who has increasingly filled her successful gallery with Woodstock-based artists.

As for the rest of the Artist's Associations gallery spaces holding openings this weekend, and running shows up until WAAM's winter sabbatical starting just after the New Year, the big ticket item is the always-crowded, usually salon-style, and unquestioningly affordable Holiday Show and Sale, a new Small Works exhibition juried by former WAAM Gallery Manager Prudence See, and works by Active Member Agnes Tomaselli.

The exhibition 11Pick2, featuring a host of key contemporary Woodstock artists, continues in the Towbin Wing through January 3, as well.

The key holiday show is set to feature a large assortment of works by members working in all media and in all styles, with everything priced below \$500 and most in the \$100 to \$200 range, the better to sell (and end up wrapped as gifts to be given in the coming month).

The joint openings run 4 p.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, November 21 at the galleries located at 28 Tinker Street in the heart of Woodstock.

For further info visit www.woodstockart.org or call 679-2940. ++