

For Immediate Release

HOW WE LIVE, PART II:

Global Artistic Visions of Need and Empathy, Political Chaos and its Repercussions
Selections from the Marc and Livia Straus Family Collection: Two Dimensional Works

On View: March 1, 2021 – January 31, 2022



A.A. Bronson, *White Flag #8*, 2015

In “**How We Live, Part II**” we have retained most of the original sculptures from “**How We Live**” since, due to the pandemic, the works had very short physical access. To these works we have added paintings, tapestry and other two dimension constructs, to expand on the discourse. “*How We Live: Part II*” offers, for this moment in history, on-line access to an expanded “How We Live” exhibition, taking stock of how the narratives incorporated into artists’ works bespeak universal fears, concerns, and celebrations of who we are as human beings, as Americans, as part of a global community. The year 2020-2021 has been a trying one. The COVID19 pandemic has, of this moment, caused the death of over 2.5 million people and climbing, including over half a million Americans. In the midst of this disaster the US has faced election dissention, turmoil and violence that reached to the very core of our republic, to the Congress of the United States, and it is not over. So, in expanding the exhibition ‘*How We Live: Part II*’ to include two-dimensional works, we

looked to responses from the global art community. What in our archives has had lasting meaning; what still addresses the reality, the paranoia and the fears of today?

In selecting the works on display, I am reminded of the iconic film, *Terminator*. After near misses with world destruction, after the apparent victorious emergence of justice and peace thanks to the young John Connors (a contemporary Messianic figure), his mother, Sarah and the Terminator, his protector, the final scene shows two young males in combat, street fighting, and John asks the equivalent of: Can there ever be peace or is this, hate and anger, a damning destructive part of human nature? Over the years we have installed works that addressed this topic. Folkert DeJong, *Mount Maslow*, built on Abraham Maslow's theory that once human beings have their necessities they always want more- more power, more possessions, more money, unlimited independence- yet at the end we all die. It is a type of Ozymandius reality check, "Look at my works, you mighty, and despair," yet only two cement feet remain in the desert landscape, all that is left of the iconic figure of yore.

The works chosen for this exhibition address all of these issues and in doing so give us pause to consider history, to consider modes of survival and to learn.

Let us focus for a moment on **A.A. Bronson's *White Flag #8, 2015***, not just the work, but the artist who has created it, Bronson, a member of the collective General Idea along with Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal. If one visited the final exhibition for the collective, one cannot forget the poignant images and videos of a human being wasting away, an emblem of a society disintegrating, an art world decomposing as blame for the Aids epidemic was laid at the doorstep of the gay community, of the artists. Both Felix and Jorge died in 1994, leaving A. A. Bronson to carry the message of what it means to be an empathic human being, on his own. That was the 80's, and now, as I listen to comments and accusations about 'The China Plague', and hear about elderly Asians attacked on the streets of NY, I recognize the scapegoating that so moves responsibility off one's own shoulders, onto another's. And this is America, home of immigrants, home of the brave, the red, white and blue of our flag, white-washed by Bronson, yet incorporating a touch of raw honey.

We drew on works in the collection that hark back to the transition from Communism to Parliamentary systems, to democratic ideals, free education for all, though in **Josef Bolt's** works, children are haunted, not free, live in 'Fairy Tale Story' fear of what lays in wait, the wolf on the way to grandma's, this as many schools were or still are closed for fear of contagion. And **Daniel Pitin's** unbalanced universe echoes boarded up stores in New York and across the country, destroyed interiors, metaphorically and realistically, of the Halls of Congress post siege. And **Zsolt Bodoni's** portrayal of Tito I leave to your imaginations, looking at the figure in his recognizable blue uniform, iconic in pose, his hat shielding his stony face, a visage with no compassion, no conscience.

Morris lives in a community controlled by cartels, south of Mexico City. In *'El dueño de todo'* (The Owner of Everything) he has gathered street objects, found materials, just as we see being gathered by the many homeless across the country, yet Morris has now made them precious, incorporating them into a story of life, a story of human beings from the renaissance art works of the greats imprinted on his canvases, till today.

There are works to lighten the darkness, *'Guinness'* with the Irish girls in the background, people who know how to laugh, and of course **John Wesley** would portray them in naïve baby blue and pink, or **Alison Taylor's** boy with remote, as we, of this era, sit in our home in front of our computer and television screens, homebound with our mementos, our relics of a life as it once was not so long ago. **Serban Savu** can look to the continuity, society doing what it has to do, regardless of circumstance. Health care givers go to work, trash pickups occur, workmen build, and society moves on. Hernan Bas can sit in a beautiful landscape, and these last few months many of us have come to appreciate the outdoors as never before, a place of space, a place to exercise, to wave to others from a safe distance, to feel good. But even in landscape often the dark side looms, issues we face today, pollution, dissipation of the very air we breathe, trees denuded and ghostly, a feature of Sven Kroner's polluted landscape, **Schwontkowski's** *'End of the Earth'*.

And lastly, a cry after a year of sickness, a period of political turmoil and trial, how to value and keep what is so precious and can be so easily lost, **Jeffrey Gibson's** *'Someone Great is Gone'*, an elk hide, colorfully painted, stripped off its owner, a species endangered.

Art is a universal voice. It warns, it condemns, it gives us hope in distress, it teaches us compassion, it teaches us humanity.

Lest we forget!

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Hudson Valley MOCA, located in Peekskill, NY, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts and education center dedicated to the enrichment of communities in the Hudson Valley and Peekskill, New York, through contemporary art exhibitions, arts education programs, artist residencies and lectures, and the Peekskill Project, our bi-annual international art festival.

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