
Colleen Browning - Ephemera

Colleen Browning: The Early Works

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Colleen Browning: The Early Works Press Release

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**Arts &
Minds**

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**The career of artist Colleen Browning is rediscovered
in two exhibitions at Fairfield University**

**“The Early Works” at the Bellarmine Museum of Art
“A Brush with Magic” at the Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery
January 24, 2013 – Sunday, March 24, 2013**

FAIRFIELD, Conn. (Dec. 7, 2012). *Saved from obscurity!* Artist **Colleen Browning (1918-2003)**, a National Academician, played a significant role in America’s contemporary realist movement in the years after 1950. Although she attained sensational early success on the American art scene, her fame has almost entirely evaporated. **Fairfield University** rediscovers and celebrates the career of this Anglo-American Realist painter with two exhibitions, mounted jointly by the **Bellarmino Museum of Art and the Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery**, and on view from **January 24, 2013 through March 24, 2013**. Exhibition sponsors are the National Endowment for the Humanities and Whole Foods Market. The media sponsor is *Venü* magazine.

The two Fairfield University exhibitions highlight not only this prolific artist’s early works on paper and signature oils from the 1950s, in the Bellarmine Museum’s *Colleen Browning: The Early Works* exhibition, but also a selection of compelling oil paintings created in the years after 1960, in the Walsh Gallery’s *Colleen Browning: A Brush With Magic*. Taken together, these works showcase and illustrate seven decades of the artist’s lengthy career. Opening receptions, free and open to the public, take place on Thursday, January 24, 2013, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Bellarmine Museum of Art, and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery. Public programs related to the exhibition (listed below) are also scheduled.

“With the incandescence of a comet’s tail, Colleen Browning ascended quickly. By the mid-1950s, she was pushing the upper stratosphere of the American art galaxy. And like the comet hurtling through time and space, she, for a time, blazed with great intensity only to have the memory of her work fade into virtual oblivion,” writes Philip Eliasoph, professor of art history at Fairfield University, in his recently published monograph on *Colleen Browning: The Enchantment of Realism* (Hudson Hills Press, 2011). “But the history of art is filled with names and personalities who were never fully appreciated in their day, only to be rediscovered with a more sympathetic appreciation by larger audiences.”

These shows – which will be traveling nationally – were organized by the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art (SAMA), the world’s foremost repository of Browning’s work. The exhibitions, which have already appeared, in various formats, at Axis: Ballymun in Dublin, Ireland, at the National Academy Museum in New York City, and at SAMA, will travel to the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio (April 21-June 16, 2013) and the Amarillo Museum of Art in Texas (October 25, 2013 - January 5, 2014), following their Connecticut debut.

“With its mysterious, subjective quality, Colleen Browning’s work exemplifies the Magic Realist strain in American painting,” said Dr. V. Scott Dimond, SAMA Curator for Visual Arts. “In her compositions, Browning suggests the illusory, sometimes fantastical quality of seemingly ‘real’ subjects. Enigmatic glances and gestures, odd viewpoints, brilliant color and suggestive shadow all conspire to capture the viewer’s attention and to render the mundane magical.”

Colleen Browning, of Irish heritage, was born in England in 1918. A child prodigy, she was determined to be an artist from a very young age. She was still in her teens when she first exhibited in London, and she studied at the prestigious Slade School of Art on scholarship. Her first one-person show was in London’s Little Art Gallery in 1949. That same year, she moved to New York City, where her works began arousing critical acclaim. She exhibited in the Whitney Museum of American Art’s

1952 annual exhibition and held her first U.S. solo exhibition a year later, at the Edwin Hewitt Gallery in New York.

Colleen Browning had the ability to endow scenes from everyday life with touches of “magic realism.” She played an instrumental role in the establishment of American Realism, a movement that was dominated by men in the mid-twentieth century. A leader in the modern and post-modern revivals of realism in American art, Browning was a painter whose oeuvre defies easy categorization. At a time when Jackson Pollock and avant-garde American artists were abandoning realism in favor of Abstract Expressionism, Browning stayed true to her Realist vision as well as her training as a figurative painter. Her works reveal a deft hand in the rendering of human anatomy and a facility with perspective: testaments to her studies at London’s Slade School of Art, where she was introduced to the methods and manners of the Old Masters in keeping with the European academic tradition, which dates back to the 16th century. Complementing her academic training was Browning’s remarkable capacity to capture fleeting moments.

“With a determined grit, spunkiness and nervy aplomb, Browning tasted many triumphs,” writes Philip Eliasoph, in *Colleen Browning: The Enchantment of Realism*. “Adventurous and audacious, she willed herself into the forefront of American art at mid-century,” he adds.

Browning’s work successfully marries texture and form with intriguing compositions. The artist once described her work thusly: “I paint different subjects, but I am always a realist, and illusionist, if you prefer,” she said. “I look for technique that will most effectively present the character of the object or scene.” Her paintings also reflect her interests in mystery and paradox. “I am very lucky to be an artist. I can make windows into a transformed world where the mundane becomes magical in an illuminated moment.”

Throughout her illustrious career, Browning was a teacher, mentor, and role model

to artists at the Pratt Institute, the City College of New York, and the National Academy of Design. Her works are held by many private and public collections, including the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Milwaukee Art Center, the St. Louis Art Museum, the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art in Pennsylvania, and the New York State Art Museum.

She was selected to exhibit in many major invitational exhibitions at venues such as the Whitney Museum in New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Walker Art Gallery in Minneapolis, and the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh. Her work was featured in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Glamour*, the *New York Times*, *Arts Magazine*, *Art International* and *American Artist*.

“Wherever we go in this reevaluation of Colleen Browning’s life and art, we are constantly faced with unexpected pleasant surprises,” notes Professor Eliasoph.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS related to the exhibitions include: a **Lecture** entitled “Colleen Browning: From London to Broadway: My Fair Lady” presented by **Philip Eliasoph, Ph.D.**, professor of art history, Fairfield University, and author, *Colleen Browning: The Enchantment of Realism* at **5 p.m. on Thursday, January 31, 2013**, in the Diffley Board Room, Bellarmine Hall; a “**Family Day: Street Life**”, sponsored by Maritime Motors, (best for ages four and up) from **1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, February 9, 2013**, in the Bellarmine Museum, which is also open to the public that day from noon to 5 p.m.; and a **Gallery Talk** “Colleen Browning: Jumping Aboard the Art World’s Uptown Express” presented by **Philip Eliasoph, Ph.D.**, professor of art history, Fairfield University, and author, *Colleen Browning: The Enchantment of Realism*, from **noon to 1 p.m. on Wednesday, February 13, 2013, Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery, Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts**. All programs are free and open to the public.

The Bellarmine Museum of Art is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. when the University is in session and is located on the lower level of Bellarmine Hall on the campus of Fairfield University, 1073 North Benson Road, in Fairfield, CT. Admission is free. Call (203) 254-4046, or visit www.fairfield.edu/museum.

The **Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery** is located in Fairfield University's Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts. Hours are Tuesday-Saturday: 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday: 12 p.m.-4 p.m. (Closed Monday). The Gallery is also open one hour prior to curtain and during intermission of Quick Center performances and closed at any time the Quick Center is closed for the holidays. The Quick Center is located on the campus of Fairfield University, 1073 North Benson Road, in Fairfield, CT. Visit: http://www.fairfield.edu/arts/qc_walsh.html

Colleen Browning East Harlem Street Scene

Pictured is "East Harlem Street Scene" by Colleen Browning (1929-2003), on view at the Bellarmine Museum of Art in the exhibition "Colleen Browning: The Early Works," from Thursday, January 24, 2013, through Sunday, March 24, 2013. The show one of two Fairfield University exhibition celebrating the works of Colleen Browning. The Thomas J. Walsh Art Gallery is presenting "Colleen Browning: A Brush With Magic," on view from January 24, 2013 through March 24, 2013.

Fairfield University offers its students and the regional community a wide array of opportunities to enjoy the arts and enrich their lives through study, performance, appreciation, and thought. The annual Arts & Minds season of events at Fairfield provides an outstanding array of cultural and intellectual events that include the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts season, the popular Open VISIONS Forum lecture series, professional and student performances, art exhibits, special lectures, and a myriad of other lifelong learning opportunities. For further information, visit www.fairfield.edu/arts.

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