

Exhibit sets out to show relevance of still-life painting

Not all of the artists accomplished the goal, but the presentation is still a revelation.

By Victoria Donohoe
INQUIRER ART CRITIC

"Tabletop Arenas," a rewarding and informative presentation of more than 60 paintings by 24 members of Zeuxis, a New York association of artists who paint still lifes, is on view at Haverford College.

A traveling show that will surprise many by its diversity, the display sets out to demonstrate that still-life painting is on the rise again and we are invited to see this for ourselves here — such work offers a means to express an aesthetic sense and a vision of reality.

Still, in this show, only Zeuxis members Tim Kennedy and Lucy Barber, along with guest artists William Bailey and Gabriel Laderman push still-life painting as a form important in itself to particularly rich conclusions.

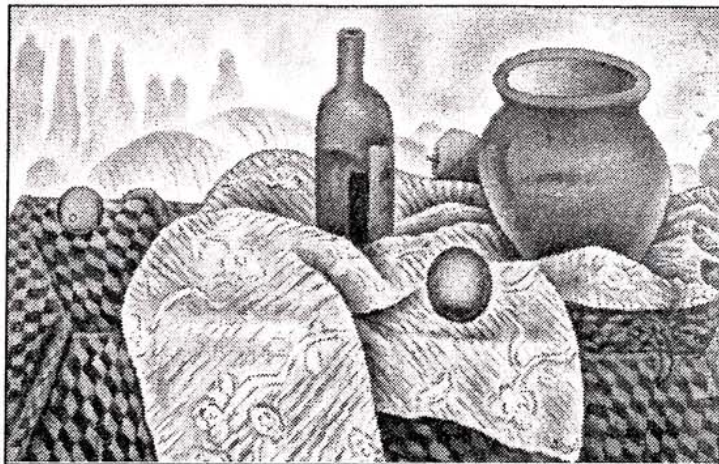
Bailey and Laderman are renowned present-day masters of American still-life painting. Well represented here, they lend prestige and weight to the show. But it's Kennedy and Barber who stand out as this display's exceptional talents. For they seem to understand the inherent potentialities of their still-life subject matter so well that it has become for them a personal and strong form that's nonetheless subtle.

Remarkably, such work stands up on its own and isn't subsumed in considerations about technique.

Other exhibitors whose works are worthy of note are William D. Barnes, Suzanne Biggins, Bevan Engman, Stanley Friedman, Robert Jessel, Richard LaPresi, Eve Mansdorf, Ruth Miller and Victor Pesce.

"Tabletop" almost effortlessly achieves the kind of successful melding of painting styles — ranging from realism to primitivism to abstraction — that many another exhibit strains for.

What could have been a stale, "members-only" format was stretched here to new possibilities. Zeuxis provides an open forum for artists to present their work and discuss the future of creative action.



"Convergence," a 2002 oil painting by Robert Jessel, is on display at Haverford College.

One leaves this show with a feeling of honest pleasure from having seen works that evoke connections to the world around us without attempting to imitate or transcribe it photographically. And though the talent of a few of these artists is still raw, this exhibit is in part a revelation.

Haverford College's Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Coursey Road, Haverford. To Feb. 20.