

Related Events:

All events are free and open to the public.

Exhibition Reception

Sunday, February 8, 3 – 5 pm

Art Thing

Tuesday, March 3, 6 - 7 pm

The artist and curator will talk informally about the exhibition.

Bits and Pieces:

Thursday, April 2, 6 - 8 pm

A video screening and discussion curated by Livebox.

A 50-minute screening of new work by Gregg Biermann, Sean Capone, Valerie George, Henry Gwiazda, Ellen Lake, Jodie Mack, Ruth Pringle, Michael Szpakowski, and the ManosBuckius Cooperative that focus on collage techniques in video will be followed by a discussion led by Catherine Forster. This program will be shown on a monitor in 4833 from March 15 - April 12. www.liveboxgallery.com/ExhibFrontPg.html

About the artist:

Born and raised on the Northwest side of Chicago, Mary Lou Zelazny studied painting at the California College of Arts and Crafts and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she has been Adjunct Professor since 1990. She has been a visiting artist at various institutions including Maine College of Art, Williams College, University of Iowa, and Northwestern University. Paintings by Zelazny have been featured in many solo and group exhibitions in Chicago the Midwest, and in Poland. Her works are in the collection of the Rockford Museum, The Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago), the McCormick Place West Public Art Collection and other corporations and private collectors.

The exhibition catalogue has been made possible through the generous support of a grant from the School of the Art Institute, a special assistance grant from the Illinois Arts Council, Michael and Sandra Perlow, Paul and Amy Carbone, Larry and Laura Gerber, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Grossman, Carl Hammer, and friends of the artist. Catalogues are available for purchase for \$15 at the Art Center's front desk.

This exhibition is presented in its entirety online through the Illinois State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. www.ilnmwa.org/

Select artworks are available for purchase. A pricelist is available at the Art Center's front desk.

Hyde Park ARTCENTER

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by the Alphawood Foundation; The Chicago Community Trust; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Joyce Foundation; JPMorgan Chase Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Orbit Fund; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Sara Lee Foundation; South East Chicago Commission; The Wallace Foundation; and the generosity of its members and friends.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

Gallery 1 & Cleve Carney Gallery

February 1 – April 12, 2009

Altogether Mutable: The work of Mary Lou Zelazny



Stardust, 1991
collage and oil
on canvas
46 x 60 inches
collection of
Larry and Laura
Gerber

Altogether Mutable: The Work of Mary Lou Zelazny is the first mid-career retrospective exhibition dedicated to the vibrant and allusive paintings by Chicago-based painter Mary Lou Zelazny. For nearly thirty years, Zelazny has woven narrative, humor and sexuality into the painted image by seamlessly combining collage and realism. This exhibition presents an expansive selection of the artist's oeuvre to date featuring over 90 collage paintings and studies made between 1980 and 2008.

Mary Lou Zelazny is often tied to the Chicago Imagists, having been instructed by artists such as Ray Yoshida and Karl Wirsum and exhibited at the momentous Phyllis Kind Gallery early in her career. Yet this exhibition bears a trajectory of technical styles and socially-conscious subjects that have pushed Zelazny to go beyond the Imagist tradition and forge a new path in the canon of painting. Her works pose questions and make pointed observations concerning the complexity of human relationships and the socialized - even commercialized - roles we play in those relationships. According to Zelazny, "Collage never completes the story; instead it leaves openings for multiple interpretations." She constantly reinvents new metaphors for our perplexing experience of the contemporary world.

Each unique series of work presented in Altogether Mutable reflects the spirit of a decade and probes the collective psyche for signs of emotional progress or relapse. The 1980s are categorized by Zelazny's introduction of animated human forms constructed out of miscellaneous food and electronic parts, as seen in Thick as Thieves (1986) from the series Fertility Monsters. The work of this period appears fast-paced and frenzied, reflecting the spirit of American culture at the time.

During the 1990s, four series of works stand out - Living with Memorabilia, Soundings, Polonaise, and What Was the



Thick as Thieves, 1986, collage and oil on panel 79 x 55 inches, collection of Charles and Susan Manker.

Question? - each with a distinct style and purpose. The painting Stardust from the Living with Memorabilia series exemplifies Zelazny's attraction towards highlighting the awkward behaviors of people involved in relationships. The study of human interaction carries over into the works titled Polonaise as well (located in the Cleve Carney Gallery). Paintings in the - Soundings series all depict an underwater theme, while the What Was the Question? series consists of all of the works with elaborate drapery, such as She Had Blue Eyes (1997). Both of these series grapple with the lonely episodes in life that help define one's roles and identities, especially for women.

In the new millennium, Zelazny's untitled series of artwork, such as Beautiful

Tomorrow (2003) includes original approaches to collage and painting, expanding her repertoire with cut-up abstract acrylic monoprints on paper, archival ink-jet prints, and photographic platinum prints. These additional techniques enable Zelazny to combine movement and stillness in the same picture plane and show the individual in a calm and pensive state. The most recent works are primarily located in the Cleve Carney Gallery.

The central theme of relationships: forming, dissolving, erupting or perhaps ossifying or fossilizing, connects one series to another, making the entire body of work altogether mutable. Relationships on all levels - friends, family, lovers, strangers, self - serve as the perfect lens to focus our reactions to emotions such as sexual desire, loneliness, and paranoia. Universally unresolved issues of gender equality, human rights, and identity politics that continue to afflict society are mischievously embedded into Zelazny's pictorial narrative. The open-ended and quizzical interpretation she presents is neither ironic nor satiric, but rather sincerely silly.

This summary exploration of Zelazny's work also reveals the importance of her work in relation to what is developing in contemporary art today. Before quirky sexualized portraiture received its recent revival in the international art market with contemporary painters like John Currin and Lisa Yuskavage, Mary Lou Zelazny had long been mining the powerful combination of the grotesque and the real to explore social commentary in contemporary portraiture. Within the Chicago art scene, her work lies somewhere between the two other great contemporary collage artists that are among her peers: James Garrett Faulkner and Tony Fitzpatrick. Each of these artists has a distinctive narrative style that provides a sounding board to assess the strategic role of collage in Zelazny's painting. What began as a method to

differentiate the figure and ground has now worked its way back into the landscape, blending the figure into the ground. It is this constant development in Zelazny's combination of collage, print, and painting that is the foundation of the work's evolving originality and freshness.

The Hyde Park Art Center presents Altogether Mutable now to call attention to the extensive and fascinating body of work that Mary Lou Zelazny has built thus far.



Beautiful Tomorrow, 2003, acrylic, collage, and oil on canvas, 48 x 50 inches, collection of Lisa Wainwright

The power of Zelazny's work originates through her ability to express the everyday overlap of reality and fantasy captured for our examination without inflated promises of transformation. Still young in her career, Mary Lou Zelazny has produced massively (if not monstrosly) in her oeuvre and promises abundance unfolding into the future.

Allison Peters Quinn
Curator of Altogether Mutable