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Holiday Show Brings Newcomers and Returning Artists to Grenning Gallery

by Tessa Raebeck



“Antique Grasshopper Weathervane” by Sarah Lamb, 2011

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Some 20 years ago, Maryann Lucas brought her two young toddlers to visit Laura Grenning at the [Grenning Gallery](#), then located next to the Corner Bar on Sag Harbor’s Main Street.

“I’ll never forget,” said Lucas, flanked by materials and colorful oil paintings in her new studio behind the Romany Kramoris Gallery in the Carruthers Alleyway off Main Street. “When I walked into her gallery for the first time and thought, ‘Some day.’”

Over two decades later, ‘some day’ has arrived; Lucas will join seven other artists in the Holiday Show at the Grenning Gallery this Saturday. Celebrating the gallery’s most successful year since its 1997 opening, the Holiday Show features a range of carefully selected artists, coming from as far away as Sweden and as close by as Lucas’ studio. While Lucas is showing her work for the first time, headliner Sarah Lamb is returning to the gallery after years of success.

Grenning gave Lamb her first show in 1998, when the artist was in her early 20s. After showing with Grenning for a little over two years, Lamb entered into an exclusive deal with the Spanierman Gallery in New York City. The Spanierman Gallery, which is still open today and continues to show Lamb’s work, no longer has an exclusive deal with the artist, allowing her to show with Grenning once more.

“I’ve been calling her every six months for five or six years now,” Grenning said Monday. “I have clients that want her work.” After years of waiting, Grenning is excited to exhibit ten new works by Lamb in the Holiday Show.

“What she’s doing is she does these amazing still lifes,” said the gallerist. “She’s very prolific. The thing she spends most of the time on is setting them up and deciding the composition. She’s got an excellent eye for design.”

Lamb puts more time into designing her work through the composition than she does with the actual execution, which Grenning says usually takes just a day or two.

“The irony of the classical realist movement,” says Grenning, “is the classical realists paint but they don’t extract themselves to remember why they’re painting and what they’re painting. They don’t think of the composition too much - the abstract design of the painting.”

Since the early days of the gallery, when Lamb was a recent art school graduate looking for a break, she has grown tremendously as an artist. In her first show at Grenning, her works sold for \$6,000 tops. This weekend, they will sell for up to \$25,000.



“Wherelwork” by
Joe Altwer, 2013

As evidenced by the Holiday Show line-up, Grenning excels at finding and mentoring new artists. She found Joe Altwer when he was an assistant to Mark Dalessio, one of her gallery’s featured artists.

“He actually came to his first opening here on a skateboard,” she recalls of the young Altwer, adding that his paintings in the show are “very beautiful, very well done, very bright light...It’s all about the light reflecting around the room, it’s not so much about describing the objects in the room.”



“River View” by Daniel Graves, 2013

In the Holiday Show, Daniel Graves will exhibit four new landscapes “inspired by the most lyrical and relaxed tonalists.” Work by Michael Kotasek, who has been likened to the prominent realist painter Andrew Wyeth but is, according to Grenning, “a lot more refined as a painter,” will also be displayed.

The show will feature a “very beautiful” piece of a glass of beer and a musical instrument by Kevin McEvoy, paintings of farmhouses at twilight and a moonrise by Kevin Sanders and an original nocturne of Sag Harbor by Greg Horwich.

And then, of course, there’s Lucas.

“I didn’t realize all the times I was talking with her that she was an avid artist,” said Grenning. As Lucas’s talent developed, she began bringing her oil paintings to the gallery for Grenning to critique.

“I find when Laura critiques my work,” said Lucas. “I really come away with clarity of how to make it better and at the same time, she makes you feel really good about what’s right - she’s a wonderful mentor.”



“Duck Walk” by Maryann Lucas, 2013

“I, for whatever reason, tell people exactly what I think of their paintings,” said Grenning. “Unless you’re really open to a serious critique it can be unpleasant. She took every observation that I had and responded like an unbelievable student. She had talent but she kind of reorganized herself aesthetically. It’s kind of exciting and apparently this is a longtime goal for her.”

Apparently. After bringing her work to Grenning last spring, Lucas made some changes, landing herself a spot in the Holiday Show, her first exhibit.

“I used to say to my daughters, we would say, ‘Do you think this painting is Grenning worthy’,” said Lucas. “Being in her gallery, this is my first - I guess it’s like a wish list...I’m thrilled and excited for the opportunity.”

The opening reception for the Holiday Show will be held at the Grenning Gallery, 17 Washington Street, on Saturday, November 23 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. For more information, call 725-8469 or visit [Grenning Gallery](#).

