



Peter Arakawa and Rita Herzfeld at Alfa Art

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By **Dan Bischoff/For The Star-Ledger**



Peter Arakawa, Watercolor, gouache and collage on paper, 16 x 20, 2011

There's still more than a week to catch "Abstraction and the Creative Unconscious," an exhibition of recent work, both painting and collage, by the protean Peter Arakawa and Pollock-inflected painter Rita Herzfeld at the Alfa Art Gallery in New Brunswick. Arakawa has been showing in New Jersey for at least 20 years, he's a graduate of Mason Gross, and makes some of the most delicate and visually exciting images you're likely to see; Herzfeld is more determinedly abstract and gestural, with hints of landscape showing through. But the command of color, and control of form, in both artists is impressive. The show continues until June 24.

The Alfa Art Gallery is at 108 Church St. in New Brunswick. Free. Open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, and by appointment on Saturday. For more information call (732) 296-6720 or visit alfaart.org.

Get Your Fiber

From June 23-Oct. 16 the Morris Museum will present "Visual Thoughts: The Art Quilts of the Fiber Revolution," a look at art quilts during the post-feminist era. The recognition of fiber arts in the 1970s — like embroidery, often dismissed as "women's art" before — was one of the major changes in art appreciation during the 20th century.

The Morris Museum is at 6 Normandy Heights Road, in Morris Township. Open Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Thursday 11 a.m.-8 p.m., and Sunday 1-5 p.m. Admission is \$10 adults, \$7 children and seniors (children under 3 are free); free admission on Thursdays from 5-8 p.m. For information, call (973) 971-3700 or today morrismuseum.org/exhibitions/upcoming.html.

What's So Bad About Paintings of Poor People?

After newly minted Republican Gov. Paul LePage of Maine earned headlines and laughs around the country last February for removing a “one-sided” mural in his state’s Labor Department offices depicting workers’ struggles from Maine’s history, you’d think art censorship based on class subject matter would be chastened.

But think again. Last week The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel reported that Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin — whose efforts to kill collective bargaining touched off mass demonstrations and at least nine recall elections for the state senate — has ordered a painting by David Lenz of three children removed from its place over the mantel in a public living room in the governor’s mansion and replaced by a picture of “Old Abe,” a bald eagle, which was part of a Civil War-themed exhibit in the capitol.

Lenz’s painting, “Wishes in the Wind,” was paid for by the independent fund that operates the governor’s mansion, and was intended to remind the governor — whoever he or she might be — of the state’s politically unconnected constituents. Lenz told the Journal-Sentinel that the three children were carefully selected: the African-American girl had been featured in the paper’s series on homelessness, the Hispanic girl was a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, and the boy had lost his parents in a car crash.

Walker has released a statement saying the removal did not imply any criticism of Lenz or his work, and that more people may see it on loan at the Milwaukee Public Library than in the governor’s mansion (the room where it hung gets 15,000 visitors a year).

In case you’re interested, the mural LePage removed is still in limbo; since it was paid for with federal funds, the U.S. Labor Dept. has insisted that LePage either restore it or give it to the federal government. Meanwhile, three separate local restraining orders have been filed demanding that the mural be put back in place.

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