

For Immediate Release

Wired Gallery Opens
THE GOLDEN AGE OF NEW PALTZ
An Exhibition in Three Parts
Part One: 1959 – 1963

Curated by Jack Murphy

July 1 – 30, 2017

Opening Reception: Saturday, July 1, 2017

High Falls, NY—On Saturday, July 1, Wired Gallery opens **The Golden Age of New Paltz**, an exhibition in three parts celebrating the New Paltz artists of the 1960's, with a reception from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. sponsored by Stone Ridge Wine and Spirits. The show runs until Sunday, July 30, 2017.

The first installment of the exhibition will survey artists* who lived and worked in the New Paltz, NY area from the years 1959 to 1963 and will include works by professors Manny Bromberg, Ben Bishop, Harry Hurwitz, Ilya Bolotowsky, Bob Schuler and Edith Holt; students Betty Greenwald, Bill Gersh, Cynthia Winika, Elaine Mars, Fran Sutherland, Frank Wright, Michael Norcia, Marie Greene, Sharon Barry Logan, Wayne Quinn, Adrian Guillery, Eddie Samuels, Patricia Herz Deahl, Bob Draffin; and residents, Ted Knaflusky, and Gene Hines.

** This is an incomplete list at press time.*



Professor Manny Bromberg and student, circa 1962. Photograph by Frank Wright.

Curatorial Statement

The artists chosen represent students and faculty of the art program at the college in New Paltz, as well as area residents. The 1960's saw a number of changes at the college, which influenced the direction of the Art Department and its students and faculty and in the art world in general. The art students who started their college education in September of 1959, predated the soon to occur Post-War "Baby Boom," which would alter the course of the State University of New York in the upcoming decade, and these members of the Class of 1963, along with their professors and local artists, were going to become witnesses to, and participants in, the direction of American Art of the 1960's.

The New Paltz Normal and Training School was established in 1885 to train teachers for New York public schools. In 1938 the State of New York allowed the school to award baccalaureate degrees, and the name was changed to the State Teachers College at New Paltz. A legislative act in 1948 created The State University of New York, and the Teachers College at New Paltz was one of the within the system. In 1951, an art education program was added to the curriculum. New Paltz, being located in New York's Hudson Valley, was part of the region made famous by the nineteenth-century Hudson River School of Painting, the early 1900's artist colony of Woodstock, NY, and also the summer retreats for many New York City based artists over the years. With the completion of the New York State Thruway at the end of 1954, New Paltz was only 90 minutes away from the heart of the American art scene in New York City, an attraction for students to this day.

The Class of 1963 was exposed to the foundations of Modern Art, but they were also on the cutting edge of Pop Art, the New Realism, Minimalism, the new style of Hard-Edge painting, Op-Art, Conceptual Art, Performance Art and Happenings, early Psychedelic Art, Photorealism, and Earth Works. It was an exciting and lively time in the contemporary art world, and the artists of New Paltz joined in and embraced it. It was also the time of the Viet Nam War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement, demonstrations and unrest on college campuses, and social upheaval. The 1950's were over, the 1960's were ready to exert their influence on all aspects of American life, including art.

Most of the artists in this show were affiliated with the college, either as young art students, or as faculty members, but a number were practicing artists who lived in the community. The college/town identifier was not an obstacle to an active give and take between these artists, and a regular exchange of ideas and in-depth discussions about art, brought these groups together often. The New Paltz area boasted a number of clubs, and there was a very active music scene which attracted many of the local artists. (A few of the visual artists were among the musicians who entertained the patrons of those clubs.) The social aspect of life in New Paltz help bond the students together as much as the academic life linked them to their teachers. And the art scene drew in all the artists.

What is it, over fifty years later, that makes the art scene of the 1960's and the New Paltz artists, unique and worth revisiting and reviewing? The impact of the local art and artists of that decade may not have had much effect on the greater art world, but a surprising number of these people established themselves in that rarified atmosphere. The real impact was how the fledgling art program at the college grew and enticed more and more new students through the 1960's into the art education program, leading to the founding and eventual approval by the State of the SUNY New Paltz Bachelors of Fine Arts degree program in the early 1970's. The art scene flourished on campus and in the area during the 60's, and is an important part of the

community today. Much of the success is due to that small group of students and professors, and the high standards they set for themselves and achieved.

But it was more than the academic pursuits of young people that make this small group special. There is a quality of work that is evident in each person's portfolio. While I was looking at potential selections for this show, I was impressed by the number of very good portraits I was seeing, but even more so, I was impressed by how many were drawings of friends and classmates. I was told that the professors encouraged the students to "draw, draw, draw," and they required that many new sketches be shown in each class. The students carried their sketch books everywhere, and often the only models available to them were other art students. Not only did this constant practice improve their drawing skills, it created real, and enduring, friendships. It also allowed for an exchange of ideas about art, and a sort of communal growth, through the close-knit "family" of New Paltz artists. Relationships could be fleeting, and intermingled, but friendships survived. Appreciation of each other's work is evident by how many of the pieces on the walls of the Gallery are from the private collections of the other exhibitors.

I came to New Paltz as an art student in June of 1967, and met some of these people that first summer I was here. Some had already been elevated to "legend" status, and many had never left New Paltz, opting to stay and raise a family, take up an occupation, but, usually, continue making art. I heard the stories of the "old days," and met more of the "pioneers," becoming friends with many of them. Even though many have left the area, and too many have died, the friendships and connections made over fifty years ago are still strong today. It was a pleasure bringing this work back to the public, and recognizing it as timeless art, by accomplished artists.

-Jack Murphy

About the origins of the show

Wired gallerist Sevan Melikyan says "The first time I heard of "the Golden Age of New Paltz" was in [an article](#) penned by Rich Corozine in the *Almanac Weekly* in 2012 about Bob Draffen, an artist from that period who had recently passed away. The only golden ages I knew were the Dutch Golden Age and the Spanish Golden Age. I had no idea that New Paltz also had a "golden age." How intriguing and exciting! This deserved to be told in a show. It turns out that Marjorie Myers Simon -- who came to New Paltz in the early 1960's as an art education student and who was a friend to many of these artists -- had also worked on a plan to organize a similar show at the Dorsky Museum, SUNY New Paltz, to celebrate the fifty years since many of them were graduated. Unfortunately, Margie developed an aggressive cancer which limited her work on this project. Jack Murphy, who was an art student in the late 60's, offered to assist, and when she died in November, 2016, he decided to try to realize her vision. Without Jack, who took on the monumental task of curating the show, it may be that no one would have learned that New Paltz had once a Golden Age."

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Marjorie Myers Simon.

WIRED GALLERY

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High resolution pictures available. Please don't hesitate to request. Thank you.