

SHAWN KENNEY 1971 b. New London, CT

EDUCATION

1993 Rhode Island School of Design *Bachelor of Fine Arts*

FURTHER STUDIES

2010 Providence Art Club *Relief printmaking with Walter Feldman*

2005 New School of Classical Art *French Académie Drawing with Dana Levin*

1992 Brown University *Independent study with Anatomist G.E. Erikson*

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2012 *Midnite Kitchen*, Greenhouse Gallery at the James Beard House, New York NY

2011 *Farm and Table*, Charlestown Gallery, Charlestown RI

2010 *Farmstead/La Laiterie*, Providence RI (ongoing)

2009 *Nocturnes and...*, Charlestown Gallery, Charlestown RI

2009 Atrium Gallery, Providence RI

2008 Jonathan Edwards Winery, North Stonington CT

2008 Chez Pascal, Providence RI

2007 risd/works, Providence RI

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2013 *Rhode Island Contemporary*, University of Rhode Island Fine Arts Center, Kingston, RI (invitational)

2013 *NetWorks 2011/2012*, Newport Art Museum, Newport, RI (invitational)

2012 *It's in the Bag*, The Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI (commission)

2011 *NetWorks 2011*, The Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI (invitational)

2011 "Yes!", Buonaccorsi+Agniel, Providence, RI (invitational)

2010 "The Still Life" Annual Invitational, Elliot Fouts Gallery, Sacramento CA

2010 *The Art of Wine*, Powers Gallery, Acton MA (featured)

2010 *Arts & Eats*, Candita Clayton Studio at Hope Artiste Village, Pawtucket RI

2007 *Impressions of Light (w/ Paul Langmuir & Amy Ryan)*, Providence Art Club, Providence RI

2009 *Summer with a Twist*, Powers Gallery, Acton MA (featured)

2009 *The Portsmouth Arts Guild*, Portsmouth RI (invitational 4 person show)

2008 *SmallWorks North America*, The Greenwich Workshop Gallery, Fairfield CT (national juried show)

2008 *Boston International Fine Art Show*, Boston MA (feat. by Powers Gallery, Charlestown Gallery)

2008 *Food for Thought*, Courtyard Gallery, Mystic CT (featured)

2008 *William Bailey/the Contemporary Still Life*, Susan Maasch Fine Art, Portland ME (invitational)

2008 *Going to the Dogs*, RISD Museum, Providence RI (invitational)

2008 *Salmagundi Club & Providence Art Club*, Courtyard Gallery, Mystic CT (invitational)

2007 *Food...Glorious Food!*, Flinn Gallery, Greenwich CT (invitational)

2007 *Ruth Frisch Dealy and Shawn Kenney*, Cottage & Garden/Tastemaker, Newport RI

2007 *Recent Works (w/ Ron Rosenstock & Jim Bush)*, Providence Art Club, Providence RI

2007 *Open Painting 2007*, Providence Art Club, Providence RI (national juried show)

- 2007 *Animal Imagery*, Essex Art Center, Lawrence MA (invitational)
2006 *Scenes of Rhode Island 2006*, Atrium Gallery, Providence RI (statewide juried show)

AWARDS

- 2011 NetWorks 2011 *profiled artist*
2009 Individual Fellowship - Merit Award, *Painting Rhode Island State Council on the Arts*
2008 "Editors' Poll - Best of 2008," *Rhode Island Monthly*

PUBLICATIONS

- "Portfolio" (featured artist) *Southwest Art*, December 2011
"Beyond the West," *Southwest Art*, August 2011
RISDxyz, (feature) Winter 2011
American Art Collector, August 2009
Rhode Island Monthly, June 2009
"Big Deals on Little Pictures," *Providence Monthly*, November 2008
"Bon Appetit!," *SO Rhode Island*, September 2008
Providence Journal, August 21, 2008
Featured Artist, January, AIDS Care Ocean State Artists Calendar 2008
"Will Paint for Food," *Providence Monthly*, March 2007
"Exhibit Explores 'Souls' of Animals," *Boston Globe*, January 04, 2007

AFFILIATIONS

- Providence Art Club *Exhibiting Artist, Board of Managers, Education Committee Co-Chair, Instructor 2006-*
Pawtucket Arts Collaborative *Board Member 2007*
Pawtucket Open Studios *Exhibiting Artist, Event Coordinator 2006-2007*

BIO

Growing up, Shawn Kenney wanted to be: Pecos Bill. A Race Car guy. Evel Knievel. Jacques Cousteau. A Jedi, a Sprint Car Driver, a Veterinarian or Neurosurgeon...and a Disney animator. (Give or take a few, in about that order.)

Making pictures has been an escape since earliest boyhood in Washington (with Bigfoot lurking in the nearby Cascades) through school years spent outside Philly (cornfields no longer in the backyard, still just a short bike ride down the road...along with the mythic Pine Barrens and the Jersey Devil.)

A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design (BFA 93,) he has called the state his home for the past 20 years & is passionately engaged with Rhode Island's richly diverse creative & culinary communities.

As an art director, designer & illustrator, he's worked with some of the world's most recognized properties, while never leaving love of the craft of drawing and painting behind.

Recent bodies of work have tended toward farm (perhaps inspired by the childhood favorite 'Ferdinand') and table (which led to his co-founding 'Will Paint for Food', an organization that supports hunger relief through sale of his paintings.)

He lives just outside Providence with his wife (who is equally instrumental in studio successes and reminding him that he's not Speed Racer) and ancient lab (who has miraculously seen 4 World Cups.)

When not in the studio, he can be found in the kitchen, in the garden, or cruising country roads on his Sportster.

January 2011

STATEMENT

Art has the potential for a mysterious power—maybe it’s magic—to spark a connection, or sense of wonder, and to transport the viewer into another world.

One of my strongest artistic influences is a glow-in-the-dark calendar on the wall above my bed in childhood ('77, not yet 6, just before the tidal wave of *Star Wars*). Staring up at night, I dreamed of climbing inside and getting lost.

When I make an image, I’m not really thinking about formal concerns of composition or surface or form—I’m looking to create *that* place. A space filled with light and air and, if possible, presence.

But if a work is to have a shot at that alchemical resonance, it needs good bones—even in the most ethereal de Koonings we see inspired draftsmanship and dedication to craft.

That combination is the hallmark of my artistic heroes: Rembrandt. Velazquez. Caravaggio. Van Gogh. Klimt. The Wyeths. Russell Chatham. Frida Kahlo. Ansel Adams. Andrei Tarkovsky. Andy Goldsworthy. Barry Lopez. Rick Bass. James Turrell. Brian Eno & Daniel Lanois.

They, beyond the beauty of the natural world, are why I paint and where I find inspiration.

NOTES ON FARM & FIELD

The works here are inspired equally by visits to local farms, Herriot’s *All Creatures Great and Small*, Sendak’s *Wild* rumpus, and the animals (Animals) brought to life in the stories of Gregory Maguire, Tex Avery, and Joseph Campbell.

Neither taxonomy nor romantic ideal of ‘the way life oughta be’ - they’re an attempt to share the immense sense of peace and wonder that rural settings instill in me.

Shawn Kenney
April 2012

NOTE ON THE FOOD PAINTINGS

“If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.”

— E.B. White

Painting for Food

Shawn Kenney began making food paintings about five years ago as part of a self-imposed “artistic boot camp” to get in shape after being away from the easel for too long—one small study a day, using a makeshift shadow box and the classical “sight-size” method. Yet, his goal was anything but classical. “I wanted these paintings to be fresh, informal, off-kilter, lit-by-the-fridge-at-night,” Kenney says. “They’re rustic Italian in both sensibility and execution.”

In terms of the subject matter, “food was an easy choice—something I know & love. Also helped that it was readily at hand and could serve as lunch after the session. My wife and I take great pleasure in cooking and planning trips based on culinary adventures. I’ve got a stack of cookbooks on my night stand that I read like novels.”

Once his inventory of appealing little food studies grew, restaurateurs, café-owners, grocers, wineries, friends and collectors began to snap them up—initially online and now through galleries in New England and California. Through a project he calls *Will Paint for Food*, he has been donating a portion of the proceeds from the sale of his paintings to food banks and other hunger-relief organizations, including the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, Women Against Hunger, Share Our Strength/Operation Frontline and Heifer International.

“It’s a way to give back and a natural fit for my resources and interests. The food paintings are intentionally priced lower, keeping them and the project accessible to many. Ultimately, we’d like to grow the project to the point where others could adopt it and contribute to their local organizations and pantries.”

As for his ongoing fascination with food—whether through cooking, reading, traveling, sampling local favorites or painting the products and ingredients we all have in our kitchens—Kenney says that all of his work is “unabashedly comfort-driven.” He recognizes that his food paintings are technically still lifes, yet in his mind that terminology makes them “feel like something far more intellectual. It’s really about connecting, shared memories, celebrating the table...it’s the joy of experiencing those simple pleasures with others.”

from the spring 2011 issue of RISDxyz, Rhode Island School of Design’s alumni magazine