

By Julia Rothenberg, PhD

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With *Happenstance* Francine Rogers, a talented emerging curator has produced her second group exhibition at SLA gallery. Rogers, who came to New York City twenty years ago from her native Lithuania, once again brings her background in theatrical production, a thoroughly original eye for combining the works of artists with diverse foci and style and her generous and expansive heart to bear in *Happenstance*, currently on view until April 3.

*Happenstance* features four artists whose work is held together through its emphasis on contrasts: black and white; graphic lines and watery shadow; representation and abstraction; night and day; dream and reality.

Sir Shadow, the odd man out (literally, as the three other artists are women) provides a New York City heart to this show of graphic works. Shadow has been a fixture on the New York scene, as “mayor” of the Whitehouse, one of the last surviving SOR hotels on the Bowery and Shadow’s home since 1995 and as an “outsider” artist, creating lyrical drawings of musicians using the simple, sometimes metallic point of a sharpie on solid colored backgrounds of paper or canvass. Shadow’s work can be found in the collections of major players like Isaac Hayes, Oprah Winfrey and Whitney Houston but can also be purchased from Shadow’s website or even directly from the artist himself immediately post-production in Washington Square Park and other public spaces, where, humming his own private melody while giving himself over to the poetic force that he calls “flowetry”.

Apparently also moved by a mythic and poetic force, Bruna D’Alessandro displays her dreamlike watercolor and ink drawings for the second time at SLA gallery. D’Alessandro, a sculptor and graphic artist from Italy but quickly growing strong roots in Brooklyn compels moody and surrealist images working quickly from the suggestive forms created by wet and watery ink pools skillfully manipulated on paper, somewhere between Helen Frankenthaler and Marc Chagall. These small, rapid-fire pieces are Rorschach tests, suggesting single or paired figures, mating, copulating dancing and giving birth. These drawings hover between representation and abstraction, and are given meaning as much

by the inner stirrings of the viewer as by the artist herself.

Dream and fantasy also play a starring role in the drawings of Rasa Vaisvilaite. Vaisvilaite was born and received her art training in Vilnius, Lithuania. She creates small, intricate drawings using black and white pen and pencil on recycled paper depicting fanciful versions of animal life including otters, dolphins and cows which cradle, in the crevice of their limbs or the folds of their flesh a simple, egg-shaped dreaming face. According to Vaisvilaite, these drawings work to ward off sleep paralysis disorder, a condition from which she suffers. The drawings portray a burden left lingering when woken up from sleep paralysis and in her case the imaginative creatures she draws, helps to cleanse the mind.

The fourth artist featured in Happenstance, the Brooklyn based artist Deborah Tint, helps us to heal us from the isolation and sense of COVID induced hopelessness delivered by this year of lockdown with her utterly charming and whimsical wall of watercolor drawings of the Coney Island and New Orleans's based burlesque performer Lefty Lucy, who hosted and modeled for a series of drawing sessions over zoom. Lefty, sporting an assortment of costumes ranging from nightclub chanteuse, woman of the night, candy striper and feathered bard provided artists from various centers of quarantine with the opportunity to muse together but apart on the various guises of womanhood mediated by the impossible frame of the computer screen. Tint's watercolors, which range from the suggestive and lean to a highly finished depth and precision reveal the skill of a seasoned draftsman and the soul of an artist who has managed to fly despite the caged state we have all endured.