

SOMA NEWART GALLERY

Carpenters Square Mall
31 Perry Street · Cape May · New Jersey · 08204
609.898.7488
www.somagallery.net



Left: Victor Grasso, *The Naturalist* (2016), watercolor on paper, 72 x 54 in. Right: Shepard Fairey, *Water is the New Black* (2015), Edition of 6, silkscreen and mixed media collage on wood and HPM (wood), 18 x 24 in.

Brine

curated by Victor Grasso

June 4 - July 4, 2016

Opening artist reception: Saturday, June 4, 2016, 6:00 - 9:00 PM

Hours: Daily 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM (Sunday - Thursday 10:00 AM - 7:00 PM through June 8)

SOMA NewArt Gallery is pleased to present *Brine*, curated by Victor Grasso. For this exhibition, SOMA opens its galleries to thirteen selected artists in a dynamic presentation encompassing a range of mediums and techniques: Shepard Fairey, Bo Bartlett, Greg Bennett, Graeme Cameron, Ali Cavanaugh, Danny Galieote, Steve Gibson, Victor Grasso, Frank Kallop, Kris Lewis, Stan Sperlak, Adam Wallacavage & Frank Weiss. An opening reception will be held Saturday, June 4, 2016 from 6:00 to 9:00 PM.

Combining the gallery's mission of promoting artists who have connections to Cape May and the Jersey coast with its commitment to exhibiting world-class artists and enriching the cultural landscape of the region, *Brine* denotes a confluence; an intermingling of tradition and contemporaneity. The exhibition's title takes inspiration from the brackish waters of the surrounding area, where fresh water from as far upriver as the Catskill Mountains meets salt water from the Atlantic Ocean. By presenting an eclectic and engaging selection of work exploring similar yet divergent themes, *Brine* offers up a *mélange* of artistic perspectives in

response to SOMA's seashore setting. From traditional technique and plein-air painting to works crafted from glass and steel, this group presentation offers a snapshot of contemporary art practice both in the Mid-Atlantic region and nationwide.

Exhibition curator Victor Grasso wanted "to bring a massive jolt of art and culture to Southern New Jersey, especially to my already culturally rich hometown of Cape May. My goal was to put together a world-class group exhibition at SOMA Gallery and *Brine* delivers with a group of exemplary artists who I've had the good fortune to meet and become friends with over the past few years. I want to give everyone a chance to see these outstanding works they have contributed and I couldn't be more humbled, pleased, and honored to have these artists in the lineup."

Shepard Fairey, best known for manipulating images for mass consumption through street art, contributes two panels with ominous and ironic depictions of the sea. Noted realist painter **Bo Bartlett** presents scenes from American life which are as entrancing as they are enigmatic. Curator **Victor Grasso** also embraces a realist vision, though considerably darker and with a glint of surrealism, in his enthralling large-scale rendering of an octopus. This tentacled organism takes form elsewhere in the exhibition, including Philadelphia-based artist **Adam Wallacavage**'s exquisite octopus chandelier. Canadian axe maker **Graeme Cameron** proposes a more mythological interpretation of this sea creature with his elegant *Kraken Titanis Axe*.

Painter **Danny Galieote** works with classical techniques and a mid-century aesthetic which imbues his depictions of idealized subjects with an air of nostalgia. A stunning portrait by **Kris Lewis** explores a similar theme with considerable emotional depth, while **Ali Cavanaugh** explores the body through the lens of childhood using a modern fresco technique which yields slippery and sumptuous results.

Lending local context to the exhibition are coastally influenced plein-air painters **Greg Bennett** and **Stan Sperlak**, both of whom have exhibited extensively with the gallery. **Frank Kallop** explores moody narrative and academic still-life in his contributions to the show. Emerging artists like photographer/filmmaker **Frank Weiss** and airbrush artist **Steve Gibson** also contribute to the exhibitions, infusing additional diversity and talent into the SOMA galleries.

Victor Grasso has mounted eight solo exhibitions with the gallery; this is his first curatorial offering. A noted painter of new American realism, he lives and works in North Cape May, New Jersey, where he began his career illustrating covers for local publication Exit Zero Magazine. His work has been exhibited most recently at the Noyes Museum of Art (Oceanville, NJ) and Parlor Gallery (Asbury Park, NJ) as well as in New York, Philadelphia, Miami, San Francisco and Tuscon, AZ.

SOMA NewArt Gallery opened in 2007 and is recognized as a leader in southern New Jersey's visual arts community. The gallery exhibits local talent as well as mid-career artists based in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. Located on historic Perry Street in downtown Cape May, SOMA's exhibition season runs from April through October.