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'HIStory/HERstory: Whose Story?' exhibit examines voice, stacked decks, hidden stories in art

BY KRISTEN HAINS

Special to the Record-Eagle

GLEN ARBOR — For more than a year, Sarah Bearup-Neal, gallery manager at the Glen Arbor Arts Center, has found herself thinking — a lot — about what she calls the crusade to cleanse cultural and educational institutions of policies, curricula, anything that hints of DEI: diversity, equity, and inclusion.

“The effort felt zealous and hyper-righteous,” she says. “It morphed into a federal campaign aimed at devaluing, silencing, and penalizing support for DEI initiatives that sought to right the scales for people who have been histori-

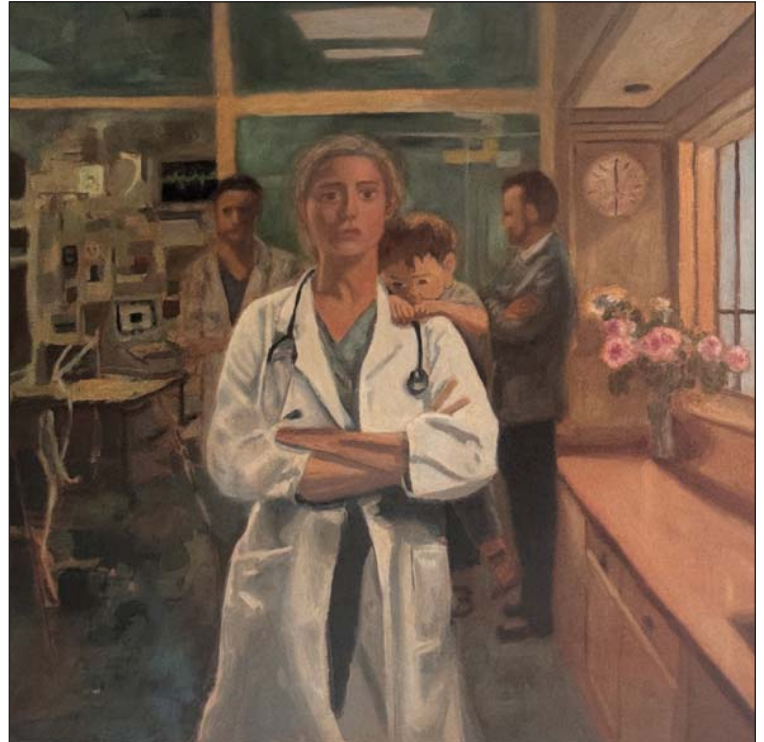
Opens tonight

There is an artist reception tonight at 5 p.m. in the main gallery at the Glen Arbor Art Center. Exhibit open through Oct. 23 during regular hours at 6031 S Lake St.

cally marginalized.”

“Like nature, public servants abhor a vacuum, so they began replacing the DEI voices they’d silenced with another, dominant voice,” she continues. “It often sounded to my ear like, ‘Shut up and sit down and don’t whine so much.’”

And then she thought: isn’t this an interesting idea to explore as an exhibit?



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Todd Lininger’s work, “A Conversation With My Daughter,” in oil.

From these conversations with herself, the Glen Arbor Arts Center’s newest exhibit was born. “HIStory/HERsto-

ry: Whose Story?” will be on display from Aug. 15 through

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Oct. 23.

The exhibit includes mixed media, printmaking, contemporary quilts, painting, sculpture, fiber work, fiber art, and colored pencil, and features a slate of artists that includes both familiar regional names and makers whose work is not often seen at the Glen Arbor Arts Center.

Bearup-Neal notes that many of the exhibitors are women, which has sparked new questions.

“What is it like to be a woman whose male colleagues received the credit for her groundbreaking work? People don’t necessarily become winners because they’re inherently exemplary human beings. Sometimes the deck is stacked,” she says. “So, it is even more important that we think critically about delivered truths, work to uncover all the hidden stories, and hand microphones to all the muted voices.”

She says “HIStory/HERstory: Whose Story?” attempts to do just that.

“I want to get the conversations rolling,” she says. “I hope that people will look at the work and read the artists’ statements, have a head-slapping moment, and go away saying, ‘I never knew that.’”

And were there specific voices or perspectives she felt important to highlight in the show?

Quite the opposite, she says.

“I wanted the prospect to communicate an openness to interpretation. I was hoping that applicants would come at the exhibition’s main ideas—whose voice tells the story; whose voice isn’t allowed to tell the story—from unexpected directions,” she says. “But whatever the direction, I was more interested in finding out what issues and perspectives invigorated applicants, and how they articulated that through their making.”

In addition to the exhibit, the gallery will host companion events, including a facilitated conversation with four of the exhibitors, who will discuss their submitted work and how it relates to the theme of the show. “We will also get into



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Martha Lidle-Lameti, “Constriction.”

questions about how the art gave them a language for addressing some of these questions. A visual language,” she says.

She sees the companion programs as a way to create an even more welcoming invitation to explore art.

“The reason I do companion programs is because not everybody feels like they’re welcome, or they won’t come into the gallery because they think they’re not going to get it, or they don’t know the secret language,” she says. “But anything we can do to make things more accessible is my primary goal, because this, this stuff is important.”

And the importance of that extends beyond the work she does at the gallery.

“I think that the arts, all of them, not just the visual but the performing and the literary, give us such powerful tools for talking about the world,” she says. “The arts allow us to translate in different ways what we’re seeing and thinking. And that’s why creative work is so important, and why plays and galleries ought to be places where people feel like they can go.”



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Carrie Betlyn-Eder’s work, “You See Right Through Me,” mixed media sculpture.

