



WILTON LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION, INC

137 Old Ridgefield Road
Wilton, CT 06897-3000

Telephone: 203.762.3950
Facsimile: 203.834.1166
www.wiltonlibrary.org

NEWS

Contact: Janet Crystal

Direct dial number: 203-762-6324

E-mail: jcrystal@wiltonlibrary.org

www.wiltonlibrary.org

May 11, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wilton Library pays tribute to Branchville SoHo Gallery June 9

Wilton, CT – They all use to hang decorously on the walls of the Branchville SoHo Gallery of Contemporary Art and now they have one more chance to be seen together before they move on to be cherished and loved in people’s homes. Paula Reens, who passed away last month, and her husband Lou Reens, Wilton residents for the past 49 years, made a decision to have the remaining paintings from their contemporary gallery they owned in Ridgefield, CT placed on display at Wilton Library and have the library be the beneficiary of one hundred percent of the proceeds. The public will be able to see fifty paintings of some of America’s well-regarded contemporary artists at the opening reception of “The Branchville SoHo Gallery Estate Art Exhibition” on Friday, June 9, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the library. Artists such as Ben Benn (1884-1983), Jack Youngerman (b. 1926), Marvin Hayes (b. 1939; lived in Wilton 1965 - 1991) and Robert Heindel (1938 – 2005), among others will be featured.

Ed MacEwen, Wilton Library’s art chairman remarked about the exhibition, “This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see these paintings in one place. Through the generosity of Lou and Paula, before her passing, this exhibition came together as a love letter to their gallery and to the library. They wanted to see these paintings enjoyed by others and to have the library benefit 100%.”

Elaine Tai-Lauria, the library’s executive director noted, “Wilton Library is honored to have this exhibition in our gallery and on our walls. We were overjoyed by the Reens’ bigheartedness.”

Ben Benn, one of the featured artists, exhibited widely with the Whitney, MOMA and Hirschhorn museums and was in the collections of many fine institutions at home and abroad. In a 1982 press release, Paula Reens, director of Branchville for twenty years, wrote, “As an American artist who developed independently, his [Benn] thick brush strokes, intense colors, technical craftsmanship and dramatic use of black lines plus his refusal to obliterate the subject no matter how abstract he became, Benn is easily defined as an expressionist.”

(More)

Robert Heindel's paintings, Garden of Eros I and Garden of Eros IV also will be on display. This American artist's works are featured in public and private collections globally including The National Portrait Gallery in London and The Smithsonian Institute (Washington, D.C.)

"It was a thrill putting this exhibition together," noted MacEwen. "It was tantamount to working on a giant jigsaw puzzle because all the paintings were not easily identified. I was fortunate enough to have Petra Saldutti working with me and using her own art background to uncover and discover the provenance of many of the paintings, including the Branchville building itself."

According to a press release that Mrs. Reens wrote about the Branchville gallery, it started in the 1700s and 1800s "as a cow barn and dairy depot dug into the hillside." It served as a stop along the way from Norwalk to Danbury where milk was stored. It became the oldest tenement house when in the 1850s the Danbury & Norwalk line bought the property from the farmer and started to put workers in the newly constructed rooms above the depot. Over time it was a grocery store and a "speak-easy" during Prohibition, and then it fell into disrepair and ruin. In the 1980s, the Reens were involved in the reconstruction and owned the Branchville SoHo Gallery of Contemporary art for the next twenty years.

The exhibition will run through Thursday, June 29. The Reens were hoping that each and every last painting would go to a home or office where the art could be appreciated. To accomplish that goal, the paintings and prints are being moderately priced. Unlike other exhibitions, the library will receive one hundred percent of the purchase price of each artwork.

Wilton Library is located at 137 Old Ridgefield Road in the heart of Wilton Center. Library hours are Mondays through Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays, 1 to 5 p.m. through June 18. The library will be closed Sundays in the summer beginning Sunday, June 25. For information and directions, visit www.wiltonlibrary.org or call 203-762-6334.

###

05/11/17



Caption: "Wild Horse" by American contemporary artist Ben Benn (1884-1983) is one of fifty paintings in Wilton Library's Branchville SoHo Gallery Estate Art Exhibition, opening Friday, June 9, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Other noted American contemporary artists in the exhibition are Jack Youngerman (b. 1926), Marvin Hayes (b. 1939; lived in Wilton 1965 - 1991) and Robert Heindel (1938 - 2005), among others. The exhibition is made possible through the generosity of the late Paula Reens, director of the former gallery, and her husband, Lou Reens. One hundred percent of the proceeds will benefit Wilton Library. Wilton Library is located at 137 Old Ridgefield Road in the heart of Wilton Center. For information and directions, visit www.wiltonlibrary.org or call 203-762-6334.