Indicative & Allusive

An exhibition exploring the enduring power of the figure is on view now at Delaware Contemporary.

BY ROCHELLE BELSITO

One of the most classic subjects in art is the human figure. It is known intimately by artists and often studied in great detail through anatomy and life drawing classes. Each artist has their own vision when it comes to the figure, capturing its beauty in various styles and mediums. The narratives and shapes they can weave in their figurative art are endless. Some derive from everyday life, while others are from the depths of their minds—imagined and yet based on reality.

Through August 28, the Delaware Contemporary in Wilmington will present the exhibition The Figure: The Indicative & The Allusive, with 32 artists answering the question of what it means to

1. Alex Kanevsky, Walk in Cloud, oil on panel, 36 x 36
2. Vicki Vinton, Fally and Folk, mixed media on board, 36 x 46 © Courtesy Sonnabend Manning Gallery
be human. Organized by Kathrine Page, the museum's
Gretchen Hupfel Curator of Contemporary Art, the
show will explore the figure as both subject and object
and range from realism to abstraction.

"The Figure: The Indicative & The Allusive examines
what it's like to live in one's own skin— that thin veneer
of genetic inheritance manifest as perfect or flawed," Pape says. "It examines the external, cultural experi-
ences that inform artistic expressions of the body. It
delves into body image, identity and self-expression.
It seeks to peel the layers of self-absorption, aging,
gravity or body narratives. The spectrum of physical
materials used by the artists is meant to represent the
human body as both physical and sexual, how it moves,
how it creates, what it carries, obeys or leaves behind."

Among the artists with work in the exhibition is Alex
Kanevsky, whose "unexpected compositional arrange-
ments in his paintings juxtapose the natural world
with the oft-times fractured human form [to] provoke
a myriad of narrative interpretations," explains the
museum. On view is his painting Walk-By Closet, which
depicts a couple intertwined between rows of clothing.

3 Bruce Herman, Persistence of Vision, oil on brass leaf on wood, 48 x 36" 4
Douglas R. Glissel, Standing Figure, oil on
canvas, 24 x 18"
ways a life can go."

Her pieces Felix and Felix shows the same man in two different moments of his life. His skewed outlooks and perspectives of the world can be interpreted from his changed expressions. Vinton shares, "Felix and Felix is about transition. In this case from open-eyed childhood innocence to adult apprehension...time has passed, the outcome is allusive. There is a story here."

Photographer Noel Sylvestre's portraits, too, capture moments of life. In particular, they document a family of 12 in western New York state that had been given a HUD trailer to live in after being flooded out of their homes by Hurricane Agnes in 1972. Three generations consolidated to one place. The series began when Sylvestre and his wife moved to the area and, while regarded as "outsiders" by many, Wanda and her family befriended them.

In the show is Supertime Redux: Wanda's Scrapbook. "I think this intimate portrait reflects the underpinning of humanity we all have, but sometimes lose touch with," says Sylvestre. "Poverty stripped away most everything this family had. Nonetheless they reached out, not looking for a handout, or even for a hand up, but just to be seen, recognized, respected and loved where they were. They let me be part of their family."

Other works in the show, such as those by Lynda Schmid, are reflective of the human connection to the surrounding world. According to the museum, Schmid explores surface manipulation and the power of photography to evoke a sense of time and memory. Layering mixed media statements with ink, paint and transparencies appeal to ethereal realms of time and space. Depicted in her piece Part/Counterpart is a tree shed of its leaves on one side and a bare woman on the other, with the bends and curves of each mimicking one another.

Of her work, Schmid says, "I'm interested in exploring ideas related to human relationships with the natural world and the ways in which plastic attitudes toward physical beauty has transmogrified over time."

In many of Douglas R. Giebel's paintings, the figure is in direct relationship with the landscape, exploring not just the form itself but also the surrounding world. For this exhibition, two of his works will be on view: Standing Figure, 1984, set in a studio, and a 1980 painting titled Three Brothers. Religion has an underlying role in Giebel's art and is another thread he connects between nature and the human form in his compositions. He says, "[T]he most persuasive reason for my painting the figure is theological. In Biblical terms, humankind is God's image-bearer, the very crown of creation. The artistic exploration of the human figure celebrates our true humanity, enwined in God's image."

Also on view will be works by Tara Booth, Gina Bovosn, Katey Boyle, Moe Brooker, Ellen Durkan, Tendai Johnson, Ken Mahrey, Michael Jones McKean, David Paps, Lydia Pizarro, Stephen Tents, Brad Vannaman, Simone Walsh, Chatatina A. Wendt, Peter Williams and Carson Zullinger.

"As you view the work and identify the wide range of expressions of the figure, I encourage viewers to come to their own conclusions about each piece," shares Page. "Whether empathy, confusion, joy or inspiration, it is my hope this exhibition inspires you to imagine what it means to be human; that it instills a desire to engage in a more thoughtful cultural discourse on the human figure. Consider as well how our collective beings have entered a period of political and social uncertainty accompanied by accelerated and complex technology. It's ever more important to reassert our physicality, our humanness and ponder our identity, values and place in the cosmos."