

Zinger missiles: Mark Gilbert (left) and Mauro Zamora create red-hot art.

Heat and Why It Matters

Taking posterity head on.

By Roberta Fallon rfallon@philadelphiaweekly.com

In today's global art scene—where a Malaysian artist making abstract paintings in Brooklyn can show work in a Philadelphia gallery—it's hard to place value and pass judgment. Where once critical context was filtered through the narrow lens of theory or regionalism, now the lens is wide-angled. It must encompass the globe and embrace all venues and all theories. And why not? Everything is available at the click of a mouse, so why not look at and consider it all?

What stands out in this otherwise overwhelming flow of art is work that conveys passion and heat. I don't mean things that are merely loud or noisy or full of red. Passion in art conveys itself with energy, focus and humanity. Art by self-taught artists has this inner-fueled heat, which explains why this art is now so popular.

Passion is a good yardstick for measuring art. Among work I've seen locally with this fire in the belly are Caleb Weintraub's paintings at Projects Gallery, the exhibition "Fables" at the ICA, Mauro Zamora's wall painting at Seraphin, and Mark Gilbert's paintings of facially deformed patients at Klein Art. This isn't an

Caleb Weintraub: "... With the Bathwater"

Through Oct. 29.
Projects Gallery,
629 N. Second St.
267.303.9652. www.projectsgallery.com

Mauro Zamora: "Crossing Borders"

Through Oct. 8.
Seraphin Gallery,
1108 Pine St.
215.923.7000. www.seraphingallery.com

"Fables"

Through Dec. 17. Institute of Contemporary Art, 118 S. 36th St. 215.898.5911. www.icaphila.org

Saving Faces

Through Oct. 28. Esther M. Klein Art Gallery at the Science Center, 3701 Market St. 215.966.6188. www.kleinartgallery.org

exhaustive list but reflects some thoughts about heat produced by a variety of artists in a variety of venues.

Weintraub's red-hot imagery depicts militant gun-toting babies and apocalyptic Candylands. You can feel the artist's distress about the subject matter. These works are Boschian dystopias full of beautifully executed details and surreal conceits. Their message about the horror of excess keeps on coming. Mauro Zamora's wall painting of a border scene behind a cyclone fence—painted in delicate pink tones that suggest a dream, and with real paper drawings blown up against the painted fence like debris—is haunting and personal. What's expressed is a longing for beauty and brotherhood that's both simple and universal.

"Fables" is a hot grenade toss-fest. Works by Kara Walker, Christopher Myers, Wanda Raimundi-Ortiz and Kanishka Raja talk urgently about beauty, truth, loneliness and the human condition. Finally Mark Gilbert's portrait paintings generate heat by sheer depiction of forbidden territory—human deformity. The works are large,

and graphic, and while essentially "applied" art (their goal is therapeutic for the patients and illustrative for the viewer), they make me think about why painting is better at communicating transgressive material than photography. (Compare say Lisa Yuskavage's cheesecake paintings with their source material, *Playboy*. Yuskavage raises ideas—and titillates. *Playboy* just titillates.) What Gilbert, like Yuskavage, brings to the table with his paintings (and interestingly, Yuskavage is also painting deformity) is his humanity. And that makes them works worth seeing.

In art, as in most things, geniuses are few and far between. Mostly the art world contains hardworking artists, and what you see is a continuum from good to okay—with occasional zingers that fall off the chart at either end. We won't know our geniuses until our art historian grandchildren tell us who they are. Until then I'll keep looking for the heat and thinking about why it matters. ■

For more on the Philadelphia art scene go to fallonandrosf.blogspot.com

STARTLING 'FACES'

Art exhibit chronicles surgeons' skills, patients' moving journeys

By **SUSAN BONI**
For the Daily News

WHEN IAIN Hutchison talks about his patients, his voice booms with passion, awe and pride. He knows their stories — how they became disfigured, how they looked before surgery, and how their lives have changed.

These stories are being told through a touring art exhibit called "Saving Faces." The College of Physicians of Philadelphia has brought the show to the Esther M. Klein Art Gallery through October. Twenty-six oil paintings are on display at the gallery, and eight more can be seen at the college.

Conceived by Hutchison, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon at London's St. Bartholomew's and Royal London hospitals, "Saving Faces" follows the emotional and physical journeys of people with severe facial injuries, deformities or cancer.

The portraits were painted by Mark Gilbert, 37, a Scot, through an artist-in-residence program established by Hutchison at the Royal London Hospital.

Hutchison, 58, operated on Mazeeda, a 2½-year-old Bangladeshi girl with a huge malignant tumor growing out of the right side of her face. One eye was blind. She had stopped smiling. Her eyes were downcast and sorrowful.



Right: Mazeeda, a 2½-year-old Bangladeshi girl. Below: Chris P, before and after.

Programs planned in conjunction with "Saving Faces" Page 47



A small portrait of Mazeeda's mournful face hangs alongside a 6-foot canvas that captures her entire transformation.

"When I see this portrait, it always tugs at my heartstrings because she has the most wonderful smile," Hutchison said. Not everyone portrayed in "Saving Faces" is smiling. Some have been ravaged by multiple cancer operations. Others were painted in the midst of surgery.

"I was painting people in the most traumatic moment of their lives," Gilbert said, yet they were "strong, charismatic and not going to be made to feel low because of how they looked."

Why paint disfigured people?

Hutchison wanted to show what surgeons could — and couldn't do — and that disfigured people can lead full lives. Finally, he hoped the process would heal patients' emotional scars.

Said Dan Schimmel, executive director of the Klein gallery, "The fact that this exhibit is in oil paintings is going to startle the viewer and perhaps make them consider the reality of these situations in a much more poignant way." ★

"Saving Faces" through Oct. 28, Esther M. Klein Art Gallery, 3600 Market St., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 215-966-6188, www.kleinartgallery.org; College of Physicians, 19 S. 22nd St., 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily, 215-563-3737. Both shows are free and wheelchair accessible.





It only took a few decades, but John Armleder, the prominent Swiss artist, is finally getting his Stateside due. The ICA's "About Nothing: Works on Paper 1962-2007" is, as the title implies, a retrospective (although only of Armleder's abstract drawings, not the furniture sculptures for which he is also known), and his first major exhibition in the United States. But Armleder's been around for a long time, at the vanguard of several of those important

GALLERY

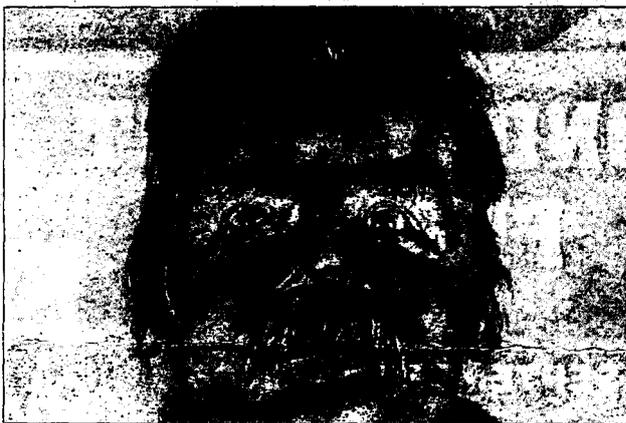
art movements that somehow get very silly names — "Fluxus" in the 1960s, "Neo Geo" in the 1980s. (Luckily, his Fluxus offshoot Groupe Ecart, which organizes publications and exhibitions for artists, has a more dignified-sounding moniker.)

"About Nothing" comes to the ICA essentially unchanged from the Kunsthalle Zürich's fall 2004 installation. But "it will look very very different," according to ICA director Claudia Gould, who installed the exhibition with Armleder himself, because the two spaces are so different. It was an "extraordinary task," she says, to get 500 drawings from Europe, but worth it: "He's someone who's really known in Europe but he's really looked at here as an artist's artist, and he doesn't have a dealer here. [Meanwhile] he has 40 rooms opening in Geneva, a retrospective of all his work."

The title, according to Gould, is one of the enigmatic plays on words of which Armleder is fond. "If you ask what his work is about, he would be the first to say 'nothing,' which is partially true in terms of how John thinks. But it's almost funny because everything is there and he says nothing. It's called 'About Nothing' but it's really about everything."

—Rachel Frankford

"About Nothing: Works on Paper 1962-2007," opening reception Fri., Sept. 8, 6-8 p.m., runs through Dec. 17, Institute of Contemporary Art, 118 S. 36th St., 215-898-7108, www.icaphila.org.



Saving Faces

People with severely damaged faces do not usually sit for portraits. But from 1999 to 2001, British maxillofacial surgeon Iain Hutchinson employed Glasgow portraitist Mark Gilbert as artist-in-residence at St. Bartholomew's and the Royal London Hospital. Gilbert painted the faces of victims of cancers, accidents and birth defects before, after and sometimes even during surgery. He documented both startlingly successful reconstructions and permanent disfigurement not for voyeuristic purposes, but in the hope that having their sometimes severely mutilated faces painted would help them come to terms with what had happened to them and regain a sense of human dignity. The "Saving Faces" exhibition has traveled around the U.K. and the United States, and comes to Esther Klein in collaboration with the College of Physicians of Philadelphia's "humanism in medicine" program. Hutchinson and a bioethicist will give a lecture at the College on Sept. 26 at 6:15, called "What's in a Face? Issues of Self and Identity in Facial Reconstruction."

GALLERY

—Rachel Frankford

Opening reception Fri., Sept. 8, 5:30-7:30 p.m., runs through Oct. 28, Esther M. Klein Art Gallery, 3600 Market St., 215-966-6188, www.kleinartgallery.org. Additional works on display at the College of Physicians, 19 S. 22nd St., 215-563-3737.



Windy City

The *Front Page* is such a great story — a media/politics satire set in 1930 Chicago, in the vein of Kander & Ebb's *Chicago* — that it has been turned into a movie three times. Now, at long last, we may see a successful stage musical production. Tony Macaulay, the

THEATER

pop songwriter-turned-novelist, got the idea in 1980 and his show had a successful London run but Broadway producers passed because its large cast was too expensive. For its run at the Walnut, Macaulay has done an extensive rewrite. Bernard Harard's company, sometimes criticized for sticking with the tried-and-true, here takes a chance and apparently is rewarded by the budget. Macaulay calls his piece "a musical come thriller with lots of action, and a strong love triangle — a man, I career and his woman." Macaulay has won the British Academy Award nine times for songwriting and his tunes have been recorded by stars from Elvis Presley to Alison Krauss, but he says he's most proud of his novels.

—Steve Cohe

Runs Sept. 5-Oct. 22, \$10-\$67.50, Walnut Street Theatre, 825 Walnut St., 215-574-3550.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK | PATTI SMITH "I spent all morning writing a song about Guantánamo Bay. The anger and outrage I felt isn't any different than the outrage I once felt about Vietnam or civil rights. My blood is still burning." —THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF PUNK GETS MOUTHY W/ IT

the a-list

ART

"Saving Faces"

Through Oct. 28. Free. Esther M. Klein Art Gallery, 3600 Market St. 215.966.6188. www.kleinartgallery.org; College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 19 S. 22nd St. 215.563.3737. www.collphyphil.org

Artists today often try to grab an audience with "shock and awe tactics," says Dan Schimmel, director and curator of the Esther M. Klein Art Gallery, "but they go about it in such fantastical ways." His new exhibit "Saving Faces" uses realistic techniques to show dramatic and life-altering events. Painted by British artist Mark Gilbert, the works document the transformation of patients who've undergone facial reconstructive surgery for genetic deformities, cancer or injury. The portraits, which are also on display in a satellite exhibition at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, depict individuals before, after and sometimes during their procedures. "I think it will startle people," says Schimmel. Most similar images catalog and document medicine through photography, but this medium gives the subject a more analyti-

cal and clinical feel. "It removes the human experience," says Schimmel. "Painting is more primary to our sensibilities." (Mike Bederka)

PUPPETRY

The Rocky Horror Puppet Show

Thurs., Sept. 14-Sat., Sept. 16. 8pm. \$15. Theatre, 2111 Sansom St. 215.413.1318. www.littlefishtheatre.net

If there's one thing sorely lacking from this year's Philly Fringe lineup, it's toast being lobbed at performers. Enter *The Rocky Horror Puppet Show*. This Little Fish Theatre production gives Richard O'Brien's sci-fi musical an *Avenue Q* makeover with puppets created by Hob Hollow's Patrick Ahearn portraying the characters (save for flesh-and-blood leads Brad and Janet). The work marks a departure for the New Jersey-based troupe, which has performed largely at schools since its 2003 beginnings.

"Because we've been doing a lot of children's theater, we wanted to do something as far from that as possible," explains Little Fish co-founder/artistic director Christopher Totoro. The educational merits of gender-bending Transylvanians aside, why does *Rocky Horror*



Mission accomplished: The strip turned show hits all its targets.

SATIRE

Get Your War On

Wed., Sept. 13-Fri., Sept. 15, 9pm; Sat., Sept. 16, 7pm and 10pm. Arden Theatre Company, 40 N. Second St. 215.922.1122. www.ardentheatre.org

After 9/11 David Rees' *Get Your War On* clip-art comic strip and Internet phenomenon captured (and continues to express) the undercurrent of tension, anxiety and rage like no other medium. And it also manages to be bladder-bustingly hilarious. Perhaps the most amusing parts of the highly political and equally profane comic are the stoic clip-art office characters. It would seem a highly ambitious task to create a live-action version of the stern bespectacled man gripping the phone and grimacing while contemplating the logistical failings of a flowchart, or the wildly smiling lady brandishing a donut around a breakroom table while criticizing foreign policy with an onslaught of F-bombs. Austin theater troupe the Rude Mechanicals, under the direction of Shawn Sides, are just that ambitious, which is hardly surprising given that they also have an adaptation of Greil Marcus' *Lipstick Traces* under their collective belt. When you consider the troupe has injected music and choreography into *Get Your War On* as well, you have to take your (clip-art) hat off to them. (Maggie Serota)



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Dan Schimmel, director of the Esther M. Klein Art Gallery, hangs the "after" portrait of "Rhonda," while "Roland" in a mask hangs on another wall. Artist Mark Gilbert was surprised at the subjects' willingness to sit for portraits. Normally, they declined even to look in mirrors.

CLEM MURRAY / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Before-and-after portraits show the saving grace of surgery.

A gallery of faces remade

By Susan Boni
FOR THE INQUIRER

Susan Morgan-Elphick was afflicted from birth with a chin and forehead that jutted out like a crescent moon.

A native of a small town in northern England, she longed to look normal and would do anything she could to distract people from her face.

"I'd dye my hair all different colors," she said. "I'd go over the top with eye makeup to take the view away from my lower face." She has only a few pictures of herself before the age of 29.

Today, 11 years later, Morgan-Elphick's face is a case study of what surgery can do. Her new smile has been enshrined in a six-foot oil painting in the "Saving Faces" exhibit that originated at London's National Portrait Gallery. Twenty-six paintings from the original exhibit went on display Friday at the Esther M. Klein Art Gallery, 3600 Market St. The show is in collaboration with the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, which is mounting a smaller version of the exhibit.

"Saving Faces" was conceived by Iain Hutchison, an Oral and Maxillofacial surgeon at St. Bartholomew's and the Royal London Hospital.

Hutchison, 58, who operated on Morgan-Elphick in 1995, believes that the public needs to know what is possible with modern facial surgery — and what isn't. The exhibit follows some of his patients as they are treated for severe deformities from facial injuries, cancer and congenital impairments.

His collaborator, portrait painter Mark Gilbert, 37, has been a regular exhibitor at the National Portrait Gallery since 1993.

At Hutchison's urging, Gilbert immersed himself in hospital life to chronicle 35 patients in various stages of facial repair.

The portraits are arguably more personal than photography. They interpret the patients' faces in warm and vibrant colors, capturing the struggles and successes.

The subjects include a 2½-year-old girl who had a tumor the size of a baseball removed from her cheek. Another patient, a lawyer, had endured 15 operations in 13

If You Go

■ **"Saving Faces" Exhibit**, free to the public through Oct. 28:

Site: Klein Gallery, 3600 Market St. Time: Monday to Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

College of Physicians Satellite Exhibit: Daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 19 S. 22d St.

■ **"Saving Faces" Programs**, free and wheelchair-accessible at the College of Physicians:

Sept. 26, 6 p.m.: "What's in a Face? Issues of Self and Identity in Facial Reconstruction" with British

surgeon Iain Hutchison and associate philosophy professor Hilde Lindemann of Michigan State University.

Oct. 24, 6 p.m.:

"Transformative Surgery: Artistic and Psychological Considerations," with "Saving Faces" painter Mark Gilbert, visiting professor, University of Nebraska, and David Sarwer, associate professor of psychology in psychiatry and surgery, University of Pennsylvania.

RSVP for programs: Mara Zepeda, 215-563-3737, Ext. 225



A "before" painting. The exhibit at the Klein art gallery runs until Oct. 28.

years, losing an eye and all the bones on the left side of his face and head.

Gilbert was amazed that patients, who normally would decline to look in the mirror, would sit for portraits and like the results. Many felt the painting process helped them heal emotionally, he said.

Several revolutions have occurred in modern facial surgery in the last 20 years, said Hutchison, founder of England's Facial Surgery Research Foundation.

Surgeons can now take a tiny artery or vein from elsewhere in the body and place it in the neck. The block of tissue or flap attached to the blood vessel can then be harvested, carved into the right shape, and used to replace the lost tissue in the head and neck.

This means that surgeons are no longer limited in what they can transplant by the distance between the face and other parts of the body, Hutchison said.

Another advance has been the use of titanium metal plates, much lighter than stainless steel, to hold together bones that have been fractured or moved around in a new way.

Surgeons can now lengthen bones by stim-

ulating new growth through a technique discovered by Russian innovator G.A. Ilizarov. A bone is cut and a screw is inserted on each side of the cuts. The patient turns the screw each day, opening the bone by a fraction of a millimeter. New bone then forms across the opening, eliminating the need for bone grafts from another part of the body.

Surgeons have also found new ways of gaining access to the face without leaving visible scars. For Morgan-Elphick, Hutchison did the whole operation from inside her mouth. After working with an orthodontist for 14 months before surgery, he fractured her cheekbone, pushed it out, and inserted a rib, fixing it in place with a titanium metal plate. She has no external scars.

Besides showing what modern facial surgery can do, "Saving Faces" shows its limitations. Not all patients are free of scars or have perfect faces.

"The general public sometimes think that we surgeons are supermen and women who can achieve the impossible," Hutchison said.

Still, he hopes the exhibit will help show that "people with disfigurement can lead normal, active, full lives."