

# APALAZZOGALLERY

**ROBERTO JUAREZ  
80's EAST VILLAGE  
LARGE WORKS ON PAPER**

+

**DOWNTOWN AMIGOS Y AMIGAS**

**A project by Fabio Cherstich**

**16 December 2023 – 3 February 2024**

APALAZZOGALLERY is pleased to present *Roberto Juarez. 80's East Village Large Works on Paper*, the first solo exhibition in Italy of the artist Roberto Juarez with the group composed by Stephen Barker, Arch Connelly, Donna Francis, Jeff Perrone, Elaine Reichek, Mark Tambella and Jimmy Wright. The exhibition is curated by Fabio Cherstich and the opening will be on Saturday 16 December 2023.

“Three years after the first exhibition devoted to the work of Larry Stanton at the gallery, I decided to re-investigate the New York art scene in the 1980s with this new exhibition project. The stage is again Manhattan, this time with a focus on the East Village, in a choral dialogue prompted by a valuable body of large works on paper by Roberto Juarez. Made between 1981 and 1985 and rediscovered by the artist in his Columbia County, New York studio during the lockdown, after 40 years, they continue to emanate the city's impetuous energy at its creative peak.

Arriving in New York in the winter of 1980, young Roberto Juarez immediately established himself in the downtown art scene, combining neo-expressionism with imagery influenced by his queer identity. The artist's half-Mexican and half-Puerto Rican roots play a key role in his choice of subjects and colours, adding an extra layer of meaning to his work.

Serving as a prologue to this focus on Roberto's works on paper comes the second exhibition, "Amigos y Amigas". The group show celebrates the artists who, united by friendship and together with Juarez, contributed to the vibrant East Village art and cultural scene. The selection includes works by Jimmy Wright, Mark Tambella, Donna Francis, Elaine Reichek, Jeff Perrone, Arch Connelly, and Stephen Barker. A selection of memorabilia and archival materials from Juarez's archives will frame the works in the exhibition.

This project was born out of my friendship with these artists and offers a valuable insight into the dazzling beginning of Roberto Juarez's artistic journey, as well as a glimpse into the network of affections and collaborations that helped define the effervescent East Village art scene beginning in the 1980s. This is a unique opportunity to immerse oneself in the stories intrinsic to works and artists that shaped the cultural fabric of that era and that I like to share for the first time with Italian audiences.”

- *Fabio Cherstich*

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**Roberto Juarez** (Chicago, IL 1952) lives and works in New York City, USA. After his studies at San Francisco Art Institute and UCLA, he moved to New York where he was one of the protagonists of the East Village art scene in the 80s. His works have been exhibited in private and public American institutions such as Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (2018), National Academy Museum, New York (2015), Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City (2004), Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami (2003), American Academy of Art and Letters, New York (2002), Austin Museum of Art (2002), Albuquerque Museum (2002), Center for Fine Arts, Miami (1995), Peggy Guggenheim, Venice (1993), El Museo del Barrio (1988), Whitney Museum of Art, New York (1987), Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (1986), The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1984), San Francisco Art Institute (1977). Roberto Juarez has been elected member of the National Academy of Arts NY and of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Amongst the other awards, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship in New York (2001) and the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome (1997). His site specific public commissions are visible at Miami Airport, Grand Terminal Central Station in New York City and in Brooklyn.

Juarez's works are held in numerous prominent public collections: Brooklyn Museum of Art; Denver Art Museum; El Museo del Barrio; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; MET Museum NYC; Miami Art Museum; and many others.

**Stephen Barker** graduated from Cooper Union School of Art in 1980, soon after becoming an assistant to noted portrait artist Hans Namuth and architectural photographer Wolfgang Hoyt. In response to the growing AIDS crisis, Barker became an activist, working with ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and managing the Brooklyn Needle Exchange for two years. He also took his camera into New York City's sex clubs. Given the necessity for anonymity, many of the figures that appeared in this work, entitled *Nightswimming*, appear indistinct at first glance. The settings are often darkened cinemas and hallways, yet there are flashes of intelligibility – tenderness, passion, and even introspection.

**Arch Connelly** (Chicago, Illinois, 1950 - New York, 1993) moved in the sphere of East-Village and Patterns & Decoration, that trend which, starting in the second half of the 1970s, in precise contrast to the minimal and conceptual currents, established itself in America with its opulent and transgressive, redundant and playful charge, laden with references to the various forms of folk and craft art. The "hyperdecorative" vocation exaggerated to the nth power in that ornamentation of banal and "qualityless" objects belonging to the everyday, also has its roots in the great American tradition of Pop Art. The last "New Baroque" phase leads Connelly to a hyperbole of the ephemeral, to an apology of the theatrical. With the result, however, of transforming his painting into a high-class painting that goes beyond the Hollywood-style overload of refinement desired by Pollock and Stella to immerse itself in a fin de siècle atmosphere.

**Donna Francis** has been exploring photography for 50 years. Her work encompasses a wide range of subjects and techniques. She has used conventional methods of photographing such as (analog) equipment, pinhole, or digital cameras. Despite the limitations of the pinhole camera, she has found ways to push the boundaries of the medium. Experimenting with different printing techniques, such as cyanotypes, the Van Dyke Brown method, giclee printing on handmade papers. With the advent of technology catching up to Donna, she is able to print on textiles, thus allowing to create large scale images the audience can walk around, and between. Creating an environment that is both ethereal and grounded in reality. She is always seeking to push the boundaries of the medium and create images that challenge and inspire. Above all, her work is about celebrating the endless possibilities of photography as an art form. She believes that every image has the potential to be a work of art, and that every moment has the potential to be captured in a way that is both meaningful and beautiful. Through her photography, she hopes to share her love of the medium with others, and to inspire them to explore their own creative potential.

**Jeff Perrone** (Atwater, California, 1953) works at the intersection where West African fabric, Indian miniature color, and Southwest Native American form flow into abstract painting. Perrone combines, transposes, and joins together the materials, structures, and processes that engage the history of world culture, across time and continent. Sewn buttons function as pointillist accretions that define rectilinear, curved, or gently bending, totemic bands of color. The buttons are modern equivalents of the shells and beads used the world over, in everything from everyday, functional clothing to the most sacred sculpture. [...] Perrone's pictorial hybrid is a variety of painting-without-paint, a migratory art, grounded by Malian mud cloth (bogolanfini), and indebted to the geometries of both Incan weaving and South African Basotho house murals. To this cluster of mixed origins, the artist applies painted wood moldings, a framing device similar to that used by the Igbo women of Nigeria, who embellish the windows, doors, and walls of their dung-and-mud houses with lumber fragments, which they recombine, in a highly stylized way, to suggest both animist and Islamist motifs. Drawing upon this communal pool of aesthetic knowledge, and incorporating 'immigrant' and recycled materials, he creates a recombinant collage, built upon directional shifts and syncopated movements - like those of Afro-Cuban jazz, or the sound-sampling mixologies of the turntablist DJs, who, as Basotho women say of their art, 'beat out a rhythm across the wall.' Perrone situates his work within this cultural multi-verse, in a reverse colonization process: a migration into painting space that has the flavor of lived, urban life - a context embracing the cultural criss-cross. His pidgin painting, speaking in an aesthetic patois, inhabits a sphere where difference is a breeding ground encouraging ever more variety, and diffusion. Such an influx reflects a life of interchange, from the textile importers on 125th Street to the Ukrainian button sellers at the 26th Street flea market. It can be seen anywhere: from an Indian woman on 34th Street, in a pink and gold sari under a Harris tweed blazer, ordering jerk chicken; to a Somali woman, in a banana-leaf print dress, and a black-and-white checkerboard fake fur, sitting in a Thai restaurant on Bayard Street.

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**Elaine Reichek** (Brooklyn, New York, 1943) has been using thread as a core element in her work since the early 1970s, at first with minimalist line paintings made with thread on canvas, and more recently with her embroidery and new-media works. She was an early pioneer among conceptual artists rethinking the role of craft in the fine arts and investigating alternative narratives that had been excluded from the canon, in what is now a burgeoning field of creative endeavor and critical inquiry. Through an extended exploration of the history of the embroidered sampler, Reichek arrived at the fusion of image and text in dialogue with the history of art that continues to be her main area of exploration. Reichek lives and works in New York, and has exhibited extensively in the United States and abroad for nearly forty years, including solo exhibitions at: New York's Museum of Modern Art and The Jewish Museum; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Tel Aviv Museum; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio; Stichting De Appel, Amsterdam; and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. Her work is in the collections of New York's Museum of Modern Art, The Jewish Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Arts and Design, and the Brooklyn Museum; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Museum, Philadelphia; Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas; Norton Museum of Art, Palm Beach, Florida; and the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin, among others.

**Mark Tambella** is a cocoon maker. He has painted mostly with oil on canvas for over the last 20 years on the Lower East Side. These paintings include bright restaurant kitchens, shadowy bar rooms, and dimly lit bedrooms with intense physical realities. But it has been difficult to near impossible to see these paintings, spaces of his mind, except when they've become stage sets, because as Mark so eloquently put it, "Art is bullshit, theater is real." As long as he has been making paintings he has been building and designing stage sets with some of the most talented playwrights and artists in New York. A short list would include Gary Indiana, Jeff Weiss, Ellen Stewart, Lanford Wilson, Maria Irene Fornes, Damon Wright, Neil Greenberg, and Ross Bleckner. Most recently, he created the visual carnival for The Rainbow Flea with Charles Allcroft. A huge backdrop painted with a broom lets you see as much as feel a tenement apartment. It is a portal that constantly unfolds from the grim layer of the apartment to a glittering surreal stage that seems to become a butterfly's cocoon. And very much like a cocoon, it all must be destroyed in the end. Mark has told me, "Over time, you see spatial themes and formulas developing from performance to performance, though they may be totally dissimilar in content and spirit. Even certain experimental pieces utilize very old hat tricks to manipulate the audience. The nature of creating something to serve this orbiting sphere of many creative processes (acting, directing, lighting, costuming, and music) is collaborative and uncontrollable until their collision at a given time." Mark Tambella likes to use throwaways to create his stage art. Using throwaways to create something that will be destroyed is to use something already destroyed, already forgotten, and to reanimate it. This way of working has the added feature of bringing the whole conspicuously wasteful culture we live in onto the stage. Surprisingly, the visual impression is one of sacred abundance and transformation. Look for The Snowman's Serenade, the upcoming work of Charles Allcroft with stage art by Mark Tambella, at the La Mama Theater this summer. (Roberto Juarez)

**Jimmy Wright** (Kentucky, 1944) is a painter and pastel artist of international note with a career in the arts spanning over fifty years. [...] Wright received a scholarship to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, from which he earned a bachelor of fine arts degree in 1967 and studied with renowned painter Ray Yoshida. Wright then entered the graduate program at SIUC and achieved his master of fine arts degree in 1971 [...] While at SIUC, he was an organizer of the university's first LGBTQ+ organization, one of the earliest in the country. A few years of teaching and travel followed—California, Europe, Asia—followed, then Wright settled in the Bowery, New York City, in 1974, just as the punk and gay scenes were reaching an early peak. There, Wright used the vibrant nightlife as a source of inspiration for a series of paintings capturing the libertine atmosphere of the clubs and bathhouses as well as quieter moments between the gay men of the neighborhood which Wright observed and then later painted from memory. The arrival of the AIDS epidemic in New York's gay community in the early 1980s brought an end to the clubs and the lives of many of those associated with them, including a number of Wright's friends. More devastatingly, Wright's partner of over a decade, Ken Nuzzo, was diagnosed HIV-positive in 1988. To better care for Nuzzo, Wright switched the subject of his art to cut flowers: subjects which could be arranged and the paintings worked on when time permitted. [...] In recognition of his work and commitment to his art, Wright was named a National Academician of the National Academy of Design in 2018 and elected the president of the National Pastel Society in 2013, an office he continues to hold. His art resides in the collection of many leading museums including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as private collections and galleries around the world. [...]

**Fabio Cherstich** (Udine, 1984) is an Opera and Theater director and set designer. His work combines a meticulous attention to visual aesthetics and a passion for new media and contemporary visual languages. He has worked in numerous Theaters, including the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, Opera d' Avignon, Opera de Marseille, Theatre Maillon de Strasbourg, Teatro Argentina in Rome, and Teatri in Reggio Emilia. His productions have been invited to prestigious international festivals, such as the Festival d'Avignon, Festival di Napoli, Festival Premiere Strasbourg, Stuck Contemporary Art Center Festival in Leuven, and the Venice Theatre Biennale. Since 2012, he has been an associate artist at the Franco Parenti Theater in Milan. He is the creator and director of the "Operacamion" opera-on-the-road project, described by The New York Times as "a unique project capable of returning opera to its origins." As a director of performative events in the fields of fashion and design, he has collaborated with brands like Cassina, Gufram, Memphis Milano, Fay, Hermès, Off-WHITE, and Acne Studio.

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Cherstich also serves as an editor for international magazines, including Apartamento, Dust, Cap 74024, L'Uomo Vogue, Numero Art, and Alla Carta. He teaches aesthetics of theatrical direction at the Scuola d'arte drammatica Paolo Grassi in Milan and at the IULM university in Milan. Always interested in contemporary art, with a particular focus on the underground New York scene of the 1980s and 1990s, he has been the curator of the Larry Stanton Estate in NYC since 2019.

**APALAZZOGALLERY** was founded in 2008 by Francesca Migliorati and Chiara Rusconi, as a commercial space for new encounters. Inspired by the unique architecture of the gallery, the prestigious Palazzo Cigola Fenaroli in Brescia, Italy, it aims to show contemporary art through a particular perspective, presenting curated solo and group exhibitions on a diversity of themes. The commitment of the gallery is to develop a multidisciplinary and cross-generational programme. APALAZZOGALLERY organises exhibitions based on a particular theme or, alternatively, on the work of a single artist; and it supports international and Italian artists, both young and historical figures. Every project is built on a long and attentive dialogue between the gallery space and the artist; the result is often a show, in which the artworks engage the space in innovative ways, creating complex connections with the architecture of the palace. The gallery encourages and sustains this dialogue through artist residencies. APALAZZOGALLERY promotes the work of the artists through Italian and international art fairs and curatorial projects.

Represented artists are Sonia Boyce OBE RA, Ann Iren Buan, Edson Chagas, Giorgio Ciam, Raùl De Nieves, Nathalie Du Pasquier, Emkal Eyongakpa, the Estate of Larry Stanton, Paolo Gonzato, Ibrahim Mahama, Eva & Franco Mattes, Servane Mary, the Estate of Jonas Mekas, Lucia Pescador, Marta Pierobon, Nathalie Provosty, Alan Reid, Olympia Scarry, Augustas Serapinas, Alexandra Sukhareva, The Reader, Francesco Vezzoli and Luc Ming Yan.

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