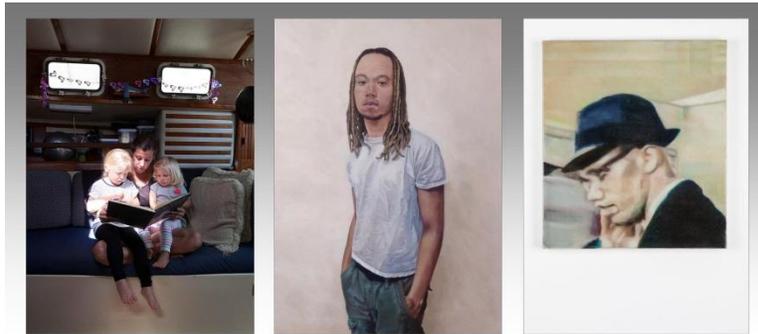


Margaret LeJeune, Rick Lewis, and Jason Patterson

Contemporary Portraiture



The McLean County Arts Center presents Contemporary Portraiture, an exhibition featuring work by Margaret LeJeune, Rick Lewis, and Jason Patterson in the Brandt Gallery, January 9 through February 14 2015. A reception will be on Friday, January 16 from 5 to 7 pm and an Art Talk given by the artists will be on Tuesday, February 3 at 6 pm. These events are free and open to the public.

Contemporary Portraiture features three artists informed perspectives on portraiture. With a nod to the history of portraiture, each artist moves their subjects who may be considered other into the light of hero. Margaret LeJeune, Rick Lewis, and Jason Patterson are each embarking into new, bold series of works that grapple with challenging our society's preconceived perceptions about race, gender, class, and religion.

Photographer Margaret LeJeune's new series titled the Female Mariner Project focuses on women who choose a life aboard and cruising on sailboats. Contrary to the history of ocean exploration dominated by men, these contemporary women live and work on sailboats. LeJeune states, "I am struck by the courage and tenacity that all of these women exhibit in their ability to unleash the ties to creature comforts and consumer culture and to live a life that is both adventurous and nomadic." LeJeune's photographs level class structure and gender bias depicting the individuals at work or leisure, above or below deck, sometimes posed and sometimes candidly performing a sailing task. The breadth of images captures the unique lives and personalities of this autonomous community.

As an Associate Dean of Students at Illinois State University, Rick Lewis has worked with many in the most formative time of their lives. Over the years, Lewis has noticed the challenges that many young African American men face in a campus and culture dominated by the White Caucasian experience. Lewis began a series of portrait paintings of Black males titled (In)Visible Men with the intention to "address the omission and marginalization of this social group in the narrative of social conscious outside the context of entertainment, athletics, and criminality." The large scale paintings present each figure in front of seemingly neutral and backgrounds, creating a dialog between the power of the individual over the assertion of the environment. By accepting the gaze of each dignified man, a personal internalized conversation begins demonstrating how one evaluates and accepts another individual.

In his artwork, Jason Patterson brings significant moments of the past into a contemporary focus. He states, "The subjects in my work largely center around the American narrative. I convey these events, stories and lives through portraiture." Patterson appropriates images and represents their material source through his delicate drawn marks in chalk pastel on canvas preserved under a heavy varnish. In his new series titled On the Conversion of Malcolm Little to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, Malcolm X, Patterson has combined his drawn representations of media images of Malcolm X with scale representations of the Italian Baroque painter Caravaggio's 'Conversion on the Way to Damascus', 1601 and 'The Conversion of Saint Paul', 1600-1601. This comparison of Malcolm X and Paul the Apostle "struck numb" in religious transformation resulting in their lives changed from destructive and self serving to prolific messengers of a new order still resonates today. Patterson suggests, "The drama of Caravaggio's aesthetic matches the way Malcolm X's life is remembered -- turbulent, epic, inspiring, and tragic. By depicting this foundational moment in Malcolm X and Paul's lives, we see also the foundation of what they became." As any public historical figure, Malcolm X and Paul the Apostle must battle myths and misconceptions of their character and intent and may never be truly known.

This exhibition was generously sponsored by



[Listen to WGLT's Laura Kennedy discuss portraiture with us](#)

