

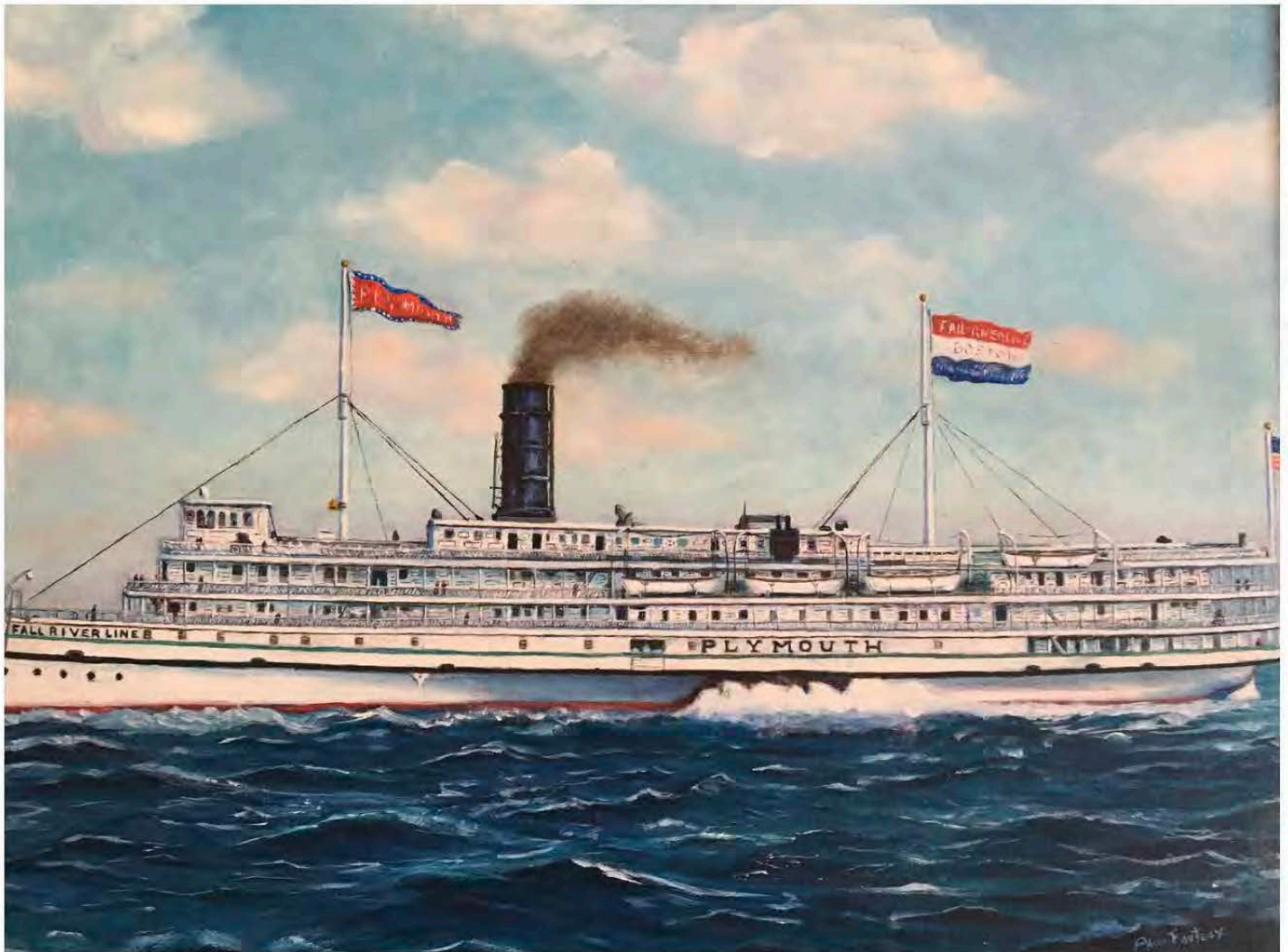
Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art exhibit explores ties with New York art scene

Don Wilkinson

“Group Exhibition III” at the Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art (FR MoCA) is an ambitious presentation that takes note of some of the connective threads between the cities of Fall River and New York. Those threads, some direct and others tangential, note deeper bonds that one might not initially expect between the Spindle City and the Big Apple.

The exhibition, curated by FR MoCA co-founders Brittni Ann Harvey and Harry Gould Harvey IV, is effectively three distinct displays that speak to each other in unanticipated ways.

The foyer of the museum is a gallery unto itself and presently displays artifacts and artwork from the collection of the Maritime Museum at Battleship Cove. There is a charming painting by Alice Fauteux of the steamboat Plymouth and nautical tools (brass telescope, oil squirt can, hammers, a number of gauges and the like) displayed in a vitrine, representing the history of the Fall River Line, a transportation route that connected Boston to New York City from 1847 to 1937.



Painting By Alice Fauteux From The Collection Of The Maritmtime Museum At Battleship Cove. *Provided Photo*

The inaugural collaboration between the two institutions suggests the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

The large pristine main gallery features paintings and three-dimensional works by Kathleen White, who was born in Fall River in 1960. White, an incredibly prolific artist that moved to New York City in 1987, died in 2014. Displayed alongside White within that space is Rafael Sanchez, her partner and frequent artistic collaborator.

MARTOS GALLERY

But what is the connection between the Fall River Line ephemera and White (and by extension, Sanchez)? White's grandfather was a Fall River Line steamboat captain.

There is something demanding and engaging about the obsessiveness of motif and approach in White's work, as if she were repeating a refrain over and over again, making sure she was being heard. A number of her "Love Letters" paintings are displayed and all feature similar markings and strokes: blunt vertical blocks, packed tightly against each other like passengers on a crowded subway train, one row over another.



A Painting From Kathleen White's Love Letters Series.
Provided Photo

Her palette is selectively limited, with pinks running from chalky Pepto-Bismol to deep coral, shifting to-and-from sweet lavenders and a maroon that nears the hue of dried blood.

Displayed on one wall of small shelves are 24 handmade tiny automobiles not much bigger than vintage Matchbox cars and created with Sculptamold and oil paint. White titled them all simply "Car" and they represent but a tiny fraction of the series, all created between 1999 and 2001.

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Sanchez has a bit of a Duchampian readymade sensibility in a few of his works. “La Pildora (The Pill)” is a bell jar tightly packed with lightbulbs of varying size, color and design. The cynical viewer might dismiss it as an art school joke but it is far more than that. The bulbs have changed over the years and Sanchez takes particular care of the bulbs both formally and conceptually. Many of the bulbs were taken from the homes of friends and colleagues who lost their lives to AIDS, and hence the objects take on a kind of sacredness, a physical embodiment of spirit.



La Pildora The Pill by Rafael Sanchez *Provided Photo*



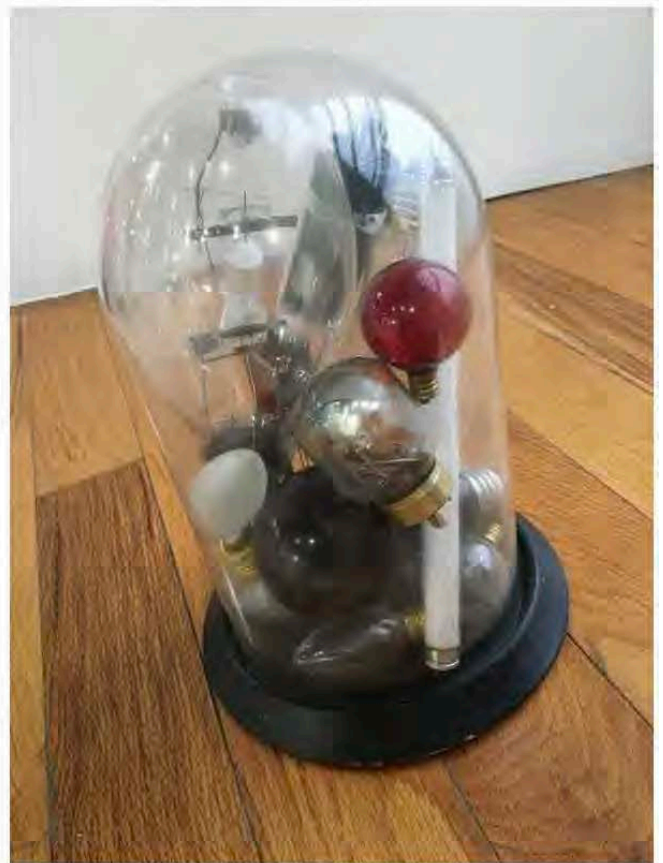
All The Faces I Know by Bella Carlos *Provided Photo*

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His kinetic mixed-media sculpture “Weather Station” is an assemblage of all-black objects. An open umbrella, a balloon, and a walking cane are mounted to an old school phonograph, atop a tall table or stool. It’s a deceptively simple work, situated in a corner of the all-white gallery. The curators have made the most of positioning and lighting to make it a showcase piece for the exhibition.

In the adjacent display spaces is the third leg of the exhibition called “Flame of Love” featuring Bella Carlos, Dorothy Carlos, Tom Forkin, Christopher K. Ho, Brian Oakes, Tim Simonds and Marisa Takal.

Bella Carlos displays a series of wearable body adornments, with long black satiny straps tied to soldered forms that, at quick glance, look like bracelets or necklaces, adorned with decorative shapes, baubles and shimmery surfaces. But when one realizes that they are meant to be strapped to the face, they take on a kinky “Eyes Wide Shut” vibe that nudges one to a different kind of thought process. One of them is actually called “The Face I’m Afraid Of.”



La Pildora The Pill by Rafael Sanchez *Provided Photo*

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Carlos collaborated with fellow exhibitor Brian Oakes on “When You Touch Me You See Me,” a mixed media wall piece, with glowing cool blue lights, decorative flourishes, insectoid ornamentations, the suggestion of a flower, and the image of an entangled knot above the legend from which the work derives its title. It is a billet-doux of the new era.

“Group Exhibition III” is on display at Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art, 502 Bedford St., Fall River until April 14. FR MoCA is open Saturdays and Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m. and by appointment.