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SYNESTHESIA

Ani Art Academies artists will exhibit works inspired by music at Rehs Contemporary Galleries this April. **BY JOHN O'HERN**



Faculty, students and alumni of Ani Art Academies will exhibit their work in the exhibition *Synesthesia* at Rehs Contemporary Galleries in New York, April 9 through 29.

Ani Art Academies, with schools in Pennsylvania, the Dominican Republic, Anguilla, and Thailand, follow the training system of Anthony Waichulis. The “program is designed to promote creative freedom through logic and discipline.”

Synesthesia is defined as “the production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by

stimulation of another sense or part of the body.” The works in the exhibition have been inspired by music. Rehs Contemporary advises, “While this sensation is incredibly rare, the talents of the Ani Art Academies will convert you into a synesthete! Stop by and hear the works of art. Feel the colors. Taste the sounds.”

Among the works is a painting by Waichulis in the Trompe l’Oeil technique, which has earned him international acclaim. The oil painting, *George and Grace*, was inspired by the George and Ira Gershwin 1926 hit *Someone to Watch Over Me*.

1
Andrea Bills, *Waiting for Alice*, charcoal and pastel, 15 x 20”

2
Anthony Waichulis, *George and Grace*, oil, 7 x 5”





“George is indeed a reference to the song’s author, while Grace (serendipitously) was the name of the model shown in the playful, somewhat informal portrait. The song that inspired the work debuted in the first preview of the musical *Oh, Kay!* in Philadelphia in 1926. During the second act of the musical, actress Gertrude Lawrence performed the song alone on the stage, pouring out her feelings of loneliness, insecurity and despair to a small ragdoll. However, what many people may not be aware of is that the idea to include a ragdoll in the performance originated with George Gershwin himself,” says Waichulis. He adds, “Much like Gershwin’s impulse to visually enhance the realization of his creation with the introduction of an emotionally charged object as a ‘confidante’ for his Kay, I have chosen an assortment of character-laden ephemera to communicate what the song means to me.”

Several works in the show are extraordinary renderings in charcoal and pastel.

Deborah Lloyd who is artist/assistant instructor at Ani Art Academies Dominicana is represented by *Invincible*. Although she has a degree in public relations and international studies, she returned to school for an associate’s degree in photography before pursuing art at Ani Art Academies.

Andrea Bills has been drawing since she was a child

“With art and music being such a universal aspect of all cultures, I think the theme, Synesthesia, allowed the artists to explore familiar inspirations and create stunning works that are meaningful and transcend the communication barriers that we, as people of such a diverse world, are often faced with.”

— Alyssa Rehs, vice president and director, Rehs Contemporary Galleries

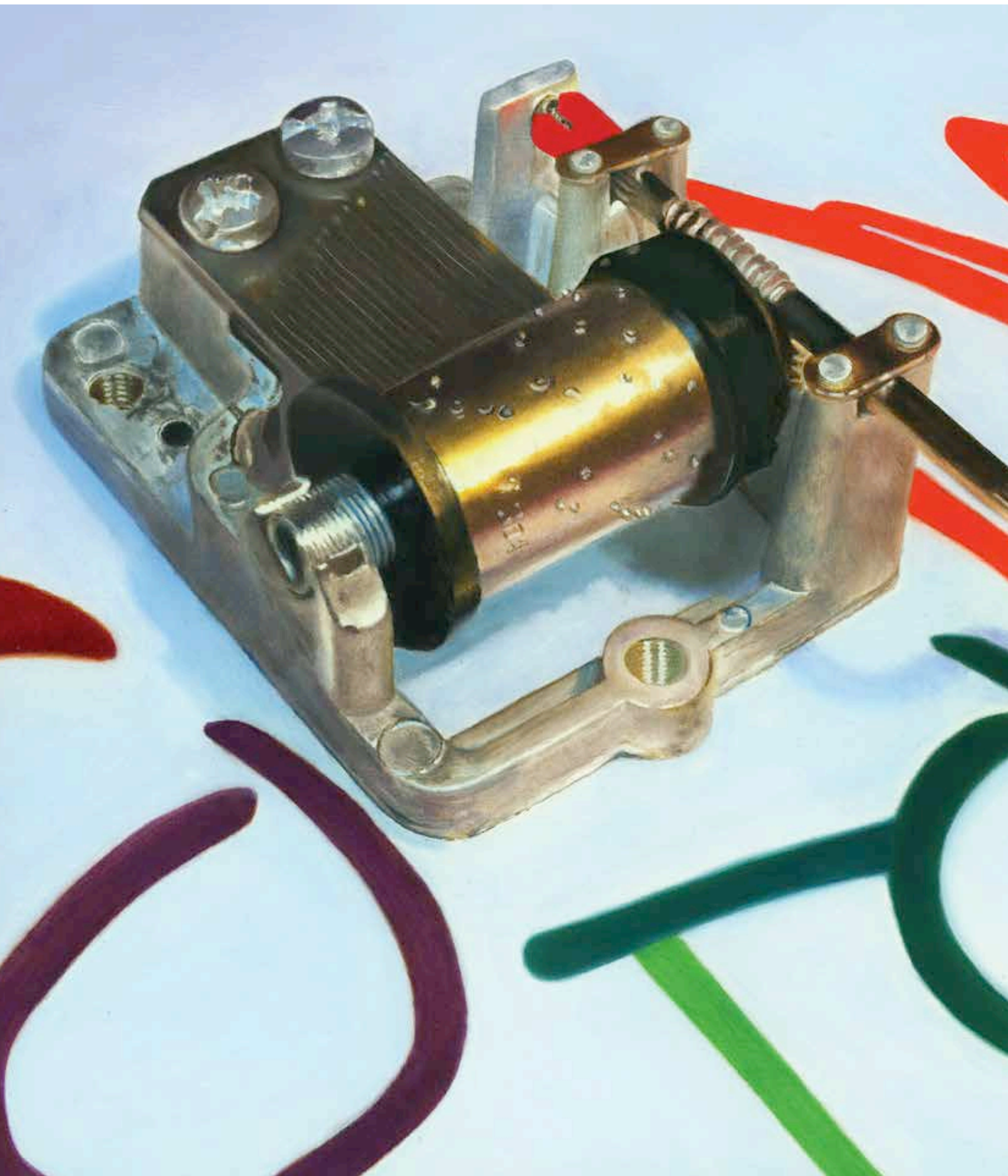
and has become an apprentice with Waichulis. She pays homage to Lewis Carroll in her *Waiting for Alice* in charcoal and white pastel, capturing the light and texture of objects from a tea cup to a crisp fall leaf. The work also contains a skull referring to the tradition of *vanitas* paintings.

“My inspiration began for this drawing when thinking about the White Rabbit from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and the Disney song, ‘I’m late! I’m late! For a very important date! No time to say hello, goodbye! I’m late! I’m late! I’m late!’” says

3
Andrew Covington,
Incunabulum, charcoal
and pastel, 10 x 8”

4
Deborah Lloyd,
Invincible, charcoal
and pastel, 8 x 10”







5

Bills. “My original idea was to make the Rabbit the central missing figure for this piece, but as the idea evolved through sketches and preliminary work, I decided to make Alice the missing figure, while the Rabbit and the Hatter are left waiting for her arrival.”

Andrew Covington also depicts a skull in his charcoal and pastel, *Incunabulum*. Covington’s skull has been turned into a container for forgotten objects—or their memories—children’s blocks, a thimble, a key and a medieval Knights Templar coin. Covington began drawing from comic books as a boy and is now studying with Waichulis in Pennsylvania.

Sharon L. Hourigan is an award-winning independent artist who has studied with Waichulis. Her often humorous oils on panel show a mastery of Trompe l’Oeil. *Imagine* depicts the mechanical innards of a music box, capable of music without its fancy case. She has been a finalist in the Art Renewal Center *International Salon Competition* four times.

During a study abroad, Hourigan’s daughter Meg found and purchased for her the music box mechanism that plays

Imagine, the artist’s “all-time favorite song,” she says. “I treasure this gift and thought it would be a perfect component for a still life painting for *Synesthesia*. I included Lennon’s iconic self-portrait as a hint to the song as well as homage to him, his brilliance and his beautiful idea of world peace.” ●

5

Timothy Jahm,
The Art of Peer
Pressure, oil, 30 x 30"

6

Sharon Hourigan,
Imagine, oil, 8 x 10"

SYNESTHESIA

When: April 9-29, 2016

Where: Rehs Contemporary Galleries, 5 E. 57th Street, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10022

Information: (212) 355-5710, www.rehs.com