

pt at large

reviews, commentaries, stories: paul tamburello's take

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December 07, 2011

🔗 The Copley Society: Big Value with Holiday Small Works 2011

The vibe on Newbury Street is like no other place in Boston. Walk two blocks and you'll overhear at least three languages and see a dozen fashion statements from footwear to hairstyles. It's great preparation for entering the Holiday Small Works 2011 show at The Copley Society. It looks like Santa's sleigh tipped over and spilled hundreds of pieces of compact artwork that his elves gleefully hung on the gallery's walls. Purchasing one won't break the bank but will get you interested in making return visits to this low-key, high quality gallery.

The Copley Society
158 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116

Tuesday - Saturday 11-6 | Sunday 12-5 | Monday by appointment•

(617) 536-5049•

Email info@copleysociety.org

Holiday Small Works 2011 Exhibition

November 17 - December 24

At age 134, the venerable **Copley Society** of art could be excused for behaving like the Dowager Queen of Newbury Street. The society, created by the first graduating class of The **Museum of Fine Arts School** in 1879, has the breeding of a Boston Brahmin debutante. In the dawning century of social media, the dowager has upgraded from a parasol to an iPhone.

A Thoroughly Modern Millie, she's downloaded a ton of apps on her smartphone. Her eyebrows arch ever so slightly when she spies a **QR mobile** code icon in the Copley Society's front window (square image bottom left). She pauses, retrieves her

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iPhone from her Coach handbag, swipes open the QR app and takes a photo of the bar code.

Before you can say Henry Cabot Lodge, she's connected to the Co/So web page that displays every piece of art in the gallery's annual **Holiday Small Works 2011 Show**.

"Splendid," she smiles to herself. She's found the perfect place to fill her friend's Christmas stockings. Dowager. No. Digerati, yes.

Luckily for the rest of us, we don't need to have a trust fund to afford what lies inside the Copley Society's Holiday Small Works Show. Scores of the 450 pieces in the exhibition are in the \$150 to \$500 range. Modestly sized and priced, they're the closest thing you'll ever experience as an "impulse buy" in a bona fide art gallery.

Each of the society's 330 current members could submit as many as five works. Several of the 450 artworks that were submitted were sold right off the walls on opening night. "I certainly hope the pattern continues in the northward trend," Suzan Redgate, Executive Director of the Copley Society, said last week. ("We're up to 85!" she wrote in an email on December 7.)

The cozy upper and lower galleries are loaded with watercolors, oils on canvas or linen, acrylics on Masonite, graphite on paper, archival pigment prints, platinum prints, mixed media, and hand colored etchings in styles from traditional to contemporary. If L. L. Bean were in the art business, it would feel like this, filled with the kinds of stuff you didn't know you wanted until you saw it.

"We realize that plowing through the show can be an overwhelming experience so we try to hang the pieces by themes: architectural, marine, Boston, landscape, still life, abstract, and figurative. There's a lot to absorb."



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About

In lesser hands the result could resemble a garage sale. Ms. Redgate and her staff somehow manage to keep the exhibit fresh and balanced as pieces are sold, giving each little collection on the walls room to breathe.

Artwork is displayed on upper and lower galleries...a feast for the eyes

“Having the entire exhibit posted online is an enormous draw for our regular customers and newcomers as well,” Ms. Redgate said. Customers have been known to walk into the gallery, send an iPhone or the gallery’s web site to a spouse and ask, “How about this one for the hallway by the front door?” Ca-chinnng.

Art may be a commodity but even in a pinched economy, purchasing a little piece of art that touches your heart like a puppy in the pet store window can make you feel good every time you look at it.

Internet savvy Redgate and her staff checked [Google analytics](#) and found there were more annual hits on their web site in November than December. The result? A convergence of art and science. “We realized that people were beginning their Christmas art shopping in November and wanted to maximize our exposure so this year we opened the show on November 17th.”

“Over the years, people have been drawn to favorite artists and will look to collect some of their art at these shows. Ellen Granter, Jim Kubiawicz, and Ralph Bush fall into that category. Another emerging favorite is Beatrice Dauge, whose style of painting with a palette knife appeals to buyers.”

The faves have stiff competition. Of the 100 applications received each year, the Copley Society admits 25 to 30 new members, whose work is juried and accepted by a credentialed membership committee. Exhibiting and selling work in this prestigious gallery is one huge perk.

Between the 15 to 20 exhibits the gallery hosts every year, including solo exhibitions, thematic group shows, juried competitions, and fundraising events, both the newbies and the veterans have a chance to rocket into an art collector’s stratosphere.

The Copley Society of Art, known more recently as Co|So, is the oldest non-profit art association in the United States, with a history dating back to 1879. One of its earliest members was [John Singer Sargent](#) (January 12, 1856 – April 14, 1925) who became one of the most successful portrait painters of his time.

From Executive Director Suzan Redgate right down the line to Gallery Coordinator Alicia LaTores, Media Coordinator Sarah Adams and a handful of student interns, the gallery staff is warm, friendly, and engaging. Especially important to first time visitors, they acknowledge you when you walk in the door, might ask what you like or think of the show in an entirely laid-back way that’s interest-driven.

They want you to be comfortable. They want you to come back. And if you come back with the notion to buy some art, so much the better.

Photos by Paul A. Tamburello, Jr.



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Upstairs gallery



QR barcode displayed in front window. QR Code reader app (third row right)



Downstairs gallery

December 07, 2011 in [Art/Gallery reviews](#) | [Permalink](#)

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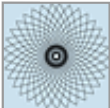
Comments



I can't wait to get in Town and visit there again. Thanks for the reminder.

Posted by: [Ann Baker](#) | [December 08, 2011 at 11:51 AM](#)

Say Hello to Suzan and Alicia and Sarah from me when you go! They've sold nearly one quarter of the submissions already. Art is alive and well in Boston.

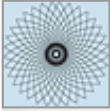


Posted by: [Paul Tamburello aka pt at large](#) | [December 08, 2011 at 12:59 PM](#)



I was thrilled to be accepted to the Copley Society recently, excited to submit my work for the first time at the Holiday Show, and so very pleased to read your wonderful review (forwarded to me by mutual friend Bambi Good). Congrats on the blog, Paul, sounds like you've found another calling since teaching (my son, Benny Zanger, among so many others).

Posted by: [Ginny Zanger](#) | [December 08, 2011 at 05:36 PM](#)



Ginny, this is so cool, small world, huh? Yes I remember Benny - and his good pal Jesse Hamilton, like two peas in a pod that year. Thanks to Bambi for forwarding the review to you. Quite amazing how the Brookline "web" keeps us connected. I loved the Small Works Show, as you can see, and understand after talking to Suzan Redgate what an achievement it is to be accepted as a Copley Society member... Congratulations!

I'm not on facebook but feel honored that you'd like to add a link to my blog on your facebook page - www.ptatlarge.typepad.com

Your watercolor "Angel Fish" reminded me of my first visit and scuba dive off the beach at St John in the Virgin Islands.

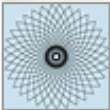
I enjoyed reading your artist statement (probably the one you submitted as you applied to the Copley Society) on your informative web site. I've spent time down in Louisiana, will be interested to see your series imagining the whereabouts of the Deep Water Horizon oil spill that is still not accounted for. Great to hear from you.

Posted by: [Paul Tamburello aka pt at large](#) | [December 09, 2011 at 10:09 PM](#)



Paul,
Thank you for a stellar blog...we are thrilled...
Most appreciatively,
Suzan

Posted by: [Suzan Redgate](#) | [December 09, 2011 at 10:12 PM](#)



I had fun writing the story. It wouldn't have been as good without the input I got from you and your staff (Sarah gave me a tutorial re the QR reader).

In a six degrees of separation moment, I got a comment on my blog from the mother of one of my former fourth grade students, Ginny Zanger, who was recently admitted to the Copley Society and has five pieces in the show... and she found about it from a former colleague of mine who's on my mailing list!

The story has several readers poised to come to visit the show.

Thanks for your compliment. Feel free to use the story in your Press Room or in whatever ways that raise Co/So's profile.
Paul

Posted by: [Paul Tamburello aka pt at large](#) | [December 09, 2011 at 10:18 PM](#)



Hey Suzan,
Was about to ask you whether the society wanted to consider adding a "What the bloggers are saying" to your web Press Page, looked around for blogs that mentioned Copley Society and found the link (with lovely intro) to my blog on the Copley Society facebook page!

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Copley-Society-of-art/38921551483?sk=wall&filter=12>

I am not on facebook but "Like" the fact that you posted it.
Thank you!

Posted by: [Paul Tamburello aka pt at large](#) | December 09, 2011 at 10:21 PM

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