

THE EAST HAMPTON STAR

SHINES FOR ALL

Colin Goldberg, Techspressionist

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Colin Goldberg posed with an uncharacteristically figurative self-portrait at the Southampton Arts Center this summer.

Those who think they are starting to see Colin Goldberg everywhere are probably right. Work by the recent Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant recipient is currently on view at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller in East Hampton and at the Southampton Cultural Center, and he was part of a group show at the Southampton Arts Center

this summer.

The Greenport artist is notable for the successful integration of designs and drawings created with his computer and for the gestural brushwork that is the hallmark of Abstract Expressionism. “Techspressionism,” the term he coined for this hybrid, is more than a label, it’s a manifesto, as outlined in the catalog of the Horowitz show.

His official definition is “an artistic style in which technology is utilized as a means to express emotional experience rather than impressions of the external world.” Elaborating recently at his Greenport studio, he said the computer was “one of many tools in the continuum of technology” that artists have used over the centuries.

Such tools have included the camera, printing press, and even pen, pencil, and paint. Frank Stella used early computer programs to block out some of his geometric paintings, and Franz Kline used a projector as a visual aid in his abstraction. These days it is common for painters to mock up ideas using computer technology and as a tool to complete a work. David Hockney’s iPad paintings, made with an app called Brushes, are just one notable example. “It’s a lot more integrated than people realize,” said Mr. Goldberg.

He was hesitant to describe what he creates as computer or digital art. “It’s just one facet,” he said. “Not a crutch, but a means to an end.” When people ask him if a work is computer-generated, he says “they are marks that the computer helped me execute.”

If he uses a pen or pencil to draw by hand, he finds it tedious. “It’s like I become the rendering machine, the printer. There’s no creativity, because I already know what it will look like. I’m just doing it for the sake of doing it.” A computer is “where ideas are generated,” he explained. “When I put stretched cut linen on the floor and do a gestural painting, I still enjoy it, but I get the same feeling on the computer watching it print.”

Helen Harrison, the director of the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center in Springs, has been a supporter of Mr. Goldberg's career. She quoted Jackson Pollock in her forward to the Horowitz catalog: "Each age finds its own technique." She goes on to compare the young artist to Pollock as well as Max Ernst and William Stanley Hayter, in his approach to form and his use of novel mediums.

Growing up on Middle Line Highway in Southampton (then a dirt road), Mr. Goldberg discovered art early. Also one of the first kids to have his own computer, a Commodore 64, he immediately saw its graphics potential. "There were two other nerdy kids in my grade and we formed a computer club. Back then it was the Apple 2 users versus the Commodore users . . . I never thought it would become such an integral part of our culture."

After graduating from high school in 1990, he ended up at SUNY Binghamton, where Angelo Ippolito, a second-generation New York School artist, became an influence. "He didn't teach us to paint abstractly, but explained his work in a way that made sense to me. His work was about paint, and the viewer could bring anything they wanted to it."

In his graduate work with computers, the artist truly began to understand that view. His undergraduate work had been mostly Surrealist.

Through an internship program at Southampton College (where his parents taught chemistry), Mr. Goldberg became a studio assistant to Steve Miller in Sagaponack. It gave him an early appreciation of how science and art could merge successfully. It also taught him about the business of art. He would see Mr. Miller working in the studio three days a week and spending the rest of his time on the business end — financials, networking, whatever else was required. "That's never taught in art school, it's not even breathed about, and that's a shame."

Mr. Goldberg decided to support himself with his tech background just about the

time when the Internet was becoming the Next Great Thing. “I got involved right at the beginning of the industry,” he said. His website designs for entities such as Snapple, Popular Science, and Golf magazine gave him “a digital-tool skill set.”

A few years later, his parents convinced him to go to graduate school. He was accepted at Bowling Green University in Ohio, one of the few schools at the time offering students a master’s degree in computer art and a full scholarship as well. There, he began incorporating digital drawing and painting into his work. “A lot of students who get an M.F.A. use it to apply for teaching jobs. My goal was to make as much work as possible.” Even then, many of his classmates hoped to end up working as animators at companies such as Disney and Pixar.

Up to that time, Mr. Goldberg had used digital drawing in prints for “Metagraphs,” a series he started in 1999. The exhibition at Horowitz, organized by Scott Bluedorn, will include an animation video of 12 of those pieces that pulls each image apart and puts it back together while rolling into the next one. They can also be seen in their original two-dimensional form in an installation at the S.Y.S. running track in Southampton. For these works, made in editions of 100, “I see the real piece as the code behind the work,” he said.

Mr. Goldberg has done little work in animation or video. He took a class in graduate school, but soon realized it would take his entire course of study to become really good at it. “My preference is to make things to hang on the wall,” he said.

Around 2004, he started to experiment with printing on top of painted works with a medium-format printer. The artist, who is half-Japanese, was inspired by his grandmother’s calligraphy in this series. She took the art form very seriously, once chastising him for thinking he could take it up without a sensei. The paintings on paper would then be overprinted with the drawings made on the computer. “I had to take the rollers out, they were leaving track marks.”

His Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant went to buy a large-format printer, which

prints up to 44 inches wide and on a variety of materials including linen and even corrugated cardboard — something that, as a new father, he couldn't justify purchasing on his own. He makes a decent living as a web designer, a talent he often barter in exchange for other goods and services. "If I didn't have what keeps making me want to create art, I'd be better off financially," he said. "I call it my art habit, in a way others might refer to drugs."

He lived in New York City for several years and elsewhere in the country, but said he was happy to be settled here to raise a family. He remembers when Kathleen King's \$100 million baking company was just the cookies she sold at her family farm stand, and he misses those days, when you could just leave money in a jar for the vegetables you took. It is why he will likely stay on the North Fork, because it resembles the community he remembers from his childhood.

In Greenport, Mr. Goldberg likes that Mark Rothko is buried down the road and that he can share in the East End history of artists such as Pollock and others he admires. The Pollock-Krasner House has taken some of his work into its collection, including a picture of the studio floorboards he made as a screen print and one of Pollock's gravestone. For someone whose first public exhibition was at the Parrish Art Museum's student show in 1989, returning to the Job's Lane building this summer may have felt part of that artistic continuum.

An informal reception will be held for Mr. Goldberg on Saturday from noon until 5 p.m. at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller.



Colin Goldberg's "Nami" is on view in "Techspressionism," his show at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller in East Hampton.