

Dobbs Ferry Artist Exhibits 'Painting-Words' At Manhattan's Agora Gallery

by Danny LoPriore Lifestyle 08/04/14



One of the works -- "Making Whoopie" of Dobbs Ferry artist John Nieman who will be exhibiting his work in Manhattan's Agora Gallery later this month. Photo Credit: *Contributed/John Nieman*

DOBBS FERRY, N.Y. -- Artist John Nieman's work exposes the viewer to the best of two creative worlds -- painting and prose -- where images and words meet to challenge the eye and mind. [The Agora Gallery in Manhattan's Chelsea](#) district will feature the Dobbs Ferry artist's work in The Chelsea International Fine Art Competition Exhibition from Aug. 22 through Sept. 11. The opening reception is set for 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 28 at the gallery, 530 W. 25th St.

Nieman's watercolors create visual riddles that break out of even the most basic art molds. He paints collections of objects -- dominoes, raspberries, cookies -- with documentary-like realism but presented in casual, intimate close-up. He then overlays the image with words in

the form of lists, phrases, or declarations, all linked to the image but requiring concentrated thought.

"I have always been attracted to the nexus of art and words -- perhaps because as a young boy, my mother used to teach me to draw on the kitchen table, and my dad loved the newspaper business and crosswords," Nieman said. "As a young man, I entered advertising where it was a requirement to combine those two creative disciplines."

The artist, who was born and raised in St. Louis, and moved to New York 45 years ago, opted out of the business world 15 years ago to devote himself to his writing and art.

"Most of my art is playful and interactive," he said. "I create a lot of images that have immediate impact and a residual mental tickle. Often, the paintings combine a list of words, luminaries, or phrases. I like this juxtaposition. It tends to involve both sides of the human brain."

Nieman's creativity took form as a young boy but was put on hold as he pursued a career.

"My art life began very early...and then took a hiatus for decades," he recalled. "In grade school and high school, most of my friends and teachers thought I would become an artist. However, like many baby boomers, I preferred to make money. So after college, I did so."

At age 50, Nieman said he "chucked it all, and decided to pursue true, single-minded creative pursuits. I call myself a conceptual pop artist. My work is fairly realistic, but also combines many references to pop culture," he said. "My inspirations were Andy Warhol, Edward Hopper, and David Hockney. In the film world, I am also inspired by Steven Spielberg and Woody Allen (there's an odd combination)."

And Nieman's life journey from childhood in the Midwest to Manhattan and its suburbs has fueled his creativity.

"Forty-five years ago, I moved from St. Louis, and have never regretted it," he said. "For the first 12 years, I lived in Manhattan and loved it. Since then, I have lived in Dobbs Ferry -- a village along the Hudson that is just 20 minutes from the George Washington Bridge. Here, I have raised five children."

And created art that asks questions and invites thought.

Agora Gallery is located at 530 W. 25th St. Hours are: Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.