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Kate Clark's man-beast was part of ArtSpace's clever "Why Look at Animals."

Byline byline

# The best of 2007

BEST  
OF  
BOOKS,  
DANCE,  
E2

We pick the year's  
shining moments in the arts

The collection of Joanne and William Pope of New Haven, was the inspiration for New Britain Museum of American Art's new "California in Connecticut" show, with works like Irving Marsau's "Dance of the Snails."

New Britain Museum  
of American Art



The big names continued to impress,  
with the smaller galleries always pushing



By Judy Birke

2007 was a big year for art, one that saw record crowds attending blockbuster exhibits throughout the country and one in

## ART

which  
record  
prices

were set at auctions throughout the world. In Connecticut, too, 2007 was a good year, with museums and galleries offering some wonderful and original exhibits. Of those I had the pleasure of seeing, these were the best.

The New Britain Museum of American Art proved itself fully capable of matching its elegant new addition for contemporary art with its exciting presentation of "California Comes to Connecticut: The Joanne and William Rees Collection," an impressive group of "California Funk" from the 1960s through the '80s, a high-colored, humorous, "outsider" focus from a specific moment of social upheaval and cultural revolution from the past, and for the first time expanded the museum's reach beyond the Connecticut experience.

At the same time, Yale University Art Gallery continued to expand its reach into the future with a museum-wide exhibit of remarkable quality "Art for Yale: Collecting for a New Century," a stunning display of acquisitions, gifts and bequests from the last decade, reflecting the full range of artistic expression from virtually every culture from ancient time to the present, that will eventually be part of the museum's permanent collection.

In addition, the museum elegantly showcased its role as a teaching facility with two excellent presentations that celebrate the present. Both shows, "Responding to Kahn: A Sculptural Conversation," in which sculptural works reacted to the museum's new renovation, and "What is a Line? Drawings from the Collection," which focused on the way artists have defined the role of the line in drawing, were organized by curatorial



National Gallery of Jamaica

The oil "Cocoa Walk Estate" by Isaac Mendes Belisario, was part of Yale Center for British Art's excellent "Art and Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and His Worlds."



Courtesy, John Myatt

"Fakes and Forgeries" at the Bruce Museum exposed both the not-so-honest and the honest, such as this John Myatt mixed-media copy of "Harlequin Disturbs Sleeping Fish," painted in the manner of Joan Miro.

## part 2

teams made up of students, and included significant works from the museum's current collection.

The Yale Center for British Art once again ran true to form with a couple of wonderful exhibits. One, a contemporary presentation, "Howard Hodgkin: Paintings, 1992-2007,"

was visually arresting in its emotional resonance, filling the space with a commanding physicality of explosive vitality and color; the other, "Art & Emancipation in Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and His Worlds," a commemorative of the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in Jamaica, stands out for its originality and the vast scope of its historical narrative. Filled with unique objects, prints, paintings and maps, the

show thoughtfully chronicled the culture of the island as the African slaves kept alive the traditions and customs of their homeland despite their brutal lives on the sugar plantations.

The exhibit that was the most fun this year was the Bruce Museum's "Fakes and Forgeries: The Art of Deception," a cautionary glimpse into the sleights of hand, the scholarly sparring

See Art, E2

# Art: Animals, lines, ceramics all inspired artists



Guilford Art Center  
"The World is Off its Rocker When it Comes to Women," a work by Elizabeth McKee at Guilford Art Center's summer calligraphy exhibit.

Evidence" at the Creative Arts Workshop in New Haven, offered a stunning exploration of just how far the art of ceramics has come, while "Responding to our World: Words, Images, Gestures," at the Guilford Art Center, a summer show of contemporary calligraphic works, revealed the expressive potential of that genre, each substantively taking concept, technique and aesthetic to a place far beyond their original traditions and intents.

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and the outright deception of the art field, currently and in the past, treating the viewer to a rare viewing of works by some of the biggest names in forgery, and including some of the most famous deceptions ever created.

At the galleries, the best exhibits pondered meaningful concepts in original ways.

The most unforgettable gallery exhibit in the depth of its concept and the quality of its inclusions, was a group show at Artspace's (untitled) space Gallery. "Why Look at Animals," presented in March, touchingly examined the relationship

between humans and animals in the contemporary world, the artists attempting to both understand it and address their concerns about it. Although the curator of the exhibit, Denise Markonish, has moved on, her efforts here remain unforgettable.

Two shows stand out for their fine balance of form and concept, both alerting the viewer to the evolution and expressive potential of their particular genre in an inventive dialogue of past and present. "Ceramic Abstraction: Exploration and

Henry Elinson's "Untitled," from "What Is a Line," one of several fine student-curated shows at Yale University Art Gallery.

