

A P R E S S   R E L E A S E   F R O M   B E N N I N G T O N   C O L L E G E

Bennington College will open its exhibition program of the 1981-82 academic year by presenting in the Suzanne Lemberg Usdan Gallery simultaneous solo exhibitions of the work of two American women. Alice Neel and Anne Abrons - one renowned, the other just emerging - will each be represented by paintings focusing on the human figure. The exhibition was organized by Michael Walls, Visiting Curator/Critic in the Visual Arts Division at Bennington College, and is funded by the Ernestine Cohen Meyer Fund.

"Paintings of the Human Figure" will be Anne Abrons' first solo exhibition. Born in New York City on April 21, 1950 - one half century after Alice Neel's birth, she received a B.A. degree from Bennington College in 1972, having studied at Connecticut College in 1969 and Williams College in 1971. Since 1976, she has participated in group shows in New York and Chicago. Although she also works within the discipline of the still life, paintings of a single figure or of two related individuals comprise the core of her recent work. A substantial number of these paintings are self-portraits or portraits of her husband, the artist David Sharpe. These portraits often incorporate, into the midground or background, recently completed works by Ms Abrons or Mr Sharpe. A group of four paintings which document the artist's marriage and the birth of her first child, Amy, form an unplanned narrative cycle and constitute a highlight of her exhibition.

Alice Neel, eighty-one years old and "still going strong", has been one of the most admired American figurative painters for many years. Born in Merion Square, Pennsylvania on January 28, 1900, she has exhibited for decades. Her involvement as a W.P.A. artist in the 1930's will be documented in a forthcoming exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, in Washington, D.C. Prominent among her many recent solo exhibitions was the installation of eighty paintings and five drawings at the Artists' Union, 25 Gorky Street, Moscow in July of this year. Ms Neel, who attended the opening with several members of her family, states that she gave the exhibition in the cause of détente. It was viewed by more than eight hundred people daily during the run of the show. She often paints members of her immediate family, and a number of these insightful, intense, and often tender portraits are included in the exhibition. When choosing subjects not related to her, Ms Neel places chief emphasis on the subject's individuality and singularity. It is a source of pride to her that many of her subjects have emerged in the public mind as symbols of the particular decade in which she painted them.

Bennington College is honored to be able to present a selection of works by so singular and persevering an artist as Alice Neel. The College is also especially pleased to present the debut solo exhibition of one of its alumnae, Anne Abrons.

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A reception for the two artists will be open to the public on Tuesday, October 6, from 7 to 9 p.m. in Usdan Gallery, located in the Visual Arts / Performing Arts Building (VAPA).

Gallery hours are 1 to 5 p.m., Monday through Sunday. Appointments for large group tours of the exhibitions may be made by contacting Ms Marge Newton, Faculty Secretary, at (802) 442-5401, extension 218.

For black/white or color photographs of works included in the exhibitions or for additional information, contact Ms Newton or Mr Walls at the number above.

(press release by Jenny Burman, assisted by Fanny Periere