



ATTACHMENT I

THE BATMAN GALLERY – THE BEAT AND HIPPIY MOVEMENT 1955-1968 2222 FILLMORE ST. SAN FRANCISCO 1960-1965

The late 1950's and early 1960's was one of the most transforming epochs in the Western World and San Francisco California was its locus. "...A restless community of young artists dazzled 1950's San Francisco as it defied conformity. Artists opened their own galleries so as to appeal directly to the public without interference of gallery owners and critics. This break through, along with the creativity it unleashed, was given impetus by writers like Jack Kerouac ("On the Road") and poet Allen Ginsburg ("Howl") and engulfed the visual arts, sculpture, music, dance, poetry, film and theatre... "Gallery openings attracted artists collaborating and improvising in all these genres. They called themselves 'Beats'." (Brian Elsassar, Arts & Culture, October 10, 2002)

The Hippy Movement which developed as the 1960's "counter culture" in the United States and the UK was characterized by movement away from rigidly defined roles and hierarchical community structures and sought freedom for self expression, exploration of individual potential, creativity, and sexuality.

The 1960's Counter Culture had its epicentre in San Francisco, where art, music and the fundamental expression of how life could and would be different was articulated. Peace, love, equality, community, humanity, understanding, environmentalism, anti war, anti establishment, acceptance and liberation of individual sexual preferences were its values. The movement stood in direct opposition to the overwhelming social conservatism that it believed was destroying the human spirit.

The Batman Gallery was one of the pivotal venues for most avant garde artists in San Francisco from 1960-1965. Batman Gallery fostered this spirit by holding poetry readings, theatre, exhibitions, art cinema, concerts and "happenings" as well as its regular monthly shows.

DR. MICHAEL AGRON – ART COLLECTOR

Dr. Agron attained his M.D. degree from the University of Illinois, College of Medicine in Chicago in 1945 while serving in the U.S. Navy. A year of internship was followed by more Naval service then three years of training (Resident) in psychiatry, where he found his medical, spiritual and artistic niche. "There I found each person to be a unique individual with varying

levels of development, cognitive capacity, understanding, and extent of spiritual and aesthetic evolution.”

In 1950 he was recalled for duty at the start of the Korean War and treated casualty evacuees flown from Korea to the Naval Hospital, Mare Island, California. When discharged he settled in Palo Alto, California. Later, as an Assistant Clinical Professor in Psychiatry at the University of California Medical School in San Francisco he trained medical students, clinical psychologists, psychiatry residents (registrars) and Internal Medicine residents in psychosomatic medicine.

While at the University, together with his colleague Dr. Sterling Bunnell, psychiatrist, artist, writer, poet, teacher, inspirer, explorer, and ecologist, he did research with the newly discovered experimental drugs, supplied by pharmaceutical companies, to develop techniques for using these hallucinogens psychotherapeutically.

Having been introduced to avant garde artists living in the Bay area of San Francisco by his colleague, Dr. Bunnell, Dr. Agron became intimately involved in their artistic lives and aspirations. This involvement led him in 1962, at the suggestion of the Auerhahn Press publisher, Dave Haselwood, to purchase the Batman Gallery when financial difficulties portended its closure. This preserved a truly seminal exhibition, and gathering place for San Francisco's most creative artistic minds like Bruce Conner, Robert LaVigne, George Herms, Michael Frimkess, Bill Risdon, Anthony Martin, Barry Hall, Jarvis Rockwell, Dean Fleming, David Miller, Laurel Johnson, Michael Bowen, Jesse Sharp, Dick Keigwin, Peter Tuesday Hughes and others. The poets hung out and held readings. Among them were Michael McClure, David Meltzer, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Philip Whalen, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder, Kenneth Rexroth, Robert Duncan, James Broughton, Lew Welch, Philip Lamantia and more.

Rising rents sealed the closure of the Batman Gallery in 1965, but Dr. Agron continued his involvement with the artists until he retired in 1990 to a lovely small town, with a rich ongoing literary and cultural history, on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay, Alabama. There he became actively involved with the avant garde artists of the Mobile Bay area and with them established a gallery to exhibit their work. He also donated a number of paintings to the Mobile Museum of Art. In 2003 he moved to Australia to be closer to his family and brought his precious art collection with him.

THE BATMAN GALLERY

The history of the Batman Gallery is detailed in the book “O Her Blackness Sparkles!” The Life and Times of the Batman Art Gallery, San Francisco 1960-1965 by Jack Foley. This work was commissioned by the John Natsoulas Gallery in Davis California and first published in 1995 by 3300 Press. This brief overview has relied extensively on this publication along with the input of Dr. Michael Agron, Dr. Sterling Bunnell and the Batman Archive.

According to Jack Foley, the original concept for a cutting edge gallery came from the artist William Jahrmarckt with the support of Bruce Conner who, along with his Wichita, Kansas poet friend, Michael McClure, searched around San Francisco for a suitable space and found 2222

Fillmore Street. The Batman was originally owned by Joan and William Jahrmack. William, nicknamed "Billy Batman", was a complicated rich young artist. The Batman name, according to Bruce Conner, was poet Michael McClure's idea "you know battling the forces of evil" but also suited Jahrmack's Beatnik look of black hair and black clothes. However there were problems and while the gallery opened spectacularly it didn't function very well.

Mike Agron's vision for Batman Gallery was made clear from the start.

"Our aim is not just to be a gallery showing competent artists – there are many fine ones in the Bay area – but rather to be a San Francisco institution which contributed to the cultural growth of the people of the Bay area by finding and exhibiting the rare and unusual creative talent and genius of individuals who are making art history as they cut the trail into art's future. Many artists know how to speak eloquently with paint; few have something to say which is worth listening to...The Batman is the gallery which specialises in showing artists who are very bold and imaginative in exploring the frontiers of creative art – it is a young gallery 2 years in San Francisco with a vigorous forward looking spirit. Shows at Batman can be counted on to be provocative and exciting. The Batman ... gravitated to the artists who had developed their aesthetic sense exploring in new directions, going out into new worlds".

That this was achieved is reflected by Michael McClure who said 20 years later in Jack Foley's book, "It is about the elegant revolt of a community of young artists who were not content to be outlawed by the social structure. The Batman Gallery of San Francisco in the 1960's allowed a group of artists and poets to push into their destinies with a dark showcase that continues to give off light. The author creates a time-capsule picture of the "Batman" with all of its glistenings and doubts. This is recommended for those who love art."

COMMENTARIES ON THE BATMAN

"There was a feeling about the place and the people behind it and associated with it that made you excited about the human adventure...That evening the gallery was packed with people to see Bruce Conner's film works and inadvertently, my paintings on exhibition at the time...the gallery had more dignity about it than any other gallery I have ever seen." David Miller 1966.

"I had exhibited at the Batman Gallery, the noted BEAT gallery four blocks closer to Pacific Heights, one or two years earlier, and it occurred to me that I could make my gallery a continuation of the movement started there (I, and a lot of my friends and acquaintances had been involved in activities there), and I decided to name the gallery, JOKER'S FLUX." Harold LaVigne 1967.

"The Batman (like the earlier Six Gallery) represented a chance to exhibit work that would never be seen in an established space, a chance to show people...who would not relate to anything established". Artist Dean Fleming.

THE BATMAN GALLERY/M. AGRON COLLECTION INCLUDES:

- Paintings/Drawings by PAUL BEATTIE, STEPHEN A. BLACKBURN, ROBERT BRANAMAN, BRUCE CONNER, VERNON E. CLARK, LEE DABNY STEVEN ELVIN, MARGARET FRINGS, LISA GRANT, MICHAEL FRIMKESS, BARRY HALL, OUTI HEISKHANER, DIANA HARRIS, LAUREL JOHNSON, WILLIAM E. JOHNSON, ROBERT LAVIGNE, ANTHONY MARTIN, DAVID MILLER, BETH PEWTER, PAUL REPS, WILLIAM RISDON, JARVIS ROCKWELL, MARIE TOTH, HELMUT VAN WAYEN.
- Sculptures. WILLIAM RISDON, GEORGE HERMS, BENJAMINO BUFANO AND OTHERS
- Collages by ROBERT BRANAMAN, JOSE CROSS, PETER T. HUGHES, ROBERT MIDRIN, CHARLES PLYMELL
- Assemblage. GEORGE HERMS, BARRY HALL, RICHARD KEIGWIN
- Photographs - SHERRY PETRINI, WILLIAM RISDON, GEORGE HERMS, CHARLES PLYMELL
Also of exhibitions held at Batman and other events.
- Pottery. MICHAEL FRIMKESS
- Books/Scripts. MICHAEL McCLURE, WILLIAM BURROUGHS, ELSA DORFMAN, ANDREW HOYEM, PHILIP LAMANTIA, STANLEY McNAIL, DAVID MELTZER, KENNETH PATCHEN, PAUL REPS, SEYMOUR KRIM, JACK FOLEY, LEW WELCH, PHILLIP WHALEN, ELIAS WILENTZ.
- Posters – BRUCE CONNER, ROBERT BRANAMAN, JOHN ARMSTRONG, GEORGE HERMS, PETER MAX, Psychedelic/Humorous/Anti Smoking/Political Satire
- Musical Instruments – Aubert Zoc
- Batman Archive – Card indexes, correspondence, news releases, photo file, news reports, correspondence with artists.

Whilst Michael Agron is still a lively and enthusiastic aficionado of the artistic social and political breakthroughs achieved during the 1960's, he has decided that the time has come to divest himself of his art works.

The Ecliptic Gallery has been engaged to catalogue and arrange the disposition of this unique collection from this most vibrant era of American art that continues to influence societies throughout the world. Some works in the collection are iconic of the era. Given the diverse and comprehensive nature of the collection which includes the complete archive of the Batman Gallery, we believe there is an opportunity for individuals or institutions with an interest in the Art History of California during the Beat/Hippy period 1955-1968, to acquire an important collection of original works and documents.

The Ecliptic Gallery is seeking expressions of interest you or your organization may have in all or part of the Batman Gallery/M. Agron Collection. It would also be greatly appreciated if you could inform any institution or collectors who would be interested in this collection. Alternatively if you could advise us we will contact them directly.

An exhibition of selected works from the collection will be held at Ecliptic Gallery, 1203 High Street, Armadale, Melbourne, Victoria Australia from Saturday, 7th to Sunday 15th July, 2012.

The complete collection will be available for viewing by appointment from 1st-28th November, 2012. Expressions of interest in the collection should be lodged with the Gallery at tonylack@eclipticgallery.com.au by 30th November, 2012. Telephone: +61 3 98222678 or cell +61 419237424.

RSVP by 6th July +61 2 98222678 for official opening of exhibition 2 pm 8th July, 2012.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Lack
Ecliptic Gallery

All works in the Collection can be viewed on the Ecliptic Gallery website
www.eclipticgallery.com.au

Click on ARTISTS
LOG IN: batmangallery
PASSWORD: 196265

Batman Gallery/M.Agron Collection will be the first file on page 1 after logging in.

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