

Coupland Artist

By Way of NYC and France--Part 1

B Y S U S A N G A R R Y

Peter Julian is the latest artist to call Coupland home, thus completing Coupland's art block--ArtBloc. Coupland has its own little art district, with sculptor Jim Huntington and his Sculpture Garden on the eastern half of the block, painter and ceramist Letitia Eldredge on the northwest corner, and now Peter Julian on the southwest corner.



Peter Julian in his Coupland studio standing in front of the larger scale piece that he is currently working on.

Letitia was instrumental in getting Peter to relocate to Coupland in the fall of 2014. She is a friend of a friend, and she told Peter about Coupland and that the house south of hers was available. She says, "Peter explores his ideas in various creative media--painting, ceramics, and wood sculpture. He consolidates an international career and archives from his former studios in Burgundy, France, and New York City."

Career begins in New York City

Peter was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1952, grew up in Dallas, and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from SMU. He moved to New York City in 1975 where he

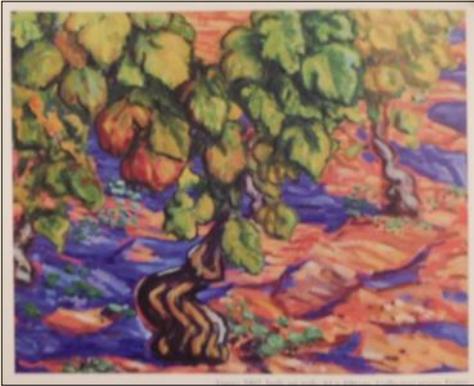
worked with other artists on performances and installations. In 1980 he was a participant in the exhibition called "The Times Square Show." In 1982, his first major exhibition was at The New Museum in its annual "New Work/New York" series of exhibitions, and he began showing his work in international exhibitions.

In the catalog for the *New Work/New York* exhibition, Lynn Gumpert wrote: "Peter Julian's paintings are unrelenting. On first encounter, we are confronted with large works that assault our senses with a barrage of color, vigorous brushstrokes, and bursts of movement. As our eyes adjust to the initial impact, we discern figures, often over lifesize, within densely packed compositions. . . . Certain gestures and segments are more clearly read, but other parts of the canvas remain abstracted shapes of color, forms, and brushstrokes. . . . These paintings inevitably invoke the legacy of the German Expressionists, and in their monumental quality and overall composition recall American abstract paintings of the fifties. Julian also acknowledges the influence of Picasso."



Peter with some smaller pieces in his studio.

Peter's work has been classified by some as Neo-expressionist, although he does not call himself that. Besides painting, he also works with printmaking techniques such as lithography, woodcut, intaglio, pochoir, silkscreen, and monotype. One of Peter's prints was published in the "American Artist as Printmaker" biennial exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1982 and "New Talent in Printmaking" at the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York City. He also was included in the retrospective "Landfall Press: Twenty-Five Years of Printmaking" in 1996 at the Milwaukee Art Museum.



Green Vignes 2002

In addition to painting and printmaking techniques, he also creates large- and small-scale sculpture in ceramic, bronze, and multi-media.

Initially upon moving to New York, Peter lived and worked in a small apartment, but then in 1980, he was able to rent a separate studio. The large space of the new studio allowed him to experiment on a much larger scale than was previously possible, resulting in a major artistic breakthrough due to this spacious location in the bustling area of West 42nd Street near Times Square.

Unfortunately, this perfect studio was condemned for Times Square redevelopment. Peter says, "I lost my studio. I couldn't find a new studio with such space."

Splitting time between New York and France

He had always wanted to experience living in another country. While he was in New York, he improved his French by watching French films. So when he lost his studio, he decided to go to France for a year. In 1997, he moved to Nuits-Saint-Georges, Burgundy, France. Nuits-Saint-Georges is the principal town of the Cote de Nuits wine-producing area of Burgundy. So as well as pursuing

his art, Peter also became a wine merchant specializing in burgundy. He recounts, "I made friends there, found a great place, and one year became seventeen, dividing my time between New York and Nuits-St.-Georges, where I did my large-scale works during that period."

Nuits-Saint-Georges embodied a combination of his art and the making of wine, which had always been an influence in his life. His paternal grandparents were Italian immigrants, so he grew up drinking wine. As he writes, "There was the making of the wine for the family table. It was an impressive ritual, from the delivery of the grapes piled high in the cellar . . . to the arrival of a few close friends and uncles who would help my grandparents set up the crusher and the press, clean the barrels, turn the press . . . And all the while the sweet aroma of those magical grapes permeated the entirety of that two-story house."

Peter tells an interesting and little-known story about the relationship between Texas grape vines and French wines: "In the late 19th century, the blight beetle [phylloxera] almost destroyed the French vineyards." French scientist Pierre Viala, in partnership with scientist Thomas Volney Munson of Denison, Texas, discovered the solution of grafting French vines onto Texas rootstocks that were resistant to phylloxera. Texas rootstocks were shipped to France, and, Peter says, "Now all European vines are grafted onto American roots." Unbeknownst to many, there's a bit of Texas in every French wine.

Part 2 of Coupland Artist By Way of NYC and France will appear in the May Coupland Herald.



Lucie en couronne de laurier 2012