

PRESS RELEASE

BICHA
STIMULATION
FOR THE NATION

Looking for a City

Works by US artist John E Brooks

November 19 – 30, 2009

Bicha Gallery

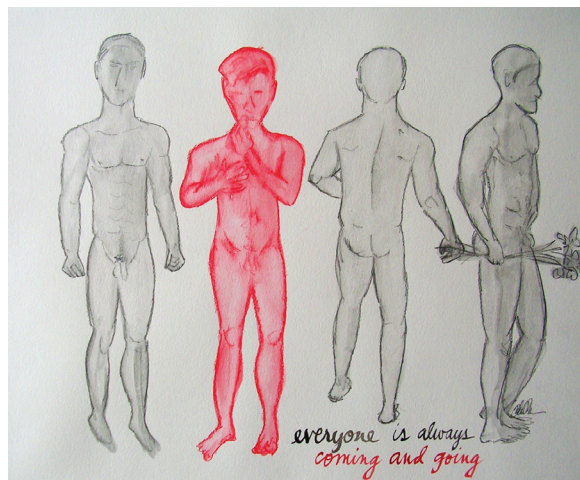
7 Gabriel's Wharf, South Bank

London SE1 9PP

These works are an exploration of the nebulous nature of identity and how we come to feel as if we belong to a particular place, how we come to call a place home.

I grew up gay in the American Bible Belt and struggled to feel at peace with my Kentucky home and its limitations. In 2006, upon my arrival to London, I sensed immediately the city's openness and welcomed the bombardment of images – from the classical to the kitsch, from the holy to the homoerotic. Here I felt as if I had been opened, yet I spent my days alone in museums, galleries and cafes. This series of nudes was completed shortly after my relocation and is a raw reflection of my first impressions and experiences in the new city. The simplified figures are both representations of myself as someone exposed and beginning anew and as someone out of place. Just as I did not feel that I belonged in this new place, despite my positive feelings for it, the figures do not seem to fit together; yet that is exactly how we find them. Like all of us, they want equilibrium; they want to make sense of themselves and their surroundings.

Living in London meant that I was closer to continental Europe and its artistic treasures. The Pedreras were painted after my first trip to Barcelona and my first exposure to Gaudi's architecture. I was beguiled by the city and felt at home. The paintings reverberate with pleasure, wonder and magnetism and reflect the brightness and levity I experienced on that holiday and in subsequent return trips.



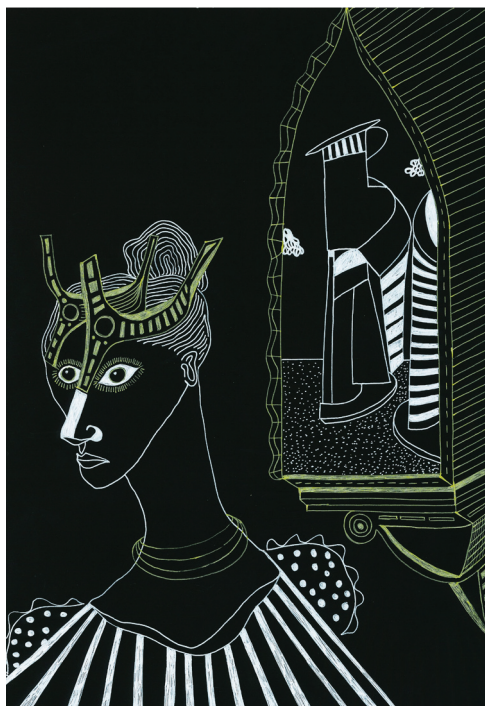
(Above) John E Brooks, *Everyone is always coming and going II*, Drawing, 2009

(Below) John E Brooks, *La Pedrera II*, Oil on canvas, 2007

Bicha Gallery & Shop
7 Gabriel's Wharf
South Bank
London SE1 9PP

T +44 (0)7721 400 048
E info@bicha.co.uk
www.bicha.co.uk

After three years living in London, I felt at home, yet familial responsibilities and my partner's career drew my thoughts back to Kentucky. My paternal grandfather, the center of our family, spent the entirety of this year battling an illness. I began this Wanderlust series as a way to celebrate his remarkable memory and our relationship, but the work took on greater meaning when he succumbed to illness in June. He often told me stories of his childhood in the Great Depression. One story centered on Veenie Dickie, a woman who dug in the local dump for wares to sell. Amazingly, she saved enough money to buy a bus ticket out of town, but her journey turned tragic and she lost an arm in an accident. I have imagined that she boarded that fateful bus for reasons of wanderlust – the same wanderlust that propelled me to London. It was only upon leaving Kentucky that I recognized this bit of myself in her story, which became my grandfather's story and is now my story to tell. In this series of drawings, I have added my own arc to her myth, as familiar London landmarks have been re-imagined through her eyes. These works were the last I completed in London before returning to Kentucky and they represent my love and admiration for the city.



John E Brooks, *Royal Academy*, Gold and white pen drawing on black paper, 2009

The exhibition's title *Looking for a City* is taken from a gospel song about Christian pilgrims looking for a celestial home. I am not religious, but I do identify with the sentiment in the song – the search for a home, the quest for peace and a sense of belonging. It is my intention that these intensely personal works, which are a testament to my own journey, prompt the viewer to examine his or her own.

Exhibition

Affordable Art Fair, London, October 2009

Newcastle Gateshead Art Fair, October 2009

Affordable Art Fair, Bristol, Spring 2009

Bicha Art Group Show Winter 2008
Wyndham Grand Chelsea, London

Bicha Art Group Show Summer 2008
Wyndham Grand Chelsea, London

Open Studios Winter 2008
Cooper Studios, Michael Road,
London, November 2008

St. James Court Art Show

Belgravia Section, Louisville, Kentucky
October 2007

Nature V Man, Earl's Court Festival Exhibition
The Troubadour Gallery, London, July 2007

Anima, Spiritus, Corpus, Three-artist exhibition,
Maggie and Rose, London, June 2007

All Photographers Now, Woman and bird
(and boy) Musee de l'Eyesee, Lausanne,
Switzerland, February - May 2007

For further information, text or images, please contact António Capelão.

Bicha Gallery | Looking for a City Works by US artist John E Brooks, November 6 - 30, 2009
020 7928 0083, 7 Gabriel's Wharf, South Bank, London SE1 9PP | 11 am - 7pm Tues-Sun
Tube: Waterloo, Embankment, Covent Garden, Southwark.

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