

## 'A Long-Forgotten Truth'

### Questroyal Fine Art

It's inspiring to be surrounded by 19th-century American landscapes with so much natural beauty—fall foliage, still waters, turbulent skies. Most of the names in this show of Hudson River School painters are more or less familiar: Kensett and Cropsey, Bricher and Bierstadt. All were doing their usual (wonderful) thing. There was a brilliant, brushy autumn study by Thomas Moran and a tranquil morning scene—light breaking, birds on the wing, and deer venturing out to drink—by James McDougal Hart.

And there were discoveries, such as Nelson Augustus Moore (1824–1902), whose two pictures—*Setting Sail on a Lake in the Adirondacks* (n.d.) and the vivid *An Indian by a Lake* (1881)—were standouts for their light-suffused atmosphere and sense of unearthly quietude.

Another was Russell Smith (1812–96), who was self-taught and became a successful scene painter. His two small works here, framed in painted moldings, like proscenium arches, had probably been set into a door. Looking “through” them, you could see a Pennsylvania landscape with lake and waterfall or an Italian scene with classical column and aqueduct.

George Herbert McCord (1848–1909) and Louis Rémy Mignot (1831–70) both



Nelson Augustus Moore, *Setting Sail on a Lake in the Adirondacks* (n.d.), oil on canvas, 16½" x 26". Questroyal Fine Art.

had big reputations in their day. McCord was responsible for the most dramatic sky in the show. You could feel the bone-chilling cold in *A Winter Sunrise* (1872). And Mignot's *Two Women in a Tropical*

*Landscape*—painted during, or inspired by, a trip to Ecuador with Frederic Edwin Church in 1857—offered the opposite effect.

Nostalgia prevailed throughout. It wasn't just the season or time of day that accounted for the melancholy; it was the artists' awareness of what was being lost. By the second half of the 19th century, the pristine perfection of the wilderness was vanishing, and these artists knew it.

—Sylvia Hochfield

## Craig Norton

### Jim Kempner Fine Art

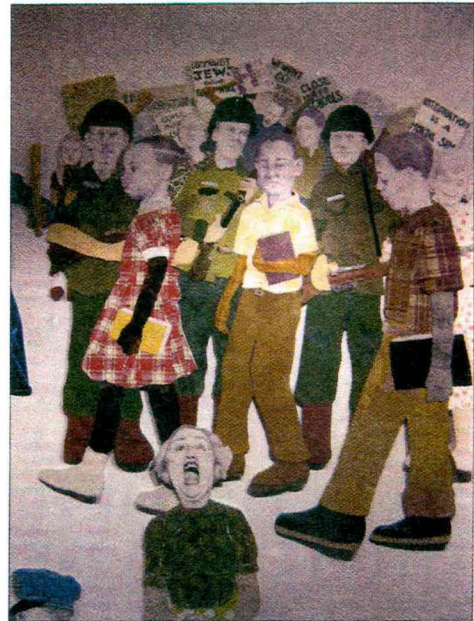
Like paper dolls come to life, Craig Norton's terrifying cardboard figures marched across the gallery walls, wielding axes, billy clubs, and ugly picket signs: “Communist Jews!” “Close mixed schools!” “The only way to end niggers is exterminate!” Some figures in the procession were dressed as Klansmen; some were stooping to unleash attack dogs. A puffy-faced white woman, eyes bulging, threw back her head as if screaming. Protected from the crowd by a line of soldiers, three somber black children carried their books toward that now infamous school in Little Rock. Norton's figures, affixed to the walls here with Velcro, had meticulously drawn faces that evoked newspaper photos, and colorfully patterned clothes cut from

wallpaper scraps. It was a compelling stylistic crazy quilt: Romare Bearden meets Chuck Close at a party hosted by Red Grooms.

The self-taught, 37-year-old Norton, who lives in Saint Louis, has been erroneously labeled an outsider artist. But

clearly, he is very much inside America and its collective unconscious. Before taking on racism and the civil rights movement, he made art about the Holocaust, the war in Iraq, and gun violence

in his own neighborhood. He is socially, intellectually, and spiritually engaged in the world and not above writing on walls. “Lord, you have been with me



Craig Norton, *Civil Rights* (detail), 2007, Bic pen on board with wallpaper, fabric, metallic paper, and fur, 288" x 90". Jim Kempner Fine Art.

through six troubles. Be with me in the seventh,” he penciled here next to the figure of a black man felled by the Klan. Elsewhere lynched men dangled from the ceiling while cardboard mobs watched gleefully. The crowd's chilling justifications for their actions were written on the wall beside their heads. Although Norton's people were conjured with paper and glue—and their words were soon painted out—these American Gothic spirits are liable to remain in our dreams at night. —Mona Molarsky

## Stephen Antonakos

### Lori Bookstein Fine Art

This exhibition of more than 30 years' work revealed Stephen Antonakos as an artist willing to skirt the very edge of nothingness and—as seen in some of the pieces here—go to elaborate lengths to do so. The best works in this show, titled simply “Antonakos: Whites,” were the large-scale wall reliefs in foam board and neon tubing, bearing such titles as *Departure* (2007), *Arrival* (2008), and *Voyage* (1999). The last is the earliest and best