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# Galleries: A long-forgotten artist, 1960s anarchy, and clay

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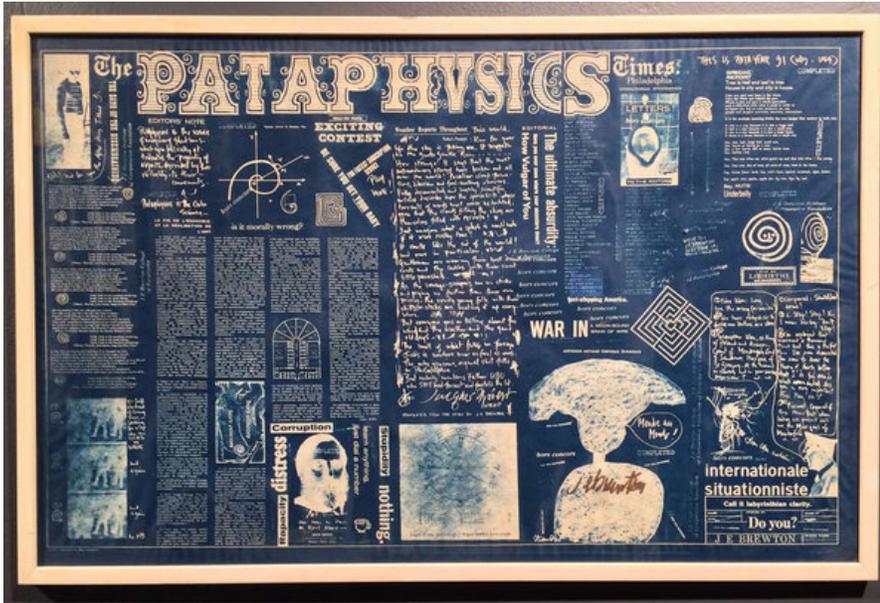
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By Edith Newhall, For The Inquirer

POSTED: April 28, 2014

On May 11, 1967 - four days before the opening of a group show in Philadelphia that would feature his paintings and prints - 36-year-old James Brewton died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The show, which also included the works of Thomas Chimes, Jim McWilliams, and Paul Anthony Greenwood, took place as scheduled, with Brewton's suicide bringing it more attention from local critics than such a show might typically have received.



"The Pataphysic Times," a 1964 work by James Brewton, from the retrospective show at the Slought Foundation. (Ronald and Patricia Weingrad)



GALLERY: "Black Mask" a Larry Fink photograph from 1967,...

Nevertheless, the consensus was that Brewton - who had won several awards as a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, among them the coveted Scheidt Prize, and who painted in Denmark for two years before returning to Philadelphia - had been an exceptional young artist. Two posthumous shows followed in quick succession - one, a year after his death, with Robert Rauschenberg at PAFA's former Peale House Galleries, the other a memorial retrospective mounted by the Kenmore Galleries in 1971.

Then Brewton was forgotten.

But not by his only child, Emily Brewton Schilling, who was only four years old when her father died and has made it her mission to find his work and restore him to his position as one of the most avant-garde artists in 1960s Philadelphia. Nor by Brewton's friends, among them Patricia and Ronald Weingrad, to whom he'd written a note shortly before his death, leaving them all the art in his studio.

Despite the fact that all the local galleries that exhibited Brewton's work have long since closed, his daughter tracked down hundreds of prints and paintings in private collections in the United States, Canada, Denmark, and the United Kingdom. And now, 43 years after his last show here, his paintings, prints, and constructions are once again in the public eye, at the Slought Foundation in West Philadelphia, in a small, concise exhibition organized by Schilling and Patricia Weingrad.

"James E. Brewton: 1930-1967" catches Brewton about four years after the elegant realism of his student days, painting in a vein similar to that of the CoBrA artists Asger Jom and Erik Nyholm, whom he met when they showed at the Print Club (now the Print Center), where Brewton had a part-time job. His sojourns to Denmark in 1962-63 and 1965 cemented their friendship.

Asger Jom, *Pour Tous Les Hommes* (1964) depicts the Danish painter in blocks of vivid color, looking straight ahead, dipping his brush in a palette, as if the viewer might be his subject. A year later, now well-versed in Alfred Jarry's philosophy of pataphysics and adding his own graffiti to his pictures, Brewton painted the mysterious *Key to the City*, a small panel in pewter-colored paint, covered with symbols, and with a real key in the lower center of the work. The pale *Detached*, from the last year of his life, appears to show a male figure in a suit with a tiny arrow above his head.

One of this show's revelations is how much Brewton seemed to have had in common with the late Thomas Chimes, who was similarly steeped in pataphysics. Brewton's intentional obfuscations of images in the late 1960s echoes in Chimes' shrouded paintings of the late 1980s.

Watching the creative leaps and bounds in this selection of a mere 28 works, one senses that Brewton knew his lifespan as an artist would be sharply circumscribed - that the sky was the limit.

Slought Foundation, 4017 Walnut St., 1 to 6 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. 215-701-4627 or [www.slought.org/resources/james\\_brewton](http://www.slought.org/resources/james_brewton). Through May 1.

Wasn't that a time?

The 1960s haven't been hotter in art since, well, the 1960s. Even so, the latest look back at that decade manages to stand out as something different.

Called "If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution" and curated by Natalie Musteata for Haverford College's Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, the show focuses on political anarchy and the countercultural artistic practices it has fomented in Europe and North America from the 1960s to the present. We're not talking pop art.

The exhibition equivocates from the get-go. There are no wall texts; one must navigate through frequently complicated/difficult work using a map or a catalog (free) whose chapters are literally screwed together. Walking through a show with a disassembled catalog is no easy feat, and the map lists only the title, artist, and materials for each work.

That said, there are many terrific works in this show, and the more visually riveting of them undoubtedly attract the most scrutiny. These include Larry Fink's black-and-white photographs of American protesters and demonstrations; Andrea Bower and Olga Koumoundouros' installations of bookshops geared to activists of all stripes; issues of the counterculture papers King Mob and the Screw from the 1960s; John Cage's hypnotic printed text *Anarchy program* (1988), and performance artist Carolee Schneemann's 1964 *Meat Joy*, a video of her extraordinary bloodfest involving chickens and naked men and women - where the R-rated *Rosemary's Baby* might have traveled had it not been a feature film.

Haverford College, Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, 370 Lancaster Ave., Haverford, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays Wednesdays to 8 p.m.), 12 to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. 610-896-1287 or [www.haverford.edu/exhibits](http://www.haverford.edu/exhibits). Through May 2.

Happy anniversary

The Clay Studio, a still-youthful Old City eminence, celebrates its birthday this month and next.

"The Clay Studio: 40 Years," gathers works by 40 ceramic artists who have exhibited in the non-profit's galleries over the last four decades and/or have been resident artists there. Organized by Garth Johnson, the Clay Studio's recently appointed curator of artistic programs, it's a handsome, beautifully installed show that has wisely taken the minimal route.

Some standouts: Rebecca Chappell's unapologetically decorative *Pineapple Centerpiece*, a colorful three-dimensional triptych of vase and flower forms reminiscent of Betty Woodman's ceramic works; Chase Folsom's *Last Arrow*, resembling a cast-iron arrow supported horizontally on a stand, as if an artifact in a museum; and Kathy Butterly's sensuous *Pile On* (2014).

Clay Studio, 137-139 N. Second St., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, 12 to 6 p.m. Sundays. 215-925-3453 or [www.theclaystudio.org](http://www.theclaystudio.org). Through May 31.