

A SYNERGY OF DIALOGUE

JENNIFER KING AND GYAN SHROSBREE AT LAISUN KEANE

Featuring vessels by Jennifer King and paintings by Gyan Shrosbree, the Boston South End-based LaiSun Keane Gallery will present the exhibition "Lashing Out" from June 2 through July 16.

This pairing of rich narrative styles relates a strong sense of female empowerment. In a recent conversation, Keane remarked that she finds it interesting to explore contrasts sparking a synergy of dialogue, a potential that she recognized with these two artists that caused her to develop this show.

"When I planned this exhibition, my goal was to showcase 2D and 3D artworks by women artists," Keane said. "I was thrilled to discover Jennifer King on Instagram and learn that she and I share common friends in California's ceramics field. Artist Gyan Shrosbree was recommended to me by an artist I was working with, Susan Metrican. I was impressed by the way [each] used color and materials to explore themes of femininity, gender stereotypes and domesticity."

Regarding the visual relationships between the artists' vocabularies featured in "Lashing Out," Keane said, "Together, their work creates a powerful display that tells unique and universal stories. Gyan's large-scale pieces demand the viewer's attention, while Jennifer's intimate vessels invite contemplation." She added, "These two artists work with materials that bridge the gap between craft and fine art. They no longer need to negotiate whether their work qualifies as fine art, as they create with a freedom that the previous generation of women might not have experienced."

Jennifer King's ceramic vessels, as Keane suggested, relate the richness of California's ceramics culture. I spoke with King by phone, and she described moving to Los Angeles in defiance of her East Coast background to get as far away from the family turmoil that

was occurring as humanly possible. Her parents were classically trained in music. An appreciation of art, she said, was ever-present, but there was also mental illness, which meant a sense of instability for her that made growing-up in that environment very difficult.

King gravitated to ceramics as the direct opposite of her parents' world. Interestingly memories of those formative years inform the narratives that cover the surfaces of her vessels today. The movement of imagery across them looks like both surreal and cinematic compilations, a series of vignettes or dreamscapes of trauma from her wonder years. The depicted content has a very LA psycho-analytic vibe by exploring autobiographical narrative in the present that's transformative of older embedded emotions. LA is a company town and the narratives on each vessel created by King read in visual substance like screenplays, or treatments. Deciphering them is quite fascinating, intimate at times and humorous with the materiality of clay very relatable as a tactile experience.

She received her BFA from the University of Colorado before heading to California. While in Colorado, King met ceramicist Betty Woodman, now among her mentors. Woodman's influence is apparent in King's handling of relief-work and sculptures.

At LaiSun Keane Gallery, the emphasis is clearly on King's vessel vocabulary. This imagery centers on family and the autobiographical elements of storytelling colorfully unfolding on vessel exteriors contrasting with added monochromatic brief phrases scrawled inside like keys to a puzzle. King is an avid reader, and her snippets of text are influences from books she's read. King teaches art at the only all girl public secondary school in LA and balances raising

her family with teaching responsibilities and studio time. She said that the lockdown of the pandemic was very fruitful for her art practice, an energizing time of creation. She and Shrosbree are prolific and their art making relates that energy. Gyan Shrosbree is a second-generation artist with likely

FEATURED GALLERY

**LASHING OUT:
JENNIFER KING AND
GYAN SHROSBREE**

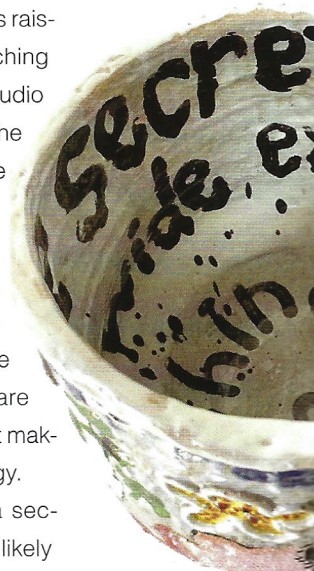
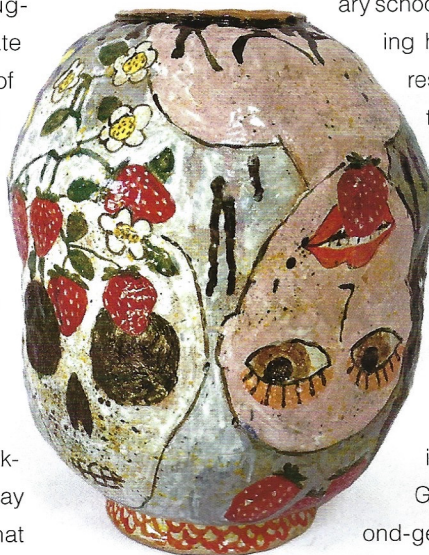
LAISUN KEANE GALLERY
460C HARRISON AVENUE
BOSTON,
MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 2 THROUGH JULY 16

LEFT: Jennifer King, *it came in the turmoil of a dream, I surrendered to that flash*, stoneware, glaze, 17" x 11"

MIDDLE: Jennifer King, *I remember strawberry was*, stoneware, glaze, 16" x 11"

RIGHT: Jennifer King, *Secrets*, stoneware, glaze.



TOP RIGHT: Gyan Shrosbree, *Essential Accessories #6*, 2023, acrylic on stretched canvas, 16" x 20". Photograph by Gareth Bell.

MIDDLE: Jennifer King, *the secrets of the great wide expanse lay behind her*, stoneware, glaze, 16" x 12".



Gyan Shrosbree, *STRUT #1*, 2023, acrylic on canvas tarp, 79" x 56". Photograph by Gareth Bell.

a happier set point when thinking about her parents. She studied Fine Art and Theater at Bennington College before getting her BFA from Kansas City Art Institute and MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art. Her paintings carry the influence of artist Jim Shrosbree, her father's, artwork. The two have shown together; he is presently the Co-Chair of the Fine Art Department at Maharishi International University in Iowa where she teaches studio art.

After graduating from Cranbrook Academy of Art, Shrosbree's career aspirations led her to New York where she worked for artists Nancy Spero and Leon Golub. Her current choice of sub-straight, tarps with industrial grommets, as will be seen in her large works "Lashing Out," refer to early New York performance art as does her fashion sensibilities. Both aspects are essential components of this artist's visual/conceptual construct. Shrosbree's paintings relate the camp of fashion to amplify the power of feminine mystique, an idea she morphed during her New York awakening to include the avenue of wearable art that still appears in her repertoire today.



Eventually, Shrosbree moved to Los Angeles and sublet a former Cranbrook teacher's live/work loft in LA's gated Santa Fe Art Colony. While she was living and creating art in this environment, she also worked for actress Brooke Shields as nanny to her children, her personal assistant, then household manager, financially allowing her to sustain her art practice. Shrosbree has an enduring friendship with the actress and her family and feels appreciative to have had a job that gave her financial stability and freedom to creatively flourish in LA.

Paintings by Shrosbree are vibrant and compelling. Some depict heraldic female figures as superheroes, emoting star-power and championing competence. Intense color saturation is used to visually control space with tongue-in-cheek mastery of the moment. Shrosbree's fashionista performative edge spans involvement in the art/fashion scenes of New York, LA and now Iowa, which is a family-friendly alternative to the hustle of the cosmopolitan centers where she's lived. In a meet-cute way, she encountered her now husband at a holiday party in her Iowa hometown, which influenced the timing of adding her strengths to Maharishi International University's TM energized art faculty. Shrosbree's paintings explore feminine identity with humor. In some, her figures have phones dangling from each

wrist illustrating the concept of grace under pressure and indispensability. Glyphs of eyelashes pepper other paintings looking like appliqued patterning on fabric messaging layered meaning about the fun of dress-up and the seriousness of womanly war paint. It's a dialogue inclusive of requisite pearls, high heels and handbags, which is the armor of social presence women bear. Her paintings have syncopation not unlike Stuart Davis, and her glyphs suggest whimsical aspects of Jean-Michel Basquiat. Shrosbree's style also stirs the vibrancy of Chicano art and references East Indian color relationships all flowing into a melting pot of joyful fantasy and resilient emotional timber.

The chemistry of LaiSun Keane's pairing illustrates genuine intensity of commitment on the part of the artists and reflects her interest as a gallerist to show content that broadens aesthetic perception. "Lashing Out" opens in Boston's SoWa Arts District on the June 2 First Friday. The gallery's artist reception for the exhibition is planned for July 7 followed by an artist talk the following afternoon, Saturday, July 8, from 1-2 p.m.

Suzanne Volmer

Gyan Shrosbree, *What Makes an Outfit #3*, 2023, acrylic on stretched canvas, 40" x 30".
 Photograph by Gareth Bell.

