

Curious curator

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS SHOWCASES EXAMINED LIFE

By Kristen Paulson

AN ESTABLISHED SCHOOL OF PSYCHOANALYSIS with an art gallery curated by a psychoanalyst who discovered art "totally by accident" provides an unusual venue for Brookline art lovers.

Mara Wagner, PsyD, Cert. PsyA is the admissions director for the masters, certificate and doctoral programs in psychoanalysis at The Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis; she also practices psychoanalysis in Sudbury and Brookline.

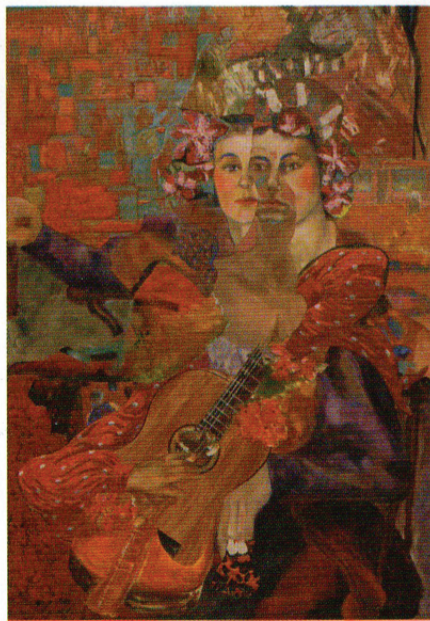
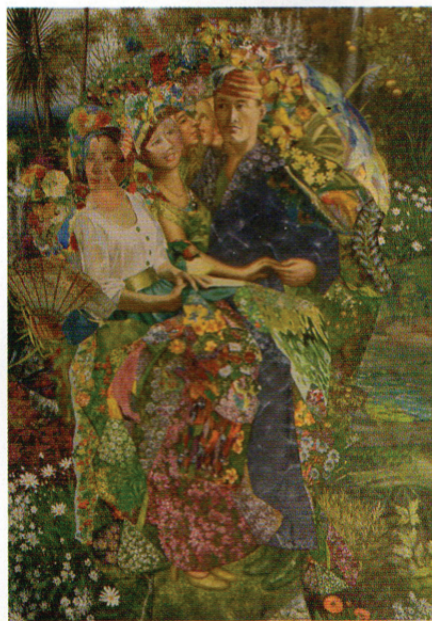
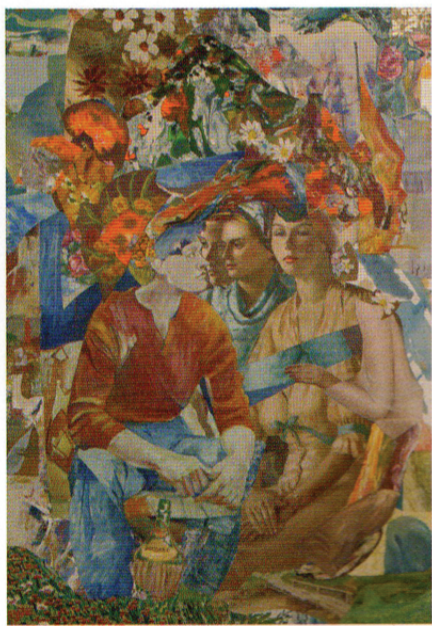
Wagner was vacationing with her children, who are both creative, when they suggested that their self-critical mother, "...try blind contour drawing ...and it took off ...I enjoy the freedom that comes from finding the truth of experience both in creative expression and in the psychoanalytic discourse," said Wagner.

Subjects that dominate Wagner's psyche periodically: wrapped branches, a lone statue or her left hand. "Then I move on. I have fun. I don't look too deeply," she said.

As Wagner is an artist, and so are some of her students, it seemed a natural progression to create a gallery at the school in 2004. Or, as Wagner put it, "the school became curious about

...Art constitutes a region half-way between a reality which frustrates wishes and the wish-fulfilling world of the imagination.

— Sigmund Freud



ALL PAINTINGS ACRYLIC AND COLLAGE, BY JOHN BAKER

the intersection between psychoanalysis and art." The gallery's mission is to bring together artists and analysts of all ages, both emerging and established, to learn from each other; it is part of the school's effort to apply psychoanalysis to all fields of study in which unconscious processes can be examined, from literature and the arts to religion and culture.

The current exhibit, *Inner Life*, features the work of painter John Baker, professor of art history at the Massachusetts College of Art and former art curator at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute (BPSI). It opened May 4 and runs through November 2007. Baker has studied the history of psychoanalysis, and considered becoming an analyst before choosing to remain an artist.

A series of Baker's large collaged acrylic paintings was described in *Art New England* as ... "full of big, bright color and an overall sense of surreal playfulness ... rais[ing] a bundle of interesting issues."

"Baker's work is perfect for this show. You can see what the fig-

ures are thinking about, where they have been and where they want to go," said Wagner.

Baker commented: "I make visible psychic energies and contents in the form of active, seemingly discontinuous and vital brushwork above and through the heads and bodies of the figures in my paintings."

Inner Life also includes a work by Boston artist Nancy Seymour, whose large off-the-wall drawings are three-dimensional installations that use fragile, pliable materials like bag ties and steel wool to build connections with the visible structure and history of specific sites. Seymour's work was inspired by a landscape memory of Spanish moss hanging from the live oaks around her childhood home. The remaining works on exhibit have been selected from submissions by local artists and constitute a lively and varied range of interpretations of the theme of "Inner Life." ▲

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