

James Dean and the NASA Art Program



James Dean



Montage of work by Norman Rockwell and Robert T. McCall

Artists Robert Rauschenberg and James Wyeth smile at the camera, perched in front of Apollo 11 on its launch pad.

"These were taken the day before the launch in 1969," explains watercolor painter James Dean in his Torpedo Factory studio. He is referring to personal photos he took of these famous artists at the Kennedy Space Center. Rauschenberg and Wyeth were invited by the NASA Art Program to document the mission to land the first human being on the moon.

We are peering into Dean's intriguing past as the Founding Director of the NASA Art Program, when he worked closely with several of the best known American artists, including Norman Rockwell and Lamar Dodd, between 1962 and 1974.

With the 50th anniversary of NASA this year, Dean's expertise was called upon to help the current curator of NASA Art Program and the Smithsonian Institution to organize the art exhibition NASA / ART 50 Years of Exploration. The show of 73 works will travel the United States for two years starting in October. A preview of the show is currently on display at the National Air and Space Museum on the National Mall. Dean co-authored a book by the same name that will be published in the fall by the Harry Abrams Co., New York.

Breaking from his typically quiet, unassuming demeanor, Dean eagerly shares the purpose and conception of the NASA Art program.

"In the time of early space exploration, NASA recorded every activity with hundreds of cameras. Not much can be added to this factual visual record. However, the greater emotional impact and historic significance of these events was not being conveyed."

As a result, it was decided that some of America's best known artists should be invited to witness these historic events and, through their skill and imagination, record the world's excitement in the way only an artist can.

As an artist himself, Dean has often been asked what he learned by working with these well-known artistic figures.

"Really, it was how they thought, rather than what they did. I learned how they decide what to do and how they choose to execute their work. It was interesting to hear them talk about it afterward, whether they accomplished what they set out to do."



Top to Bottom: Robert Rauschenberg and James Wyeth

Hot New Hours

Open until 6pm daily
Open until 9pm every Thursday
Studio and gallery hours vary

Featured Events



Beach Party

Friday, August 22
6-9pm - FREE

Celebrate summer with food, music, and games at the only indoor beach party around! Enjoy Guitar Hero, hula-hooping, and treats from Hard Times Cafe.

Art Activated

Saturday, September 13
12-4pm - FREE

Artist demos, hands-on activities, and modern dance during the Alexandria Festival of the Arts.

Second Thursday Art Night

Second Thursday of every month
6-9pm - FREE

[Second Thursday Art Night information](#)

[Full Calendar of Shows and Events](#)

The Art League News



In the Gallery

'Scapes: The Art League's Annual International Landscape Show
August 6 - September 1



First Steps by Mitchell Jamieson

Referring to the inspiration behind Mitchell Jamieson's *First Steps*, Dean remembers putting Jamieson on a carrier in the mid-Pacific to await the splashdown of Mercury astronaut Gordon Cooper in May 1963, after 22 orbits of the earth. Dean adds that Jamieson worked briefly at the Torpedo Factory Art Center in the late 1970s.

In 1980, Dean left his position as Curator of Art at the National Air and Space Museum to dedicate his time to painting, primarily in his Torpedo Factory studio. His watercolor paintings of Maine and other American scenes have received many accolades, and one of his pieces is found in the personal collection of H. Lester Cooke, former Curator of Painting at the National Gallery of Art.

Dean reluctantly admits that he, too, has a piece in the traveling exhibition, alongside works by Annie Leibovitz, William Wegman, and

many others.

"I would never select my own work for the show," says Dean, "but NASA and the Smithsonian put it in there!"

His watercolor piece *Shuttle Flowers* was painted in the early 1980s when he was invited by NASA to create several works recording his impressions of the space shuttle program at Cape Canaveral and a landing in the Mojave Desert.

Shuttle Flowers might be a reflection of the artist himself. With an expansive foreground of daisies, a common flower, you feel a sense of familiarity and tranquility. Upon closer look, you see something unexpected, something of incredible power poised to make an impact on the world as we know it.

"What thrills me - here is an art program I started nearly 50 years ago and people are still interested in it. I was in the right place at the right time. This was a government program that was so positive, and I was able to work with some of the best known artists of the time on this incredible project."

"And the pièce de résistance is that they paid me to do it!" Dean chuckles. "I would have done it for nothing."

[View selected work from the exhibition.](#)

Visit James Dean in studio 306 at the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

In the School

[2008-2009 Course Catalog Online Now!](#)

Fall Registration Begins August 11

Call for Photographers

[Multiple Exposures Gallery](#), studio 312, will shortly have an opening for membership and is now accepting applications. To get a copy of the application form, please stop by during business hours, 11am to 5pm every day except Thursdays, when the hours are 2pm to 9pm.



Shuttle Flowers by James Dean

New Works Traveling Exhibition



To Infinity
by Francine Livaditis

From Here 2 There

This exhibition celebrates the art center's 35th anniversary by showcasing a selection of Torpedo Factory artists' new works as it travels to similar art centers throughout the country.

Works by 24 artists span the spectrum of media and styles found in Torpedo Factory studios every day. A colorful catalog of the artwork is available for sale.

[View the work online.](#)

Target Gallery News



Slick: An Installation by Julie Camarata

July 23 - August 24
Reception: August 7, 6-8pm
Artist Talk: August 7, 7pm

Tennessee artist Julie Camarata's installation examines timely ideas concerning the necessity, dangers, and beauty of oil. Her installation encompasses the entire gallery space as she paints and draws directly on the wall and builds an oilrig platform complete with faux oil spilling from it and onto the floor. The installation-in-progress is open to the public until August 7 and the work will remain on display for two more weeks. [Read more.](#)

[Watch video of the installation in progress.](#)

Aftermath

September 3 - October 12
Reception and Candlelight Vigil: September 11, 6-8pm

This all-media juried exhibition features artwork that deals with the aftermath of traumatic events such as terrorism, war, natural disasters, and violent crime. [Read more on the Target Gallery Calendar.](#)



[Read the latest Target Gallery news on their new Blog!](#)

Behind the Scenes



Hand Engraving: An Old World Craft

by [Eric Margry](#) of Studio 229

Metal engraving started as a decorative technique around the 5th century B.C. Hand engraving utilizes a short, sharpened rod with a round, wooden knob handle at the end. This tool is pushed by hand along the surface carving out a line in the metal. The result is a much sharper line than any other method. Hand engraving is different from other decorative techniques in the precision of the lines and its permanence.

One of my specialties is creating family crest rings. This type of ring was started in the Middle Ages to imprint sealing wax with an emblem of a family name. Now it's mostly worn as a family heirloom. Family crest rings hand engraved in the 1500's still look great with a clear image of the crest.

Several steps are involved in this traditional technique. First I make a heavy signet ring out of wax which is cast through the lost wax method. The top of the ring must be particularly thick since the engraving is deep. I draw the family crest right on the ring, as a guide for my hand-held tool of sharpened steel. Each part of the design is carved at a different level so when you make a wax imprint with the ring, the reverse looks like a mini 3-dimensional bas relief. This complex layering can only be achieved with hand engraving.



I also hand engrave monograms, names, messages, and patterns on baby cups, bracelets, trophies, and pretty much any type of precious metal object. One of my favorite projects is to create one-of-a-kind wedding and engagement rings. Engraving can be utilized to give the metal a pattern for an antique look. Or for a sleeker, modern ring, the setting for a stone might be achieved with the engraving tool. I enjoy working with a couple to design rings specifically for them that reflect their personalities.

I started making jewelry when I was 14 years old in the Netherlands, where I was born and spent my youth. A demonstration in my school on making bracelets by bending silver wire started my interest. When it came time for college, I chose to further my skills at Schoonhoven, a school that has been training

jewelers in all aspects of the business since the 1880's.

After I graduated the 4 year program, I received a job offer that brought me to Silver Spring, Maryland. Once in the Washington, DC area, I discovered the Torpedo Factory Art Center. I realized that this was the perfect place for me, where people can see me at work, and find out about my specialized skills. I was juried into a studio in 1985 and continue to work in studio 229.

Artists' News



Box N, Rosemary Feit Covey

Studio 224 artist **Rosemary Feit Covey's** *Brain Tumor Series* was commissioned by David Craig Welch shortly after he was diagnosed with a brain tumor and underwent major surgery. In June, a radio piece on Public Radio International's Studio 360 explored the mystery behind the pair's artistic relationship, an intense connection that started three years ago and continues to impact Covey's work and David's health in unexpected ways. [Click here](#) to hear the radio piece.

Rosemary's solo exhibition called *Internal Medicine* was displayed at the *International Museum of Surgical Science* in Chicago, and was reviewed in *Time Out Chicago*.

Rosemary's *The 0 Project* was featured in the May issue of *Art in America* and has been covered in countless other publications. In July, the *0 Project* was a part of Art Month in Reno, Nevada.

Alan Sislen and Danny Conant of Multiple Exposures Gallery have photographs in the juried show *From Farm to Market* at Vis Arts in Rockville, MD. The show runs from July 17- August 17.

Viviane de Kosinsky, studio 208, will be exhibiting works at Llewellyn Alexander Ltd in London in September. She is an associate member of SOFA (Society of Feline Artists) in the UK. Her etchings were also recently chosen for exhibition in Wells, Somerset by the Hilliard Society.



Birdwatching, Viviane de Kosinsky

Marietje Chamberlain of studio 225 won the prize for Best Use of Color at the June 7 Riverband Park paint-out, and Third Prize at the South Street Gallery "Seeing Eye" exhibit in Easton, MD.

Marietje is also part of the Washington Society of Landscape Painters exhibit at the Athenaeum through August 8. Her pieces *Evening Haze* and *Countryside* appeared in the June 26 *Alexandria Gazette Packet* in conjunction with the show.



Optical Vase, Ruth Gowell

Ruth Gowell received the Silver Award in the *E-merge 2008* exhibition at the Bullseye Glass Company in Portland, OR. The international juried show is a showcase of rising talents in kiln-glass, and ran from May 5 - July 25.

Juror Dante Marioni noted in his statement, "Ruth Gowell offered a technical tour de force with *Optical Vase*. A great composition, meticulously made. A striking piece to see in person."

Juror Richard Speer noted, "Ruth Gowell's meticulous yet ebullient *Optical Vase* demonstrates how the classic vessel form, thoughtfully designed and fastidiously executed, maintains an evergreen visual appeal and, to invoke Whitman, the ability to "please the soul well."

Alison Sigethy, studio 307, has departed on her two month kayaking expedition of the Arctic. [Click here](#) to read the *Alexandria Times* article. Get updates about her expedition at www.alisonsigethy.typepad.com or

the blog on www.arcticvoice.org.

Eric Margry of studio 229, in collaboration with his wife, artist Linda Hesh, was chosen to participate in *Cool Globes*. For the exhibition, thirty local artists were given white globes to alter in any way they chose to address global warming. They are on display in the Hall of States at the Kennedy Center until September 1. Thirty globes were also given to nationally prominent individuals, including actors, musicians, elected officials and athletes, which are in the Hall of Nations.

Tatyana Schremko of studio 32 was the juror for the Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Arts in Fredericksburg, VA, for their July show *Celebration*. Tatyana recently had a bronze sculpture on display in The Art League Gallery and has a piece in the Torpedo Factory traveling exhibition *From Here 2 There*.



The Party is Over
Eric Margry and Linda Hesh

Newly juried artist **Zoya Gutina's** *Poppy Field Necklace* has just returned from Milwaukee, WI, where it was on 2008 Bead Dreams Exhibit held by *Bead & Button Magazine*. The necklace is on display in studio 5 through September.



Poppy Field Necklace, Zoya Gutina

Cora J. Rupp presents a solo show at Printmakers Inc, studio 325, titled *How My Garden Grows*. The show touches on the inspiration and development of her painted prints. "From the seed of an idea, planted in the soil of observation around us, my overpainted monotypes take on their own environment. The end result is a garden of saturated color seen in interiors and celebrating the riches of horticulture, decorative objects and floral design." The show runs from September 5 - October 31 with an opening reception on Sunday, September 7 from 2-4pm.