

Galveston Arts Center — The Update

By Catherine D. Ansporn



Among the state’s influential art spaces — as both the prognosticator of emerging talent and arbiter of important mid-career to senior grand masters — Galveston Arts Center reigns as an unrivaled power broker, thanks to the unerring eye of curator (and patron) extraordinaire Clint Willour and director Alexandra Irvine. With courage and conviction, this pair has overcome Ike’s destruction by relocating temporarily to a charming historic Strand District space along Market Street and 25th, where they’re plotting the restoration of their permanent home, the 1878 First National Bank Building at 22nd and Strand. That glorious Second Empire brick, wood and cast-iron structure, a pillar in the City of Galveston’s National Historic Landmark District, was the first bank in Texas operating under the 1863 National Bank Act and the second chartered bank in the state. As one of the most prominent commercial institutions in 19th-century Texas, its officers were culled from the leading families of the bustling, prosperous port: Henry Rosenberg, George Ball, George Sealy, Morris Lasker and Mrs. R. Waverly Smith, who defied gender expectations to become

the first female bank president in Galveston. The home of the Galveston Arts Center since 1968, the building is getting a \$1.4 million, five-year redux that will preserve it for the next century. Phase I’s fund-raising goal of \$200,000 (half of which has been reached) has a timetable of six months and will put its staff back in the building while ensuring a minimal level of programming; a show of the late abstractionist Joe Glasco is planned for GAC’s return engagement. (To contribute to further Texas contemporary art and preserve Galveston’s architectural history, contact Alexandra Irvine, alex@galvestonartscenter.org.) As the originator, organizer and producer (for more than 20 years) of ArtWalk, which takes place at GAC and sprouts to neighboring Strand District spaces (next set for Saturday, June 2), the Center mounts must-see exhibitions every six weeks. On our radar for early this summer are Houston-based creators Karin Broker and H.J. Bott. Broker solos in “Wired, Nailed, Drawn and Printed,” which highlights her virtuosity in many media, wide-ranging subject matter, intimate to epic scale and broad, challenging vision (through May 27). Next, the mighty H.J. Bott weighs in, returning to the stomping ground of his early Strand studio to mark the 40-year milestone of his obsessive, all-encompassing and pervasive geometric DoV principle — Displacement of Volume, that is (June 2 – July 8). *2501 Market St. at 25th, Galveston, 409.763.2403;*