



Dilexi: A Gallery & Beyond

Whitcomb, Laura. *Dilexi: A Gallery & Beyond*,
Label Curatorial, 2021.

Barbara Strasen's involvement with Dilexi Gallery (1958-1969) is chronicled in Laura Whitcomb's book *Dilexi: A Gallery & Beyond*. The avant-garde San Francisco gallery showed the likes of John Altoon, John Chamberlain, Jay DeFeo, Roy De Forest, Joe Goode, Ed Moses, Manuel Neri, and Hassel Smith, among many others who are recognized as major figures of California and American art.

The book is available at Printed Matter
(NY and online): [VIEW HERE](#)

Philip Starke
(1932–2012)

Philip Boyd Starke was born in 1932 in San Francisco and grew up in the Alameda/Berkeley area. In addition to being included in the Dilexi inaugural show of 1958, he was listed in the *San Francisco Chronicle* as being in a group show at Pacific Arts in Point Richmond a later the same year and of having a solo show of paintings at Pacific Arts in 1959.

Little is known of the artist outside of his friendship with Roy De Forest. In 1976 Starke and his wife loaned their 1951 De Forest terracotta piece *Equestrian Amazon* to the exhibit *Painting and Sculpture in California: The Modern Era* and it was shown at SFMOMA and the Smithsonian.

Barbara Strasen
(1943)

Barbara Strasen grew up in New York City. As an adolescent she played piano and the Baroque-period works that she studied came to form an underpinning of her multi-layered artworks. She attended college at Carnegie Mellon and studied under Richard Wilson and Robert Lepper—both of whom, much earlier, had been Andy Warhol's teachers. Strasen received a Fellowship to study at the Yale School of Art's Summer School, and afterwards moved to the Bay Area, where she found a flourishing art community. In 1963 she enrolled in graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley, where her favorite teacher was Hassel Smith.

Interested in Northern European painting's extreme spatial shifts and Hegel's theory of synthesis and antithesis, Strasen's work at the time explored ways to achieve these effects within a modern modality. She began to use collage, making cutouts which enabled her to move elements of the composition around, playing tricks with perspective and size juxtapositions. Simultaneously, Warhol's *Disaster* series of the mid-1960s was a major influence on Strasen. She saw his repetition of dire events as a kind of psychic wallpaper, exposing the denial that we live within. Working from this point of view, she wanted to make "cognitive connections between unlike images," embracing the chaos and contradiction of lived experience yet injecting them with humor. Strasen took the form of Warhol's serial repetitions and transformed it

into Baroque-like repetitions of her own images, creating complex patterns and layers that combined and disassociated cognitive boundaries.

Strasen, on the recommendation of Hassel Smith, was first included in a four-person show in February/March 1968. A review in the *San Francisco Chronicle* mentions her work as an urgent reason to see this show: "Miss Strasen's huge pop-satirical cut-out picture is worth a trip to the gallery." In the summer of 1968 her work was part of the group show *Rolling Renaissance: San Francisco Underground Art in Celebration, 1945–1968*, a multi-venue show that Dilexi participated in by including Roy De Forest, Hassel Smith, Charles Ross, Franklin Williams, Joel Barletta, and David Mackenzie. Critic Thomas Albright praised Strasen's work, writing in the *S.F. Chronicle* that her "relief paintings project groups of caricature-like bathers in front of shaped bases representing tropical beaches or Egyptian pyramids. All in streaks of flat, jarring color: they raise pop to a new level of outrageous garishness."

Since the 1960s Strasen has expanded her practice to include installation and many different mediums, including painting on layers of Mylar and lenticular prints. Strasen's approach has also become more encompassing of a supportive life force whose presence has philosophical implications regarding our ability to process the multitude of imagery that is experienced in contemporary life.

In 2018 Strasen was awarded a City of L.A. Artist Fellowship and had a solo exhibition at the Long Beach Museum of Art. She has been awarded numerous public commissions and



Barbara Strasen, *Vacation Orange Sky* 1968

has taught at the University of California, San Diego. She has exhibited worldwide, including at the *Museu de Arte Contemporânea* in São Paulo in 1980. She was included in the Whitney Biennial of 1977. She has had two solo exhibitions: *Barbara Strasen: Now And Then* at the Grey Art Gallery, NYU, curated by Tom Sakolowski, in 1990, and *Barbara Strasen: 3-D Paintings*, San Jose State University, in 1991. She is in the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Austin Art Museum, Austin, TX; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, OH; Sackner Archive of Visual and Concrete Poetry, Miami, FL; Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles; Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach CA; Austin Art Museum, Austin, TX; Islip Museum of Art, Islip, NY; Colburn School of Music Collection, Los Angeles, CA.

Irene Taverner
(1925–2011)

Irene Taverner was born in England, the daughter of a Welsh metallurgist and a Russian-born chanteuse who had performed with Louis Armstrong. Taverner studied at the Chelsea Art School in London and began experimenting in a non-objective style that gained recognition across the channel. In 1947 she had the first one-woman show of non-figurative paintings at the prestigious Galerie Colette Allendy in Paris. Her painting was intrinsically linked to music, mostly jazz but sometimes classical. In 1950 she moved to New York, where she became accepted company at the Cedar Tavern, an artist's haven where she bonded with painters like Willem de Kooning, Philip Guston and Franz Kline. Kline became a mentor to her and the two shared studio space. She was also friends with Charlie Parker and spent late nights playing all-night chess games at Riker's Coffee Shop with him until the bars opened again at 6 a.m.

Taverner propounded the importance of the immediacy of the creative act: "you make the statement, and move on." Constantly listening to music while she painted, she also frequented and showed her work at many of the clubs in New York and San Francisco, in the process forging friendships with a number of now-legendary jazz artists. Her friends included Frank Butler, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Art Pepper, Ornette Colman, Chico Hamilton, Philly Jo

1968

SOLO SHOW

Prisms by Charles Ross
January 15–February 8

GROUP SHOW

Four New Artists

February 13–March 7
Eye, Peter Gutkin, David Mackenzie,
Barbara Strasen

SOLO SHOW

Paintings by Fred Martin
March 12–April 14

SOLO SHOW

Bob Anderson—An Event
April 15–May 2

SOLO SHOW

Joel Barletta
May–June 1

GROUP SHOW

Rolling Renaissance

June–July

Jeremy Anderson, Joel Barletta, Roy De Forest, Tony Dalap,
William Dubin, Peter Gutkin, David Mackenzie, Gary Malnar,
Charles Ross, Hassel Smith, Barbara Strasen, Joseph P. White,
Franklin Williams

Group Show

July 9–July 31

Gary Allen, Luis Cervantes, Susan Kalk (Cervantes),
Bob Comings

SOLO SHOW

Richard Shaw
December 7–January 18

250



251



SUMMER GROUP SHOW

Dilexi Gallery
 631 Clay Street, San Francisco
 Exhibition: June 4 - July 31
 (Exhibition will change periodically)

Jeremy Anderson	Peter Gutkin	Joseph P. White
Joel Barletta	David Mackenzie	Franklin Williams
Roy De Forest	Gary Molitor	and others ...
Tony DeLap	Charles Ross	
William Dubin	Hassel Smith	

Roy DeForest, "Stranded on the East Coast," 1968, A/C 66" x 62"

EYE →

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BARBARA STRASEN

DILEXI

A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF
 FOUR NEW ARTISTS
 AT THE DILEXI GALLERY
 631 CLAY STREET SAN FRANCISCO
 FEBRUARY 13 - MARCH 7

←

DAVID MACKENZIE

PETER GUTKIN