

A great space for great art

By **Mark Zimmario** - March 29, 2021



A painting from Illinois artist Carrie Pearce on display at Studio Incamminati's "Rising Voices" exhibition. Photo/Mark Zimmario

The seventh floor of the Box Building's hallways were filled with colorful paintings on each wall, displaying creativity and power.

Studio Incamminati School for Contemporary Realist Art held its first official exhibition on March 24 called "Rising Voices," which showcased the work of 10 finalists for The Bennett Prize, celebrating female painters.

Twenty-nine works graced the old school building's walls as the studio welcomed guests for the first time since moving into the historic venue in August.

"It's our first exhibition so it's incredible to have this work in this space to inaugurate our gallery space, and we really couldn't be happier with the work," said James Savoie, president of Studio Incamminati. "It's a grand scale. When the show was being hung a week ago, excited students were coming into the halls every half-hour asking what was going up next. It's really provoked a great deal of conversation among the students and faculty, which is what you want an art school to do."



A classroom at Studio Incamminati on the seventh floor of the Bok Building. Photo/Mark Zimmario

New classrooms and offices welcomed curious guests while the exhibition also unveiled three skylight rooms, which were recently completed as part of heavy renovations that have been taking place on the top floor of the building.

"It's taken several months since we moved here in August," said William Daniels, chairman of the studio's board of directors. "But getting the studios together for the students to work both in person and via Zoom has enabled this school to survive and thrive during COVID."

It presented the perfect setting to display incredible works of art. The Bennett Prize, which is awarded by Steven Bennett and his wife, Dr. Elaine Melotti Schmidt, who are art collectors with an eye for realist paintings of women created by women. This year's Bennett Prize was awarded to Tampa, Florida resident Aneka Ingold, who received a \$50,000 prize and a traveling solo exhibition. The other nine finalists included West Philadelphia resident Mary Henderson, whose work ironically focused on crowds of people in public gatherings. Her idea spawned years before the pandemic took hold of the world a year ago.



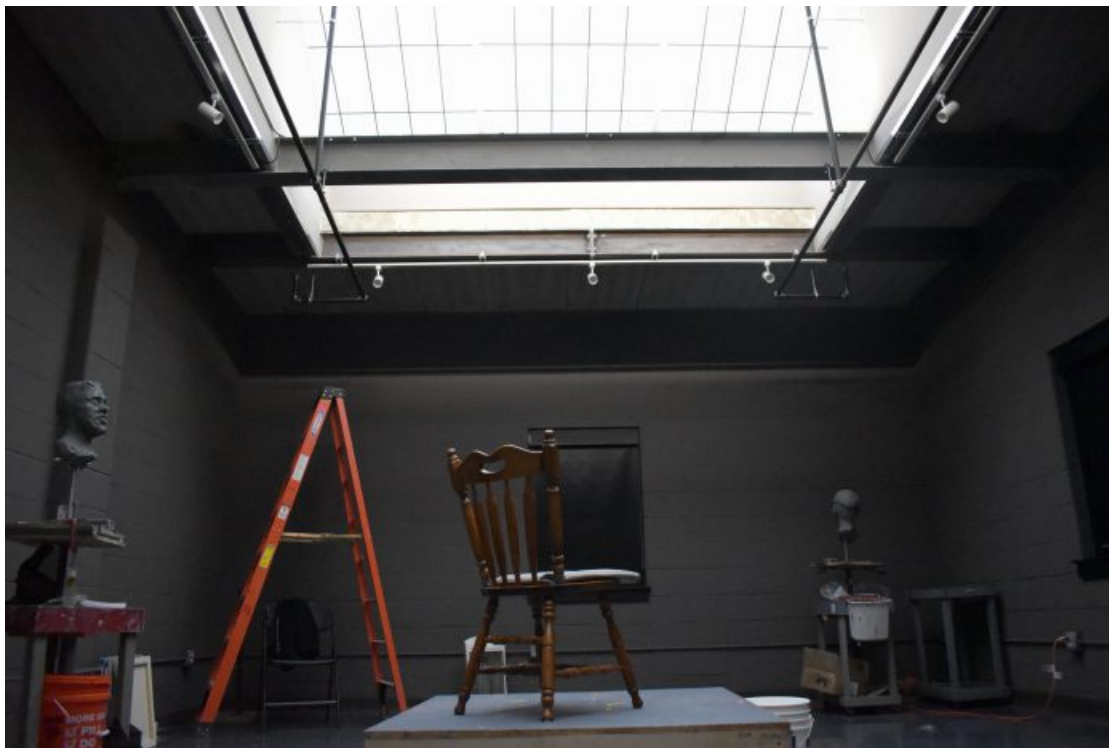
*A painting from West Philadelphia artist Mary Henderson on display at Studio Incamminati's "Rising Voices" exhibition.
Photo/Mark Zimmario*

"I've been doing a series of work, paintings of people in large public gatherings for around six or seven years," Henderson said. "It's obviously taken on a different vibe in the last year. It's taken on a little bit of a science fiction quality now."

Henderson has shown work at the Lyons Wier Gallery in New York as well as group shows at Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum in Mesa, Arizona, Wilding Cran Gallery in Los Angeles, the Woodmere Museum in Philadelphia and Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, among other venues.

She said seeing her work hang on the walls of the Bok Building was a treat, as it hit close to home.

"It's such a great space for this work," she said. "It's really cool. I love how the art hangs above the lockers."



A brand new skylight room at Studio Incamminati on the seventh floor of the Bok Building. Photo/Mark Zimmario

Kira Nam Greene was another finalist who made the trip from her home in Brooklyn to see the exhibition. Originally from South Korea, Greene is also no stranger to showing her work at large venues.

"This building is amazing," she said of the 83-year-old building. "It feels like 19th century and it's interesting to see the space being used like this."

The artists became acquainted with each other during prior gatherings for the Bennett Prize earlier this year. Henderson said she enjoyed meeting other strong-willed female artists.

"I really enjoyed getting to meet the other artists," Henderson said. "There was a wonderful support and camaraderie among the artists that was really lovely. We all follow each other on Instagram now."

The exhibition at Studio Incamminati will take place on Wednesdays through Saturdays from noon to 6 p.m. until May 9 at the Bok Building at 1901 S. 9th St.



Guests view paintings on the walls of the Bok Building at Studio Incamminati's "Rising Voices" exhibition. Photo/Mark Zimmaro

Admission is free but reservations at

<https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/5039253> are required. The studio is happy to welcome guests and showcase their new space.

"We're wildly ecstatic," Daniels said. "This is exactly why we chose this space here in South Philadelphia in the Bok Building, to have a great space and have art on the walls and have the community come in to see it."

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