

“The Color of Loyalty” Fisher’s homage to Oppenheimer

By Danny Lopriore



Artist Linda Jean Fisher’s work titled “Volume Project” is done in acrylic as a composite piece on dozens of pieces of paper and will be shown at the January 14 exhibit at the 1929 Gallery in Eisenhower Hall in West Point.

PEEKSKILL: Local artist to show work at West Point

Fourth-generation Peekskill resident Linda Jean Fisher will show a collection of her paintings titled “The Color of Loyalty: A Tribute to Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer” beginning January 14 at the 1929 Gallery in Eisenhower Hall in West Point.

Fisher, whose family has been part of the community since the early part of the 20th century, lives in Peekskill’s artist district, serves as president of the Peekskill Arts Council, and is a member of The Artist Certification Committee. The upcoming show will feature a collection of paintings drawn from her studies of Oppenheimer’s life and work. Oppenheimer was a teacher, physicist, and public servant who led the studies regarding the development of the American atomic bomb program in the 1940s.

Fisher said the collection is a product of her studies involving the fellowship of scientists and engineers who opened the nuclear age in July 1945. Her art details the history of and around the discovery of nuclear fission in a fundamental way.

The artist chose West Point as a venue because of the influence of Leslie Groves – a West Point graduate – on the Manhattan Project study. “I was studying pigment properties in 2003 and my research led me to looking at inorganic structures related how paint bases were derived,” Fisher said. “That research led again to the work at Los Alamos, Oppenheimer and microscopic images I base my work on.”

In spring 2005, Fisher recognized that Groves was a common denominator in two different areas of military study: the training of commissioned officers for the U.S. Army and the program to investigate the potential military use of fission. Groves later became the director of the Manhattan Project in 1942.

Groves appointed Oppenheimer to be the director of the Los Alamos National

Laboratory in 1943, and their partnership in the wartime effort was to design and build the first nuclear weapons was the deciding factor in choosing the 1929 Gallery as the venue.

Art reflecting history

Fisher, who holds a B.F.A. in painting from The School of Visual Arts in New York City, will show over 400 individual pieces. The artist, who is red/green color blind, utilizes her “love for systematic observation and experiment” in studying and mixing color for her works on paper and Plexiglas.

One of the major bodies of work in the exhibition is a selection of paintings from “The Daily Bread.” These pieces reflect the artist’s challenge in fall 2003 to execute one painting per work session as a means to find personal freedom. “I needed to paint, paint, paint,” Fisher said, “not to create a masterpiece, but to find the truth.”

“The Daily Bread” also combines Fisher’s passion for both science and the humanities. Her self-directed study of quantum physics, informed by “extensive studies in academic color theory, color perception, and pigment properties,” introduced the artist to the life and work of Oppenheimer.

Oppenheimer’s role as the director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory began her investigation of the Trinity detonation and the fellowship of scientists and engineers who opened the nuclear age in July 1945. “The Daily Bread” spells out the effects of this research.

A volume of work

This exhibit also includes an installation of Fisher’s “volume projects.” This art-making system was influenced by the efficiency of General William H. Tunner’s Berlin airlift.

Fisher said, “A ‘volume project’ is a designated number of works of art that must be completed within a certain time period while adhering to specific regulations. “The sum of the works and the duration of time for which I create a production schedule are drawn from history or personal living experiences. The rules I follow were established to sustain the output of the production schedule.”

"576" is one such “volume project” that will be exhibited as a work in progress. The completed piece will comprise 576 11” x 8.5” acrylic paintings on paper. Each sheet features a series of circular bands centered within a square. The sum of the rings divides equally into the number 24. This configuration provides a means to explore the 24 colors in Wilhelm Ostwald’s color system as well as his principles of color organization and color harmony.

Oppenheimer stands as patriot

Before World War II, Oppenheimer had associations with known communists. All of them had been thoroughly examined by the Army when it cleared him in 1943, and by the Atomic Energy Commission when it cleared him in 1947.

In December 1953, those communist ties became the basis of new charges against Oppenheimer and the Atomic Energy Commission formally indicted the scientist on charges of disloyalty and suspended his security clearance. Oppenheimer decided to answer the charges against him and asked for a

hearing to clear his name.

But instead of an objective inquiry called for by the Atomic Energy Commission's rules, he was subjected to an unfair trial that extended over a 24-day period (24 times 24 equals 576).

"I have complete faith in Oppie's loyalty to the United States of America," asserted Fisher. "He loved this country and would never have done anything to jeopardize it. He was a peaceful man filled with hope for a peaceful world."

For more information about the free 1929 Gallery exhibit reception, please contact Pat Harrington at (845) 938-2782 Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

About the artist

Fisher's work has been exhibited in solo and group shows in galleries and museums, including The Bronx Museum of the Arts, The Alternative Museum in New York City, Center Galleries at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit and SPACES in Cleveland.

Her work is part of private and corporate collections, including Pfizer's permanent collection at the Doral Arrowwood Education Center in Rye Brook. In 1994, Fisher was one of 35 artists chosen to participate in The Bronx Museum of the Art's 14th Artist in the Marketplace program.

Fisher has lectured at Monmouth College in Illinois, Westchester Community College, Women's Partnership for Education in Prison at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, and Eastchester High School.

For additional information on the work and artistic career of Linda Jean Fisher, please contact the artist at (914) 734-9540 or visit www.lindajeannerfisher.com. The show's reception will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. January 14. The 1929 Gallery is located on the fifth floor of Eisenhower Hall, Building 655, West Point. Gallery hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily (except for holidays) and prior to all performances in the Eisenhower Hall Theatre.