

Southern Vermont Arts Center

Contact: Robyn Madison 802-362-1405, ext. 10

Elizabeth Torak Works on View at the Southern Vermont Arts Center

Pawlet, Vermont artist Elizabeth Torak has worked for a year on the large-scale painting to be shown at the Southern Vermont Arts Center's Elizabeth de C. Wilson Museum. *The Feast of Venus I* is the title of that central work of the exhibition, which is subtitled *An Exploration of the Artist's Process*.

The inclusion in the exhibition of the sketches and studies that led to the final striking painting takes the viewer along on the artist's journey through the subject matter – a goddess-based, Baroque theme abounding in lavish detail and dozens of cherubic figures. In Torak's modern interpretation, the theme becomes a celebration of women, a consideration of the relationship between women and food, as well as a meditation on the mystery of creativity.

The drawings and oil studies tell the story of the birth of a work of art, allowing the viewer to follow *The Feast of Venus I* from conception to creation. A figure from the artist's imagination often makes its first appearance in a dashed off charcoal sketch, only to be encountered again in a subtly finished drawing before finally taking its place on the canvas itself. The progression of the pieces in the exhibition brings the viewer to an understanding of the creative experience as it is lived by the artist.

The figures in the painting are clearly inspired by contemporary women but are depicted in an archetypal space rather than in a modern kitchen, cueing the viewer that the scene is not located in a specific time or place and that it depicts the world of internal rather than external experience. The women themselves are enigmatic, powerful, strong and feminine; theirs is not the ideal beauty of Botticelli's Venus but the quotidian beauty that most women find in the mirror and in each other. There is, perhaps, something defiant in Torak's implicit insistence that this kind of beauty is worthy of attention and elevation.

The exhibition opened July 23 and is on view through October 16, alongside the exhibitions *Sabra Field – Vermont Artist*, *World Vision*, and *Three Contemporary Sculptors: Duncan Johnson, John Kemp Lee, and Gary Haven Smith*. Admission to the Museum at SVAC is free for members, \$6 for non-members, and \$3 for non-member students with valid ID. More information is available at (802) 362-1405.

The Southern Vermont Arts Center is a non-profit educational institution whose mission is to make the visual and performing arts an integral part of the life of the community and region. Admission to the 100-acre SVAC grounds encompassing a nature trail and sculpture garden and Yester House Galleries is free. Guests can dine on Chef Mariah Macfarlane's locally-sourced fare at Café Mamie, which is open for lunch Tuesday – Saturday (11:30 am – 2:30 pm), and for dinner Thursday – Saturday (5:30 pm – 8:30 pm). Reservations are suggested and can be made by calling (802) 366-8298. Further information about the Arts center is available by calling (802) 362-1405, or visit the website at www.svac.org.

