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Entertainment & Life

## At 92, Boghosian's new work has many inspirations

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Artist Varujan Boghosian, 92, says he's never done better work in his life.

**Varujan Boghosian** doesn't look 92. He describes himself as "great," saying, "I'm 92 and still going strong. And I've never done better work in my life."

New Boghosian work will be on exhibit Aug. 10-26 at the Berta Walker Gallery in Provincetown in a show appropriately titled "Poetic Worlds." (A group show, the paintings of Paul Resika and the pastels of Judyth Katz also will be on view.)

Boghosian is a visual poet whose work has references to literature and art. Poetry, Dada and surrealist art influence his work. He has recently been inspired by the imagery of artists as different as Salvador Dali, Andrew Wyeth and Hieronymus Bosch. Writers James Joyce, A. E. Housman and Emily Dickinson, and artists Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray have also moved him. Also Greek myths.

"And Etruscan tomb paintings," he adds. "I'm all over the map."

Wearing khaki shorts, a pink shirt over a white T-shirt and a Harley-Davidson cap, Boghosian is delighted to talk about his art while we chat at Walker's Wellfleet gallery. He is still as vital, as witty as when I first met him in 1994 when he was preparing for a show at Long Point Gallery in Provincetown. On that summer day, he had time on his mind. He was 68 and could hardly believe it. Time flies and all that. So he proceeded to move his constructions around the gallery with the vigor of a much younger man. And when a photographer came to shoot his portrait, he didn't hesitate to stretch out on the floor among some of his works.

Twenty-four years later, Boghosian is still agile and his wit is still as sharp. But no lying down this time.

Today, past is less on his mind than present. And he is proud to say, "I work every day, including Sunday."

Boghosian is an inveterate collector, searching antique shops, yard sales and flea markets for anything that strikes his fancy: photographs, tools, antique toys, blocks, and unlikely objects like hat forms and miniature mannequins.

He revels in unpredictable, ambiguous and paradoxical juxtapositions of ordinary, old and weathered objects to express new ideas, forms or meanings. By bringing together the commonplace, he creates uncommon images, which often have a narrative quality.

He creates his collages and constructions in ways that may challenge or even amuse the viewer. The humor in his work is likely to make you chuckle. For example, "Room with a View," relates to E.M. Forster's novel and the desire of Lucy Honeychurch to have a room with a view of the Arno River in Florence. In the collage, Boghosian turns it around so the view is for bystanders of the room with the fish at the window. There is little guessing with "Swan Lake." "Lady Godiva" is fanciful, with the naked lady out of sight.

Other pieces may puzzle you as you wonder about their meanings, as with "Heartfelt" and "Untitled (Elephant Pyramid)." However, with this latter collage, one could view the elephant as the symbol of the Republican Party, and the art could be interpreted, depending on your political views, as its current precarious situation.

Boghosian is delighted to talk about how his work begins. Having his breakfast of peanut butter on saltine crackers, with coffee, one morning, he says he was perusing one of his many art books and was intrigued by a Bosch painting. And that was the inspiration. "I made the greatest collage I've ever made," he says grinning.

He goes on to discuss a painting Wyeth did of boots, which was incorporated into another of his artworks. "It's a killer." And he laughs.

Earlier this year, Boghosian had an exhibition, "Varujan Boghosian: Master Manipulator," at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which now has 30 of his works in its collection. His art is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art and Whitney Museum of American Art, all in New York.

Boghosian first came to Provincetown in 1948. It was there that he found beachcombing, and his art with found objects was born.

He is retired from his teaching position at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and divides his time between Hanover and Provincetown.

Although looking at some of Boghosian's art can be mystifying, he says that it is not his intention to puzzle a viewer. Yet, he adds, "recently I've done work that's a terrific challenge for the observer, but also a deep pleasure for me and the observer. It's not just sky, water and land."

Yes, Boghosian goes way beyond landscapes. His imagination strikes a creative note as he sits with his coffee and peanut-butter crackers in the morning and decides how he will proceed each day. Inspired by a piece of art or a poet's words, he combines the objects he has collected from the past into the present with an insightful, meaningful expression. He is clearly intrigued by the process and then the completed work, with which he intends to engage viewers, enticing them to explore and even find their own meanings.