



CommunitySection

ART

Don Alter: Visual Thinker of the 21st Century



By **ABBY LUBY**

Don Alter was very much at home in the well lit Hudson Beach gallery in Beacon, New York. The 81-year-old artist was surrounded by his latest body of



Don Alter

“The Albers taught us about the Bauhaus philosophy,” recalls Alter. “They taught us that there is a social responsibility between artists and the world. It got me thinking about my economic identity and how one makes their way in the world.”

The training paved the way for Alter's successful career in textile design, but before he could test the commercial waters of the design world, he was drafted to serve in the Korean War. In the military he completed the vigorous combat training for overseas, but ended up state side creating military training aids and signs because of his artistic talent.



Heads #11 of 12

Alter was a first generation American who was raised in The Bronx by his Polish immigrant father Sol Alter, a bread baker. As an artist, the young Alter attended the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan, after which he was accepted at the Black Mountain College in North Carolina. The small college was an artists' mecca and Alter met and worked with such artists and thinkers as Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell, John Cage, Alfred Kazin, Merce Cunningham, and famed authors Arthur Penn and Paul Goodman, among others. On the board of directors was Albert Einstein and William Carlos Williams.

Alter was just under 18 and the youngest one at the Black Mountain campus, a small, open community of artists who embraced a liberal life style in and out of the classroom. For the young artist it was like being a kid in a toy store.

“It was innovative and exciting,” says Alter. “It was like Shangri-La and everyone was very close.”

Alter studied drawing, painting and color under the rigorous tutelage of Josef Albers and textile design with Anni Albers, both who had just fled Nazi Germany after closing that country's famous Bauhaus school.



Airplane Landscape

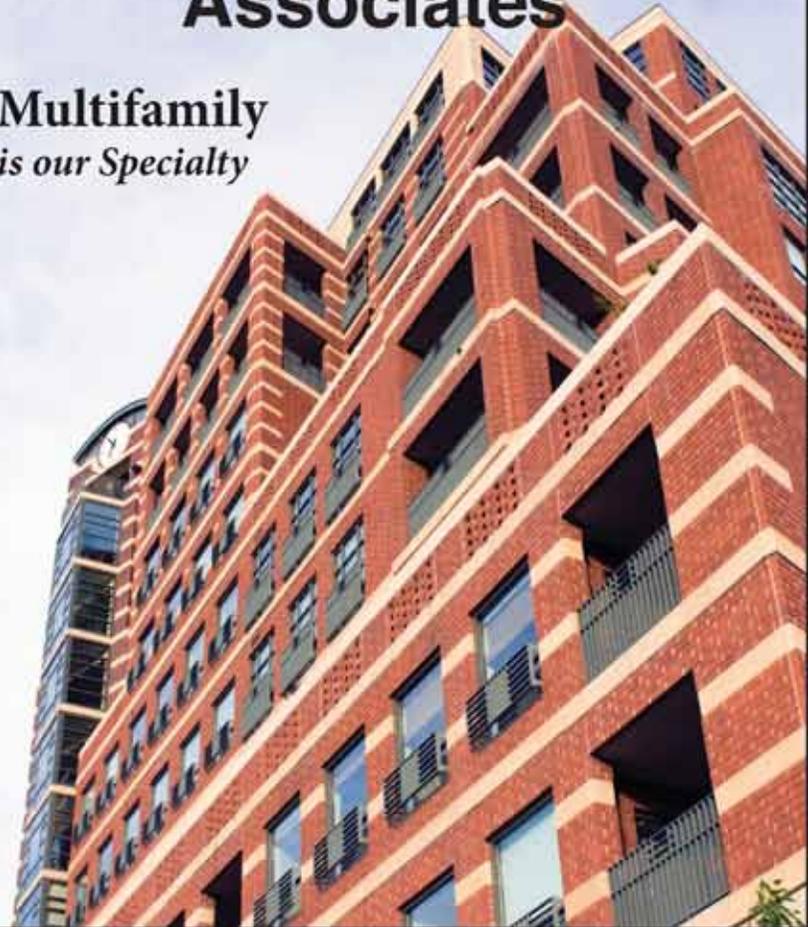
After his stint in the military, he set his goals towards the textile world and eventually became a well known and respected designer and founded Design Logic Inc. in New York City. His ideas grew from his art background - a rich mix of abstract and real imagery.

“The work I did was very innovative in a competitive world. It was a time when a lot of visually exciting things were happening in the world. People were working and there was a sense of optimism and an energetic retail market.”

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As a successful textile designer, Alter always had his finger on the pulse of the visual world - both commercial and artistic. He created and produced textile designs for home furnishings, fabrics, wall paper and other products. He had commissioned and noncommissioned designs that were sold nationally and internationally. By the time he retired in 1990, he was ready to return to painting full time. Today, he lives with his wife Alice Himmel in Newburgh and his studio is a small space overcrowded with stacks of canvases.

Over the years, Alter has seen the growing number of surfaces with images that fill our everyday lives are a "bombardment of visual media where it has become so super saturated without intellectual comparison and too disparate." To that end, Alter says he wants to simplify the artist-viewer relationship. Today, his has deftly expressed his ideas combining abstract and realism. His colors are extraordinary and the subject matter is compelling. In "Airplane



Juggler in the Park



Apple Orchard

"Landscape" rainbow colored flora and fauna grow off the canvas, a subtle, a tiny airplane hints at a sense of perspective. "Apple Orchard" shows a young man integrated with nature, a mysterious ladder reaches up to a sky of ethereal plumes. Other work includes fantasy landscapes,

beguiling faces and abstract explosions that reverberate off the canvas. Alter says as he gets older, experimenting and stepping outside the box becomes easier, as does showing his work.

"I'm opening up more, maybe because it's easier to get rejected at my age. You wait to be a unique voice. I want to take the time and develop skills to make something exciting. I am, after all, a provocateur."

Two very dedicated friends and artists have helped Alter regularly show his work here in the Hudson Valley. Tony Moore, a sculptor, and Harald Plochberger, a painter, have curated the current two-part show of Alter's work at the Hudson Beach gallery in Beacon, a community based gallery. Both men have produced the DVD film, "Donald Alter: A Dialogue on Painting". Both shows (the second one started June 9) are called Chromatic Tales, Part 1 and Part 2. The showing will conclude on July 5, 2012.

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T 845 440-0068
www.hudsonbeachglass.com

CALENDAR

Empire City Casino Highlights Father's Day with Baseball Giveaway and Appearances by Former Yankees and Mets Stars

YONKERS, NY -- Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway in Yonkers, New York, will celebrate a "diamond-studded" Father's Day on Sunday, June 17, with a special Empire City Baseball Giveaway, and all-day Autograph and Question & Answer Sessions by notable New York Yankees and Mets World Champions.

The first 5,000 male Empire Club members to visit the Promotions kiosk in the Gotham Palace on Father's Day will receive a free Empire City baseball. The following is the full lineup of baseball greats who will be on hand to make Father's Day a special one for dad:

11:30 AM-1:00 PM: Ralph Branca, Brooklyn Dodgers All-Star pitcher

1:00-2:30 PM: Ron Swoboda and Ed Kranepool, 1969 NY Mets World Series champions

2:30-4:30 PM: Darryl Strawberry, three-time NY Yankees World Series champion, and NY Mets 1986 World Series champion

4:30-5:30 PM: Roy White, NY Yankees World Series champion

5:30-7:30 PM: Ron Darling, 1986 NY Mets World Series champion, SNY Mets analyst

Host: Jack Curry, YES Network Yankees reporter and analyst

Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway is located at 810 Yonkers Avenue (at Central Avenue) in Yonkers, New York, Westchester County, (I-87 to Exit 2). Empire City Casino is open seven days a week, every day from 9:00 AM to 4:00 AM For more information call [914.968.4200](tel:914.968.4200) or log onto www.empirecity-casino.com.

Strawberry Festival in Katonah



KATONAH, NY -- The Katonah United Methodist Church is holding its annual Strawberry Festival. It will be held on Saturday, June 16, from 1 to 4 pm. Big plates of strawberry shortcake, ice cream & whipped cream will be the featured attraction. Weather permitting, the festivities will be held on the front lawn in the shade of our trees and tent. If it rains, the berries will be served up in the Parish Hall behind the church at 44 Edgemont Road. Come and celebrate the first fruit of spring.

Parking is available on the street and in the parking lot behind the Parish Hall. For additional information, call the church at (914) 232-4094 or visit the website at www.katonahumc.wordpress.com or direct email to the church at KUMC-secy@optonline.net.

Small Town Tom



Mike Barnhouse