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CHECKLIST

Varujan Boghosian, American, born 1926
Untitled, 1999, collage
Gift of Ellis L. Rolett; MIS.2002.36

Varujan Boghosian, American, born 1926
Untitled (tree): Orpheus and Eurydice, 1985, collage
Gift of Leo and Blanche Manso; MIS.991.37

Varujan Boghosian, American, born 1926
Euridice in the Temple, 1964, wood and brick
Bequest of Jay R. Wolf, Class of 1951; S.976.140

John Kemp Lee, American, born 1956
Ghostwriter, 2005, copper, lead, bronze, steel, encaustic
Purchased through a gift from Donald L. Drakeman, Class of 1975, on the occasion of his 30th reunion; 2005.60

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HOOD MUSEUM OF ART

Designed by Christina Nadeau, DPMS



Varujan Boghosian, *Euridice in the Temple*, 1964, wood and brick.
Bequest of Jay R. Wolf, Class of 1951; S.976.140

ARTeacherIST

The Role of the Artist as a Teacher



John Kemp Lee, *Ghostwriter*, 2005, copper, lead, bronze, steel, encaustic. Purchased through a gift from Donald L. Drakeman, Class of 1975, on the occasion of his 30th reunion; 2005.60

While the creative process registers, to many, as a solitary and deeply personal experience, those artists willing to discuss it at all often cite the importance of others to their work. Dartmouth's John Kemp Lee explains, "One of the very few things that I know to be true about the evolution of an artist is that . . . at some point in their development they spent a significant period of time working with, or working for, another artist of consequence. It has been my great fortune to have worked for, and with, several of these artists."

Among Lee's collaborators is American sculptor Varujan Boghosian, who was first Lee's teacher in the 1970s. The two men later worked together as professors of studio art at Dartmouth College. Pieces from Boghosian's prolific career have graced the gallery walls of the Hood Museum of Art before, but until now they have never hung alongside the worthy and related work of his student and colleague John Kemp Lee.

Both are local masters of two arts, sculpting and teaching, and I am proud to bring together their work in this *Space for Dialogue*. Having studied with both Lee and Boghosian during my undergraduate career, I experienced firsthand their dedication as professors and their accomplishment as artists. My fortunate position as their student and an intern at the Hood offered me the opportunity to explore the connections both of them recognize between their goals as teachers and their goals as artists. Boghosian wrote, "A lifetime of painting, writing, and teaching is the best of lives, for each act therein is a gift to the future . . . The process of educating disseminates knowledge, enlightens, and results in change" (Boghosian, 3). Lee too cites the future as motivation for his dual careers: "I learned some time ago that the gift of knowledge can never be paid back, but it can be paid forward. The best teachers have the ability to take what they have learned, to add to that body of knowledge through their own mindful practice, and to make that new and extended understanding come alive for the next generation of students" (personal interview).

We find these gifts to the future in their artwork. Both artists imbue their sculptures with a sense of mystery that entices us to pause and ask questions, layering their work with meaning and material while building a narrative in three dimensions. Here we are drawn ever closer, ultimately to remain and become students of what we see.

While the finest teachers draw from many disciplines to make their work accessible and interesting to students, Boghosian and Lee take on many roles in the creation of accessible, interesting art, including those of architect, storyteller, comedian, master carpenter, and magician. Such is the task of the artist and teacher—to remake one's art constantly to appeal to and challenge an always learning (and always changing) audience.

Boghosian and Lee manage this role-shifting with brilliant tricks and polished skill. Critics have remarked that Boghosian's art "is concerned with mysteries and riddles" (Licht 1968), and indeed many questions arise from these broken toys and aged cartoons. In *Euridice in the Temple*, we see beyond the humble materials Boghosian has used to render his character, standing sentinel amidst an architectural expanse. Within the mottled wooden frame he has created a world that we, in spite of ourselves, begin to believe in. The fairytale, depicted through symmetry and simple craft, stokes our imagination. Boghosian's gift is to recognize our participation in his art.

John Lee's *Ghostwriter* invites us in with sly serenity. Lee's mastery of craft eliminates distraction as each ripple of metal, length of chain, and skillfully cast hand speaks of a harmony between calculating control of and active cooperation with his material. He fuses simplistic

composition with painstaking detail, achieving an unexpected sense of fluidity from the combination of metals. Lee utilizes the frame to capture the work within the whole. This window might lead us to wonder what lies beyond the bounds of what we see. What is this place he references, and where are we within it? Like Boghosian, Lee invites us to be characters in the story he tells.

The sculptures, formerly whispering on their own, together speak clearly of shared histories. Just as teaching is often improved through thoughtful collaboration, so too is the creation and presentation of art. Since their initial student-teacher relationship, Lee and Boghosian have become partners and colleagues, offering one another critique and assistance in the construction of their art. The delicate hands that reach down the length of *Ghostwriter* remind us through their scale and doll-like quality of Boghosian's found-object protagonists, and indeed the hand derives from one of Boghosian's flea market finds. While neither artist will confirm exactly how the hand in question became disconnected from its owner, Lee says of its place in his work, "I first studied with Varujan Boghosian in 1978, and I have worked with him at Dartmouth since 1984. It is only right that he continue to have a *hand* in my sculpture."

Professors Boghosian and Lee lead us, through their art and their instruction, toward a greater understanding and appreciation of the visual world. They continue to influence one another and the art students of Dartmouth College, and no finer hands could sculpt the next generation of artists.

Deana Wojcik '07, Class of 1954 Intern

Deana is now teaching art at the Lighthouse Community Charter School in Oakland, California.

Varujan Boghosian, *Untitled*, 1999, collage. Gift of Ellis L. Rolett; MIS.2002.36

