



Rigoberto Torres and I have worked together on art projects for 35 years, but the day Jeannette came to our Dawson St. studio was one of our happiest moments.

We had this busy storefront workshop, the former KBA Youth Center. It functioned as another Social Club. We had received a commission from HUD's Art in Public Places so now workshops focused on installing permanent neighborhood sculpture murals. The little boy at the bottom of Jeannette's group portrait, five year old Thomas, was already cast as the running boy for the *Life on Dawson St.* wall. Jeannette's amazing work that day follows the casting of lovely seven year old Janel, surrounded by all her friends.

John Ahearn



BEWARE!  
JEANETTE MONTGOMERY  
BARRON HAS A PHOTOGRAPHIC  
MEMORY...

LIKE MARCEL PROUST  
SHE LITERALLY FOCUSES  
ON HER SOCIETY AND  
SURROUNDINGS WITH  
BEWITCHING, BEGUILING  
AND BEMUSING CLARITY

MIKE BIDLO



Ci siamo incontrati semplicemente perché... perché siamo fortunati tutti e due, semplicemente perché lei è venuta in Italia, che è il paese più bello del mondo. Stranamente io sono anche fortunato ad aver incontrato una persona delicata e brava come lei. Questa unione così bella è una fortuna per tutti e due, per me che sono nato in questa terra e per lei che è venuta da una terra molto più lontana. Che altro c'è da dire, che lei è brava lo sa il mondo!

Già nel 1985 io ero qui in via dell'Orso. Nel laboratorio di Claudio di Gianbattista vado tuttora ed è a Largo Preneste. In quella tua foto molto bella c'è scritto Casa del Popolo che è un bar lì nel quartiere Prenestino. È il quartiere di Pasolini, un quartiere popolare di Roma. Dopo tanti anni che sei qui non sei più andata da Claudio? Lui è ancora lì anche se è tutto molto cambiato: ora il giardino e la casa sono sistemati e il suo laboratorio è bellissimo, anzi al momento ci sono tre miei nuovi affreschi che esporremo probabilmente a fine maggio.

Jeannette io tutti i giorni faccio le stesse cose, alla stessa ora, lo stesso minuto, come un tonno! Ma questo non vuol dire che lavoro, vengo in studio alla stessa ora tutti i giorni però poi quando lavoro non lo so! Non sempre lavoro, però il vizio assurdo, il pregiudizio, sì, è lo stesso sempre.

Enzo Cucchi



**JMB:** In 1986 I remember coming to your studio for a party after one of your openings—or it may have been an event at your loft to raise money for AMFAR—probably Bianca Jagger invited me because we hung around a lot in those days. I could not help feeling back then that a lot of your painting was about loss and memory—those friends who we saw leaving this world much too soon. And I say "leaving this world" because your work had the feeling that there was another world for them after. There was a brightness, not sadness. At least that's what it seemed to me.

**RB:** Dear Jeannette, you probably came to my house with Bianca for some fundraiser that I was having. Usually some kind of Christmas dinner, on behalf on ACRIA (AIDS Community Research Initiative of America), an AIDS research, education and prevention organization that has grown to be one of the biggest in the country. We worked with doctors and pharmacies to try to expedite cutting edge medications to people who most needed it. We held workshops in minority communities to create awareness of the health issues the stigma and the prevention/treatment options. So a typical day in 1986 was me being in my studio working on paintings that I felt had to deal with the urgency of the rapidly shifting paradigm from the industrial optimism and progress of the previous generation to its dislocation by young people's sudden awareness of the possibility of mortality. I tried to reflect both ends of this contradictions in my work.

I've always been a creature of habit so a typical day in 1986 would not be that different from a typical day in 2014. I get up early, meditate, read the paper, exercise, get to work at 10-10.30, stop for a few minutes at 1 to eat the same thing every day (yogurt and granola), work again until about 4, return any calls or deal with any annoying stuff that comes up in the day in NYC, go home and rest, go out to dinner at 8 since I have never cooked, try to get home by 10-10.30, read and try to be asleep by midnight. I essentially repeat this scenario *ad infinitum*. I've never been a big TV watcher, nor do I need to be entertained so I don't really go to dance or theatre. I always wonder why I live in NYC, but can never figure out any other place to go, except for the summers when I go out to my house in the Hampton and basically repeat the process above, the only difference being that I get to work much earlier and go to the gym, etc in the late afternoon.

I really only have 5-6 hours of creative energy a day so I have to use it as effectively as I know how. All my best,

Ross Bleckner





We needed a place to live. We had been forced out of our studio/living space on the Bowery (half the roof leaked when it rained) by our landlord Bradley Field, a well know musician/persona on the NYC punk scene of Teen age Jesus and the Jerks, The Contortions, etc. We found through our friend, the artist Nicolas Moufarrege, that there was an apartment above him on Avenue C and 7<sup>th</sup> street in the East Village-alphabet city.

The east village in the 1980's was a run down neighborhood that resembled Berlin after the Second World War with bombed out blocks of buildings. Ave C between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Street was flat dirt, a full city block of emptiness.

People lined up on 7<sup>th</sup> street in the summer to buy drugs from a man standing in a doorway. In the winter drugs were sold from and ice cream truck playing the repetitive jingle outside our window through out the night.

This is where we set up house. The first year no one visited. Avenue A was OK to visit. Avenue B was a bit dicey. Avenue C-no man's land, Avenue D- do not enter.

We took the two floors, lying to our landlord we had the money for the rent and begun "de-vinylization," removing all modern elements. Gone went the modern heaters (there were two fireplaces) out with the modern kitchen. We built fireplace mantles with blue police barricades we found in the street and marbleized them. We wallpapered each room with "dollar a roll" 1930s reproduction of Victorian patterns and then decorated with furniture from the trash or antiques from flea markets. The furniture had to be kept from our dreams of a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century "time machine/experiment" 1835 till 1865.

We read period books by candle light in front of the burning hearth. We slept in night shirts and caps in foot high feather mattresses made by Ishkabibble Iskowitz, the feather man of Ludlow St. He said we were his best customers.

As our success grew from the sales of our paintings and photographs we rented the Kings County Savings Bank in Williamsburg Brooklyn, a Second Empire edifice on Broadway at Bedford complete with a walk in safe.

First floor: offices. Second floor: painting studio. Third floor: Photography studio.

We gave a grand ball (a recreation—well, our version—of Louise Comfort Tiffany's Egyptian Fête) with a hand delivered invitation



stating «Only those dressed as in the time of Cleopatra will be admitted». An 18-piece dance orchestra was hired to play popular music from the 1910s. On another floor was an Arabic band complete with a belly dancer and 4 roaming peacocks. A 7-foot tall blackamoor in turban greeted guests standing between two burning urns of fire. They were really two city garbage can with wood from the street. "Anything Goes" was the theme of these two neighborhoods. No rich white person from the Upper East Side was coming here, unless for a "fix"—of many kinds.

Upstate we had our 1790 brick house that was never modernized. No heating, plumbing, or electricity. We went driving in our horse and carriage. Drove in our 1913 Model T Ford. Bathed in the creek behind the barns in the summer.

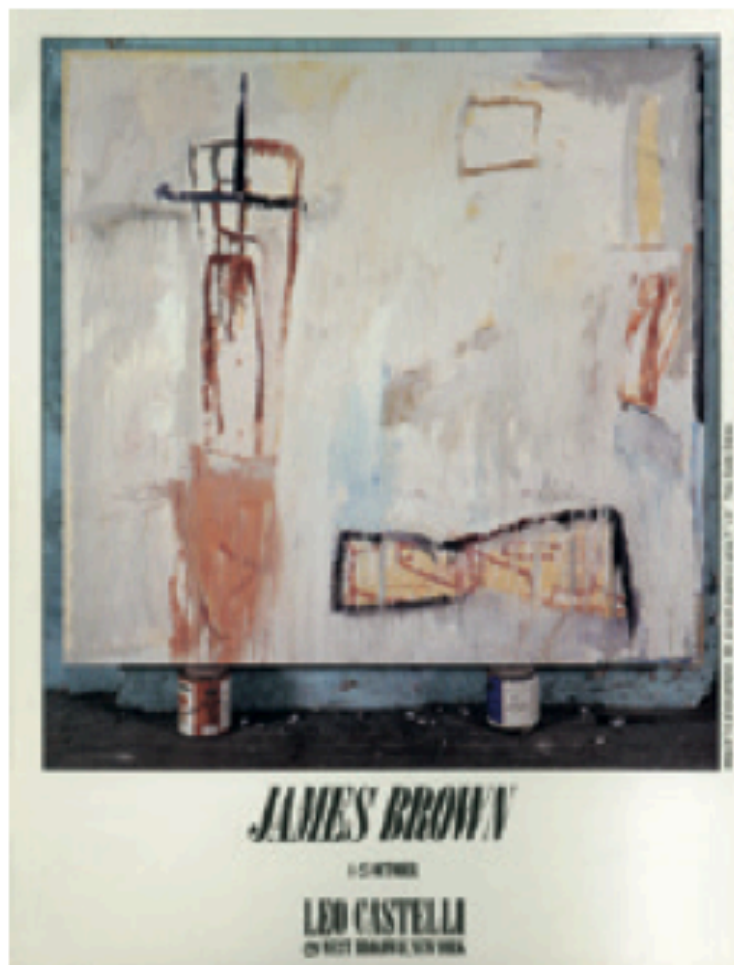
All this and more. Invites to sumptuous dinners, glittering celebrity and financial gain. We danced all through it. A never-ending champagne fountain of wonderment.

And then the financial crash of 1987 "Black Monday" came, followed by a visit from the IRS. A three day auction of our country house along with our cars, carriages, saddles, furniture, and our personal effects. Our own *Gone with the Wind*. Cut- end scene. That's were I'll end my story. It didn't kill us. It may have put a limp in our "two step" for a while. We regrouped, moved to Dublin, Ireland and are still working together after 33 years.

A lot of memories arise looking over Jeannette's photographs. So many young faces now older.

So many stories. Some with happy trails, and others, dead ends. I remember it well.

Peter Mc Gough



Jeannette Montgomery: the gentle touch in all ways and always. How could one not be open and willing to sit for Jeannette. There was a fine and subtle aura that surrounded that woman who so casually needed to take your picture. It seemed that all the South was knocking at your door and that she might have just as well arrived with Eudora Welty—thus was her charm and power. We all flocked around Jeannette and wanted to be complimented and embraced by her lens, by her eye, her presence. We wanted to be completed by her. I think of being phoned up for a portrait session with Jeannette: a wonderful exciting R.D.V., Ludlow below Houston, sometime next week, some sunny afternoon. I look forward to the day. I like the simplicity, the friendliness. I like enigmatic beings, the ones who have perfume and mystery about them. This is how I remember my encounters with Jeannette Montgomery Barron.

James hd Brown  
Merida, Mexico  
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