

Artistic Connections

In Carolyn GlasoeBailey's Short Life, She Made a Big Difference For Up-and-Coming Artists. Now They Are Returning the Favor in Ojai.



Ry Rocklen's Globowl (Bermuda Land), 2015. Medium: Ceramic, 12" x 12" x 8"

By Bret Bradigan

Artists thrive on connections — between them, their muses, collectors, gallery owners, appraisers and auctioneers. But there's a rare few people in the art world who have the keen eye to spot an artist's talent, then nurture those artists as they launch their careers and live out their promise.

Carolyn GlasoeBailey was one of those people. Her career began at age 13, pushing a broom at the Flanders Gallery. At 19 years of age, she founded her first art gallery in her Minneapolis hometown.

After bringing together artists and collectors for decades, she died Nov. 16 at age 46 from glioblastoma brain cancer. She had lived in Ojai for 20 years, while keeping up a busy schedule in Los Angeles, New York and other art capitals worldwide, and while being mother to Matson and wife to Chris Bailey.

Many of the dozens of artists represented, and befriended, by Carolyn over the years asked, "What can we do to help?" Thirty-nine artists are donating work to a special exhibition at Porch Gallery, opening July 21 and running through Aug. 21. Proceeds from the sales will go toward the Carolyn GlasoeBailey public art fund, and its goal of a \$20 million endowment, a final space for a public sculpture park, art projects and a permanent collection.

The foundation began with sister Lila Glasoe Francese, with help from Carolyn's widower, Chris Bailey. The vision is a building in Ojai. "We want to bring in more great artists to Ojai," Lila, the foundation's president, said, including an artist study and work space.

Chris Bailey said she insisted on spelling her last name Glasoe-Bailey "with no space." Perhaps that's an example of how she loved to bring people, and things, together. "The dream is to get the ball rolling, because the community is ready for it."

Lisa Casoni, co-director with Heather Stobo of Porch Gallery, said, "We ran into Lila at Azu days before Carolyn passed. Over drinks, we started discussing ways that Lila wanted to honor Carolyn's legacy and our shared vision of creating artists' residencies and introducing museum-caliber artists to our already richly creative community."

Casoni and Stobo had known Carolyn for years. "The first time we met Carolyn she had Heather and I over for a dinner party ... Her house, her art, her food were all breathtaking and impeccably orchestrated, but, in hindsight, they seem like a sidebar to what really impressed me about her. She was a hilarious storyteller, perfectly walked the fine line of being both funny and wicked."

Among the exhibitors are prominent, mid-career artists such as Brooklyn-based sculptor Rob Fischer, who will unveil his work July 21 at the Porch Gallery event, where it will remain through the "Fierce Generosity" event to Aug. 21. Fischer will speak about his work and about winning the Carolyn GlasoeBailey Foundation's Artist of the Year on Saturday, July 23 before the official opening gala.

The installation will be a "sister piece" to the series of sculptures, "Glass House, Beautiful City," that Fischer will install on Park Avenue in New York during the summer.

"All the artists came to Carolyn at one time or another for help on how to deal with their careers."



LEFT: Chris Bailey, Lila Glasoe Francese with Porch Gallery co-directors Lisa Casoni and Heather Stobo on site at the Foundation. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP, 39 artists donated work, including Rob Fischer, winner of the foundation's inaugural Artist Award, Marc Swanson (Untitled, For Carolyn), David Rathman, (Up to You, Down to Me) and Enoc Perez, (Tao Baja).

exhibit include Cassandra Jones, Anthony Ocone, and Reed and Liz Fish. Among the other prominent artists donating work are Enoc Perez, Ry Rocklin, Sanford Biggers, Sterling Ruby, Melanie Schiff and Xaviera Simmons.

Lila Glasoe Francese said her sister was spontaneous and dedicated. "She'd work just as hard for the small artists as the big artists." Case in point, choosing to base her career — which required constant travel — in Ojai.

GlasoeBailey specialized in the "secondary art market," or investment grade. Towards the end, even when her speech was affected by the tumor, Chris Bailey said she was still making deals. "Her last sale, she sold a Phillipe Guston piece for a large sum to a hedge fund manager. She couldn't even articulate to the client the artist's name, but her clients didn't care — they were this devoted."

Bailey said, "That's the Glasoe sisters, they grew up in a family with five Vietnamese foster kids. Her father told her, 'You get out in the world and make it work. PERIOD.' She was phenomenal at sales. She could close a deal, and she had excellent

Ojai artists donating work to the foundation's

relationships with clients."

One example is influential (and deceased) conceptual artist Mike Kelley — "she managed to get him to reissue a series of prints he did in the 1980s, and sold it to client for six figures." Other well-known artists she worked with were Louise Bourgeois and Ed Ruscha.

Bailey said his wife "had a formula" for finding up-and-coming artists. "She would scope them out, where they went to school, who they studied with, who was their crowd. She could tell if they had 'it.' She knew who was being watched, getting shows, had been educated by the right programs and therefore presenting themselves as emerging museum-quality artists. She was an artist advocate," said Chris Bailey. Lila said, "Artists came to her to help and the cultivated artists involved in this show are examples of her reach."

Miki Garcia, executive director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, was a close associate and friend. GlasoeBailey was instrumental in bringing her to Santa Barbara. "Carolyn lit up a room and inspired all who knew her. She taught me so much about art and passion," she wrote. Chris Bailey said that at the MCASB's party shortly after Carolyn passed that "all the board members were thanking me so much for Carolyn."

"She made all this happen ... translating a regional art space to an internationally renowned museum." ☺



Carolyn GlasoeBailey, left, with Miki Garcia.

Photo by Caitlin Jean Glaese