

**BEN ARONSON**  
***The Figure in Context***

November 6 – December 6, 2008



In ***The Secret***, a woman entirely absorbed in thought ponders a mysterious drama. With quiet intensity, her enigmatic expression is illuminated for us by the smoldering glow reflected up into her face from her brilliant orange scarf.



A striking mixed media piece, ***Midsummer Meditation*** is the study of a figure in California summer sunlight. Not intended as a painting “of” a figure, but rather “about” a figure; one which is illuminated by sunlight and defined by its counterpart, shadow. Limited color in rich ochres and browns emphasize the value range from light to dark. In context with the formal artistic aspects of line, shape, texture, and composition, the image exists on a balance point between realism and abstraction.



Blonde hair ablaze in a shaft of sunlight, and seemingly unaware of our presence, the eyes of this radiant woman in ***The Recollection*** engage us immediately. Raising a coffee cup to her lips while seated in an upscale restaurant, she hides most of her face from our view. Yet, her eyes alone are powerfully revealing of her inner state and mood. We cannot be sure if the gentleman in the background is real or remembered. His image reflected in a mirror on the wall with the vertically hung pictures suggests the film frames of an old motion picture.



In the sunny south of France along the Cote d’Azur between Nice and Monaco, many great painters such as Picasso and Cezanne have long been attracted and inspired to capture the unique and magical light and color of this legendary region. Here, in ***Veranda on the Riviera***, we see a young woman bathed in light, slowly walking toward a balustrade, leading her companion, and also we the viewers, from the shadowed interior which opens onto a sun drenched grand veranda overlooking the Mediterranean. We can feel the ocean breeze which gently lifts her hair and blouse. The brushwork which depicts her is particularly masterful. Aronson captures the illusion in concise painterly strokes which brilliantly evokes the light passing through her translucent silk chiffon blouse of Matisse Sea Green.



Drawings, throughout history, have always been a clear window into the artists mind and process. Whether approached as investigations into new ideas and possibilities or as fully sustained finished works in themselves, the art of drawing is perhaps the most intimate, revealing and direct record of the artist's hand and mind. Aronson's drawings are no exception, offering a wide range of techniques and methodologies. We can appreciate the rapid spontaneity and authority of line in ***Study for Night Studio***, produced directly from the line model. Alternatively, in ***Jazz Musician***, the marks themselves underscore an expressive element of the musical subject of this drawing. Fast staccato touches of light and dark pastel laid over lyrical passages of shifting supportive background tones reflect and mimic central musical aspects of composition and improvisation intrinsic to progressive jazz, exemplified here by American jazz master, Wayne Shorter.



***Standing Figure, Morning Light, Summer Studio, and Figure on a Porch*** all reveal the artists' early association with James Weeks and other masters of Bay Area figuration. Drawing by Weeks, Richard Diebenkorn, and Elmer Bischoff concerned themselves with working directly from the line model in black and white, often ink and ink wash reconciling the age-old pictorial challenge of "figure and ground" combined with certain goals of abstract expressionism, particularly mark making and dynamic edge to edge compositions.

