

CAPE ANN MUSEUM

ART HISTORY CULTURE

Cape Ann Museum Green premieres “The Porch-Rait Project,” an exhibition of family portraits taken during the pandemic to raise funds for The Open Door



Photo by Paul Cary Goldberg. *The Randazzo Children, Gloucester, 2020*. Archival ink jet print

GLOUCESTER, MASS. (Sept. 2020) – For the opening exhibition of the new Cape Ann Museum Green, *The Porch-Rait Project*, local photographers spent several weeks during the pandemic creating portraits of families outside their homes on Cape Ann. Each of the 245 families photographed then made donations to The Open Door, a local agency that supplies food and meals to families in need, so the project became a creative and inspiring way to respond to the current health care emergency as the community came together during the early days of the crisis.

The photographers, Jason Grow, Shawn G. Henry, Paul Cary Goldberg, and Bill Sumner, started taking portraits in April, gathered more than 245 photos, and helped raise \$30,000 for The Open Door. A selection of 40 portraits from *The Porch-Rait Project* will hang in the new Janet and William Ellery James Center at Cape Ann Museum Green off Grant Circle which opens Sept. 17.

“The portraits in *The Porch-Rait Project* show a range of families: parents with energetic youngsters, teenagers awkwardly being embraced by their parents, people isolating alone and in multi-generational pods,” writes Martha Oaks, the Museum’s Curator. “The portraits invite us to imagine what life might be like inside homes. And if you look closely, they show hints of spring, of rebirth: hyacinth bulbs poking up through the earth and kids in bare feet. The images make us feel good about who we are and remind us of

the comfort of home. But the photographs do not show everyone, and they remind us of the disparities that exist between households. They remind us of those who are homeless, who go without meals, and who are forced to make painful decisions for financial reasons. Although we are all weathering the same storm, we are not all in the same boat. And it is that awareness that was the genesis of *The Porch-Rait Project*, an acknowledgement that we all need to look after each other, particularly in times like these.”

Artistically, the exhibition conveys a community in isolation while also in unity. Philanthropically, it helped sustain The Open Door, a vital Cape Ann nonprofit as it met a 40 percent increase in demand for food assistance at the height of the pandemic. More than 750,000 meals were provided to nearly 5,000 households from mid-March to the end of August with 19,000 curbside distributions and deliveries to 10 cities and town in Essex County. Even now, there is a 20 percent increase in demand before the COVID 19 crisis caused such economic hardship.

“As the pandemic brought the world to its collective knees, the community stepped up and The Open Door stayed OPEN,” said Julie Hazen LaFontaine, The Open Door’s President and CEO. “We know the road to economic recovery for many will stretch out over months or years. We are planning for the long haul. We will be here, and we are grateful for a community that cares for its own. Storms rage. Community endures.”

The Storms Rage/Community Endures message has been at the core of Cape Ann Museum’s operations during this pandemic. Three banners were installed early on in this crisis on the façade of the Museum’s Pleasant Street campus featuring Fitz Henry Lane’s painting of an embattled ship at sea with the message: “Storms Rage, Gloucester Endures.” Concurrently, this message of solidarity was also shared in a membership mailing along with the invitation to assist those directly impacted by this crisis by supporting social service organizations like The Open Door as a vital community resource in need.

“The response was instantaneous,” said Museum Director Oliver Barker. “This community has weathered many storms and together will endure this crisis. With the opening of our new campus, we felt it was fitting to feature these moving portraits by local photographers who have chronicled the quarantine experience in a unique and ultimately charitable way. We hope the community is inspired by this project and the opportunity to visit the inaugural exhibit at the Janet & William Ellery James Center at our new and beautiful Cape Ann Museum Green campus”.

The almost four-acre campus is home to the three historic structures, the White Ellery House (1710), an adjacent Barn (c. 1740), and the Babson-Alling House (c.1740), all located on the site at the intersection of Washington and Poplar Streets in Gloucester. The new 12,000-square foot James Center includes 2,000 square feet of flexible exhibition and community programming space designed to reach broader audiences with new exhibits and public programs.

The James Center will be open Thursday through Sunday, 10am to 3pm, from Sept. 17 through Oct. 25. The exhibition is free and open to the public with advance registration. To reserve timed tickets and review COVID safety protocols, please visit www.camuseum.eventbrite.com.

Images available to the media on request.

The Cape Ann Museum has been in existence since the 1870s, working to preserve and celebrate the history and culture of the area and to keep it relevant to today’s audiences. Spanning 44,000 square feet, the Museum is one of the major cultural institutions on Boston’s North Shore welcoming more than 25,000 local, national and international visitors each year to its exhibitions and programs. In addition to fine art, the Museum’s collections include decorative art, textiles, artifacts from the

maritime and granite industries, three historic homes, a Library & Archives and a sculpture park in the heart of downtown Gloucester. In June 2021, the Museum will officially open the 12,000 square foot Janet & William Ellery James Center at the [Cape Ann Museum Green](#). The campus also includes three historic buildings – the White Ellery House (1710), an adjacent Barn (c. 1740), and the recently acquired Babson-Alling House (c.1740), all located on the site at the intersection of Washington and Poplar Streets in Gloucester.

The Cape Ann Museum is located at 27 Pleasant Street in Gloucester and will re-open Oct. 1 to the public; Sept. 24 for members. **Current opening** hours are Thursday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission is \$12.00 adults, \$10.00 Cape Ann residents, seniors and students. Youth (under 18) and Museum members are free. Cape Ann residents can visit for free on the second Saturday of each month. For more information please call: (978)283-0455 x10. Additional information can be found online at www.capeannmuseum.org.

For a detailed media fact sheet please visit www.capeannmuseum.org/press.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Diana Brown McCloy
Teak Media
(978) 978-697-9414
Diana@teakmedia.com

Meredith Anderson
meredithanderson@capeannmuseum.org
(978) 283-0455 x115