



August at the art galleries

Fine Arts

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Installation view of *Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Love & War* at Rena Bransten Gallery. Photo: John Janca

Art never sleeps, even during the summer when most of us are kicking back and swinging in our hammocks. Time has come to put aside that refreshing pitcher of Tom Collins, get out of the house, and imbibe some culture. Here are a few suggestions on where to go.

Rena Bransten Gallery: *Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Love & War.*

Ferlinghetti, an activist, poet, co-founder of City Lights Booksellers and all-round local legend, has been a familiar fixture on the literary scene for years, and can still draw a crowd. Though poetry has been his claim to fame, unbeknownst to many he has pursued his second love, painting, for more than six decades. In his latest solo exhibition, the 97-year-old, self-taught artist brings a long life well-lived and his exposure to the atrocities of WWII, which turned him toward "radical pacifism," to reflections on the ties that bind and the conflict that tears them apart. Bodies of water, avian life, the human figure and text scrawled on canvases are recurring motifs and, as one might expect, literary references abound: side-by-side images of T.S. Eliot's wife Vivienne on the eve of her marriage and 20-odd years later upon her commitment to an insane asylum; Beckett's Godot; a mournful Edna St. Vincent Millay, her eyes downcast, words covering a portion of her face; and "The Howl" (2002/13), invoking both Edvard Munch's disturbing lithograph "The Scream" and the Allen Ginsberg opus published by Ferlinghetti in 1956, an act that led to his arrest and a highly publicized obscenity trial. An almost boyish, minimalist technique is applied to serious, politically charged subjects. In "Boat People" (2006), for example, a small green craft with mast and no sail is tossed by rough, bleak seas, carrying its passengers – one of them blindfolded, another gagged – on a perilous passage; and two ghoulish antagonists, naked except for their helmets, face off in the grotesque "C'est la Guerre" (1982). *Through Aug. 20; renabranstengallery.com.*

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