

Gambling Big on 57th Street

BY KELLY COMPTON



Located in midtown Manhattan, Rehs Contemporary Galleries is headed by Howard Rehs, who rightly believes that “the art community needs to embrace, celebrate, appreciate, collect, and support good academic art.” He recognizes, however, that “in today’s art world, the whole idea of an exhibition that is academic in nature is a gamble in and of itself. Will people respond? Will they come?”

Confident that they will, Rehs is preparing to launch a new series of exhibitions with *The Big Gamble*, on view April 6–May 3. Amazingly, this is the first significant showing in New York City focused entirely on the Ani Art Academies, the network of teaching studios directed by the Pennsylvania-based realist Anthony J. Waichulis (b. 1972). On the walls at Rehs will be works by 27 instructors, apprentices, and alumni, including the founder himself.

Howard Rehs says that “the participating artists were asked to use the phrase *The Big Gamble* as inspiration for their work. Some chose to explore the theme quite literally, others took a humorous approach, and still others explored something more personal, reflecting a big gamble in their own lives.” Participating in the challenge are Timothy W. Jahn (who heads the Ani Academy on the Caribbean island of Anguilla), Edward Dillon (his counterpart in the Dominican Republic), and Tim Reynolds (who has generously underwritten the first phase of the Ani Art Academies international expansion).

Also involved are artists Erin Anderson, Erika Baez, Justin Balliet, Jason Brady, Helen Crispino, Jay Davenport, Rodney Davis, Joe Dillon, Brandon D. Drake, Chelsea Herron, Emma Hirst, Sharon Hourigan, Alicia Lang, Roger C. Long, Ricardo Martinez, Kevin Moore, Brian O’Neill, Max Reynolds, Omar Rodriguez, Terese Rogers, Kate Sammons, Leah Waichulis, and Kierstin Young.

For his own part, Waichulis hopes that, “while art should never be of one voice or flavor, a resurgence of quantifiable skill-building will make the future of visual art far more robust and allow for more effective communication and expression.” The analogy for skill-building he cites most often is training in music, “which touches on all domains of learning,



Timothy W. Jahn (b. 1977)
Doc's Take
2012, Oil on board, 26 x 32 in.

including the psychomotor domain (the development of skills), the cognitive domain (the acquisition of knowledge), and the affective domain (including appreciation and sensitivity).”

This makes sense to us, and we look forward to watching how *The Big Gamble* rolls. ■

KELLY COMPTON is a contributing writer to *Fine Art Connoisseur*.

Information: 5 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, 212.355.5710, rehscgi.com, aniwaichulis.com, aniartacademies.org



Anthony J. Waichulis
(b. 1972)
The Primary Gambit
2012, Oil on board,
7 x 5 in.