

GARNER ARTS CENTER

garnerartscenter.org

55 W. Railroad Avenue, Garnerville, NY, 10923

845-947-7108

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1st, 2023

Press Conference, Preview & Ribbon-Cutting: GRAND OPENING of Building 35 at GARNER Arts Center

Press Conference and Ribbon-Cutting: Thursday, March 9, 2023 at 5PM

Artist Reception: Saturday, March 11 from 5-7PM

- Exhibition Run: March 11-April 23
- Gallery Hours: Fridays, 2-5PM, Saturdays and Sundays 1-5PM

WHERE: Building 35 within the GARNER Historic District, 55 West Railroad Avenue, Garnerville, NY 10923

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On August 8, 2011 Hurricane Irene brought catastrophic flooding to the Garnerville Arts & Industrial Center and the non-profit GARNER Arts Center gallery housing the *Sari Dienes' Retrospective* exhibition. The gallery collapsed and half of the exhibition was lost.

Now, twelve years later, GARNER Arts Center is pleased to announce the grand opening of its new gallery, Building 35, a magnificent state-of-the-art exhibition space and regional Visitors Center, with a two-woman show featuring a new exhibition of the groundbreaking artworks of **Sari Dienes** and new artworks by the contemporary Haitian American artist, **Vladimir Cybil Charlier**. In addition, the works of photographer **Ned Harris**, namesake of the *Harris Gallery* in Building 35, will be on display in the *Visitor Center @35* for the grand opening exhibitions.

To celebrate the opening and recognize the support of the larger arts community of Rockland County, New York State, Rockland County Government, the Village of West Haverstraw and the Town of Haverstraw, GARNER Arts Center announces a Press Preview and Ribbon-Cutting event on Thursday, March 9th at 5pm (invitation only) in advance of the Artists Opening for the general public on Saturday, March 11 from 5-7pm. We invite the press to join us on Thursday, March 9th at 5pm. Restoration of Building 35 was made possible with the substantial support of a FY2019 Facilities Improvement Mid-Size Capital Project grant award from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and New York State Legislature through New York State's Consolidated Funding program.

"NYSCA is proud to have provided critical capital funding to the GARNER Arts Center, which after 12 long years, has reopened its doors to a new gallery and visitor center," said Mara Manus, Executive Director of the New York State Council on the Arts. "Congratulations to the staff, board, and artists for creating this permanent space that will continue to deliver the measurable benefits of the arts to all New Yorkers and our visitors."

During a career that spanned over six decades, artist **Sari Dienes*** (1898-1992) worked in a wide range of media, creating paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, ceramics, textile designs, sets and costumes for theater and dance, sound-art installations, mixed-media environments, music and performance art. In the late 1940's Dienes met and began a lifelong friendship with composer **John Cage** and choreographer **Merce Cunningham**. She established herself in the epicenter of the art world during the 1950s, mentoring and influencing artists such as **Robert Rauschenberg** and **Jasper Johns**, and was close friends with **Mark Rothko**, **Ray Johnson**, and a myriad of others. **Diene's** work will be displayed in the *Harris Gallery* in Building 35.

Vladimir Cybil Charlier** is an internationally exhibited New York-based Haitian American contemporary

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artist, who studio is located within the GARNER Historic District. **Charlier** will be exhibiting a new body of work entitled the *Indigo Suites*, developed in response to the history of the GARNER Historic District as a dye house and textile mill. **Charlier's** work weaves together seemingly disparate cultural references and textures from both Caribbean and American cultures and, as an homage to **Dienes**, her work integrates subtle references to **Dienes's** acclaimed manhole rubbings. **Charlier's** work will be displayed in the *Main Gallery* in Building 35.

Ned Harris ***, a great friend to the arts in Rockland County and longtime curator, was a prolific photographer. His work on display in the *Visitors Center @35* captures New York City street scenes of the 1960s in memorable black and white photography.

Robin E. Rosenberg, founder and President of GARNER Arts Center, announced the grand opening celebration today, saying: "The opening of the Building 35 galleries and regional Visitor Center marks the end of a long period post-hurricane where GARNER was unable to hold regular exhibitions. GARNER Arts Center re-invented itself to stay vital throughout this time by programming in and about the grounds of the landmarked GARNER Historic District, including holding an annual regional arts festival and outdoor film, dance and immersive art events, attracting thousands of visitors. This was accomplished with the steadfast support of the New York State Council on the Arts, the Rockland County Executive and Legislature, the Village of West Haverstraw, the Town of Haverstraw and our generous sponsors and donors. While we will continue to host those programs, we are thrilled to finally have a permanent home once again in which to present the new works of contemporary artists. Building 35 has been the culmination of a lot of dedication and determination on the part of our Board of Directors, our staff and our many donors but we would not have been able to open the doors without New York State's recognition of the critical importance of a community's access to arts and cultural institutions and the Mid-Size Capital grant award we received from the New York State Council on the Arts, for which we are deeply grateful. GARNER Arts Center also wishes to recognize the generosity and support for Building 35 of TAYLOR and the Ned Harris Family, Joanne Howard and Brooklyn Demme, Sunamp Limited, Frank Vitale and the Village of West Haverstraw, along with our many other donors and supporters."

* About the **Sari Dienes** exhibition: "Armed with an ink roller, she mapped her urban haunts as well as her body's movement; uneven and ghostly skeins of pigment document her repetitive application of a standard-size brayer across the surface. Dienes placed drawing at the center of her practice while simultaneously challenging traditionally held views about the medium." (Text excerpt from Sari Dienes' 2014 solo exhibition at The Drawing Center, NYC, New York <https://drawingcenter.org/exhibitions/sari-dienes>).

The exhibition at GARNER Arts Center focuses on **Dienes'** work from the early 1950s and traces her evolution when she rejected her formal training to begin experimenting with new materials and techniques - a shift in her practice from surrealistic painting and drawing, past abstract expressionism, suggesting the beginnings of Pop Art and seminal in the Neo Dada movement. She developed "rubbings," layering surface textures of urban manhole covers and sidewalks as well as assemblages of found objects.

"But more than a change of technique, a conceptual shift was occurring in **Dienes'** work. She was at the cusp of something new; her innovative use of materials, scale and everyday environmental sources was in keeping with what a younger generation of American artists were beginning to approach. The art-historical implications of Dienes' frottage works are more significant than has been acknowledged." (Sid Sachs: *Sari Dienes Who I Am?! Sari Dienes Foundation 2022*, p. 32 edited by Barbara Pollitt).

Now within the GARNER Historic District of New York, the new GARNER Arts Center honors the work of the Sari Dienes Foundation which continues to promote, preserve and research the legacy of Sari Dienes and celebrates the publication of the new book, *Sari Dienes: Who I Am?!, Commentaries on her Life and Art*, edited by Barbara Pollitt.

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****About the Vladimir Cybil Charlier exhibition:** The *Indigo Suites* were developed in response to the history of the Garner Historic District as an old indigo Mill. As each piece juxtaposes seemingly disparate cultural references and textures, the work also weaves personal histories with markers from both Caribbean and American cultures, generating a complex narrative for the viewer to decipher. The pieces rethink iconic images using the self-taught art and vernacular language of the Caribbean, and are a gesture that aim to reclaim and re-context iconic images within the post-colonial history of the Americas. For example, the blue jeans, boots, and straw hats that are recurrent images in the paintings can be read equally as iconic cultural markers that belong to the American cowboys or as the sacred attributes of Zaka, the deity of agriculture in Haitian Vodou: a New World archetype. The duality and ambiguity leave viewers to ponder how they construct meaning.

Vladimir Cybil Charlier is a New York-based multi-disciplinary artist. She was born in Queens, New York, to Haitian parents and grew up between New York City and Port-au-Prince, an experience that continues to inform her work. She earned a Master's in Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.

Trained as a painter, **Charlier** has delved into many artistic mediums. Over the years, her work has focused on developing a cohesive language to articulate a diasporic culture and the search for that language has been the thread linking her different bodies of work, whether mixed-media paintings, prints or three-dimensional work. Earlier in her practice, Charlier started mining various forms of popular art and crafts from the Caribbean, looking at self-taught painting traditions, textile work, as well as the spiritual traditions and sacred art forms of the African diaspora, particularly as evidenced in the Caribbean; in essence rethinking these traditions within a wider diasporic perspective, such as those communities of people of Caribbean heritage, living elsewhere in the Americas, in cities such as New York.

Charlier has been an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem and more recently, at Fountainhead studios in Miami. Her work has been featured in the 2006 Venice Biennale and exhibitions at El Museo del Barrio and the Bronx Museum. **Charlier** participated in the Biennial del Caribe in the Dominican Republic, the Cuenca Biennial in Ecuador, and the Panama Biennial in 2003. Her work has been included in an exhibition at Le Grand Palais, Paris, and more recently in shows such as Relational Undercurrents at MOLAA, the Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, California, 2018 and *Bordering the Imaginary: Art from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and their Diasporas*, BRIC House, Brooklyn, 2018, *Caribbean: Crossroads of the World*, Perez Art Museum Miami, 2013. She also had a solo exhibit at Five Myles, Crown Heights, Brooklyn, in 2018.

***** About Ned Harris:** **Ned Harris** was a successful artist, photographer and curator who helped invigorate the cultural scene of Rockland County for over fifty years. A graduate of De Witt Clinton High School, Ned received training at Pratt Institute and The New School for Social Research. A founder of a prominent Manhattan graphic design firm, he created many iconic package designs for major cosmetic labels, such as Helena Rubinstein, Estée Lauder, Avon, Frances Denneiouy and Revlon. He was also a longtime board member and Chairman of the Exhibition Committee of the Rockland Center for the Arts (RoCA), where he conceived and curated many memorable exhibitions.

A gifted photographer, Ned's eye and camera caught the irony and humor in everyday life that most of us miss. His black and white photography captured New York City street scenes in the 1960's, and he

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embraced digital photography and techniques in the 21st Century. Ned's photography book *Form and Texture*, published in 1974 by Van Nostrand Reinhold, has inspired teachers and students to this day.

A proud veteran of WWII, Ned served in the Twenty-Third Headquarters Special Troops, known as the Ghost Army, a camouflage unit comprised of visual artists and sound engineers designed to mislead the enemy, and received a Purple Heart. He was among the veterans interviewed in the PBS documentary *The Ghost Army*, and he was the subject of the documentary *Ned Harris: An Eye for Chance*.

About GARNER Historic District of New York:

The GARNER Historic District of New York is a collection of landmarked pre-Civil War factory buildings located on 14 acres in the hamlet of Garnerville, Village of West Haverstraw, Rockland County, New York. Built between 1838 and the early 20th century as the Garner Print Works, subsequently known as the Rockland Print Works, the complex has been transformed into a flourishing and vibrant district for mixed-use. For its first 125 years, this European-like urban industrial environment, characterized by historic 19th century architecture including a brick smokestack, alleyways, bridges and creek, served textile mills exclusively. Today, the complex is home to woodworkers, metal workers, sculptors, painters, design centers, music studios, jewelry makers, training facilities, Stack Street Coffee roaster, Hudson's Mill Tavern, Industrial Arts Brewing Company, the non-profit GARNER Arts Center, and performance, exhibition and event spaces.

The GARNER Historic District is listed on the National and New York State Registers of Historic Places, under the name Rockland Print Works, for its amalgam of industrial era architecture, its social significance as a company town, and as one of the first industrial cooperatives in America.

Over the past 20 years, through creative thinking and historic preservation, this site has been repurposed into a sprawling complex for art, culture, history and business. The site now represents a significant economic and cultural asset for the local community and the Hudson Valley and tri-state regions.

About GARNER Arts Center:

Mission

GARNER Arts Center is an interdisciplinary arts center that advances the creation and presentation of contemporary, experiential art within a repurposed 19th century textile mill complex. By providing access to a wide range of art forms, the organization strives to enrich, educate and connect diverse audiences. GARNER Arts Center is committed to igniting and realizing artistic ideas that emerge as a response to societal, economic, historic and environmental stimuli.

Vision

GARNER Arts Center's vision is an enduring and inclusive artisan settlement that fosters a thriving arts, business and cultural district, and encourages collaboration between makers and the creative sector. GARNER seeks to be a catalyst for just and sustainable economic growth in its Hudson Valley host community.

GARNER Arts Center is a tax-deductible 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

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IMAGES:



Manhole Wild II (detail), by Sari Dienes



No Chaser (detail), by Vladimir Cybil Charlier

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Library Ladies by Ned Harris

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