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THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009

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PHOTO/CHRIS WYMAN

Artist Philip Pearlstein sits in a Texas longhorn chair in his living room. He and his wife Dorothy treasure their eclectic collection of unique artwork and furnishings from around the world.

## PHILIP PEARLSTEIN

### A story of friends, finesse and fine art

BY CHRIS WYMAN  
Correspondent

VERNON — Philip Pearlstein and his wife Dorothy can best be described as two exquisite jewels in this often-harsh rural environment of Highland Lakes and Sussex County. Some 11 years ago, the couple who also live in Manhattan, decided that their existing Fire Island weekend home and its necessary ferry rides were no longer as satisfying as they used to be. Several of their friends already lived in Highland Lakes and this is where they decided to move.

The couple and their day-to-day existence are hardly typical of the commonplace lake community retirement stories that abound on "The Mountain." They have seen and experienced a great many things in their lifetimes and Mr. Pearlstein is a world-renowned painter who is featured in virtually every compendium of modern era fine art. Of all those who try to make a go of it in the art world, rather than defeat, his is a success story of lifelong creativity and ongoing exhibitions that make many others pale in comparison.

The home they chose on Highland Lake was not without fault and Mrs. Pearlstein described the original building with less than kind words. The couple started by picturing how they would like their home to be and then decided on an appropriate architect. Transformed from the original, their home is now a warm and charming domicile generously replete with hardwood floors, a cathedral ceiling made of wooden planking, and appointed with a unique and eclectic artwork and furnishings from around the world. The end result exemplifies a refinement and delicacy of performance, execution, and artisanship.

Mr. Pearlstein, despite the approach of his 85th birthday, continues to create on a daily basis both in his Highland Lakes home and in his midtown Manhattan studio. Portraits have usually been his forte although in the past he has directed his brushes and other tools to an occasional landscape. In Highland Lakes, many of the resident amateur, semiprofessional, and professional artists often use the area's abundant lakes, meadows, and forests as subject matter. But not Pearlstein, who explains that after a several days in the city there is so much to do around his Highland Lakes house and yard that he is hard-pressed to pick up an easel and go exploring in the countryside.

#### About the artist and the weeks ahead

Mr. Pearlstein is currently the featured artist at the Montclair Art Museum in a special presentation entitled "Philip Pearlstein: Objectifications." Asked about the title, the artist explained that it just sort of developed and came to be, although the title suggests that the subject matter is presented as something that is offered as an object and has been depersonalized.

In fact, though, the show is really a highly personal retrospective exhibition that offers samples of the artist's work across a 67-year span, from 1940 through 2007. The earliest piece was created when Pearlstein was a junior in high school and was recognized as the winner of a national competition. Following high school, the artist's ambitions and direction were set aside as he served in the army in Italy during World War II. At that time, he worked as a rifleman and



## COMMUNITY



PHOTO/CHRIS WYMAN

World-renowned painter and Highland Lakes resident Philip Pearlstein describes the subjects for his work in progress, "Portrait of Jacintha and Neil." The models for this and other paintings are often good friends and neighbors who live in Highland Lakes.

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## ARTIST

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as a sign painter. Little would it be known then that those signs might one day be collectable works of art. The Montclair exhibition also includes a 1948 portrait of his friend, well-known artist Andy Warhol.

Pearlstein is a major artist in the contemporary realism movement. When other period artists were heading towards abstract expressionism, he held his ground. Jackson Pollack and his wife Lee Krasner, Willem De Kooning, Hans Hofmann, Stefan Knapp, and others headed in one direction while William Bailey, Neil Welliver and Philip Pearlstein stayed the course.

The artist is best known and acknowledged for his nudes. They are hardly Playboy playmates but rather are normal, common, everyday figures without the enhancements that are becoming commonplace in today's society. His subjects are often placed with out-of-place props, however, his highly objective (relate this to "Objectifications") renditions tend to be flatly-lit, yet distinctive compositions. However, once one is aware of his style and sensitivity to his subjects, his works are instantly recognizable.

Pearlstein's current show at the Montclair Art Museum is schedule to run through February 1. The museum is at 3 South Mountain Avenue in Montclair. Call 973-746-5555 for more information or visit them on the Web at [montclairart-museum.org/pearlstein](http://montclairart-museum.org/pearlstein).

The artist is also the subject of a special NJN Public Television "State of the Arts" program entitled "The Making Of..." The program will air on Friday, Jan. 16 at 8:30 p.m. and Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 11:30 p.m., and Pearlstein is one of three artists being profiled in the broadcast. The show will, in part, focus on how a world-renowned painter approaches each new canvas, and his history, methodology, and plans for the future.