Elizabeth de Béthune **OUT IN YONKERS**Portraits from the Yonkers LGBTQ Community



January 4 – February 29, 2024 White Plains Library Art Gallery

ELIZABETH DE BÉTHUNE

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ARTIST'S RECEPTION • January 20, 2-5pm

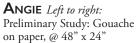
White Plains Library 100 Martine Ave. White Plains, NY 10601



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Arts Westchester







Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Angelique Piwinski

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Transgender

Would you add any adjectives to that? No, In fact I would define myself as a "Woman". I don't need modifers.

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I lived in Yonkers from 1979 until 2019. I served on the Landmarks Preservation Board 2009—2019, and was awarded the "Key to History" by the Yonkers Historical Society in 2014. I was a board member and three time President of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Philipse Manor Hall, NYS historic site 2015-2018. In 2014 founded a now 13,000+ member Facebook group entitled "Historic Yonkers"

- Appointed by Mayor Spano to his LGBTQ Advisory Board, I ultimately became a Co-chair, and, with the partnership of the Downtown BID and the city, we implemented Yonkers' very first Pridefest in 2018.
- I was the first openly transgender person to serve on the Vestry of 325-year old Saint Johns Episcopal Church.

- I was appointed by the New York State Governor as a World Pride Ambassador representing Yonkers in 2019.
- I co-curated "The Rainbow Connection/The Colors of Pride" art exhibition at the Blue Door Gallery in 2018
- My photo and story featured in "On Christopher Street, Transgender Portraits", by photographer Mark Seliger. The accompanying exhibit has been shown in New York City, Europe, Memphis and will be seen at Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in 2024. And I witnessed the Stonewall Uprising.
- I am a current member of the Board of Trustees of the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers

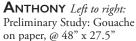
Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? The Yonkers LGBTQ+ community is very diverse, but was largely underground until 2018 when the Yonkers Mayors LGBTQ Advisory Board created and executed the first Pridefest in Yonkers.

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? Very welcoming on all levels from the larger community, law enforcement, and city government.



ANGIE
Oil on canvas, 48" x 28"
Fall 2023







Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in



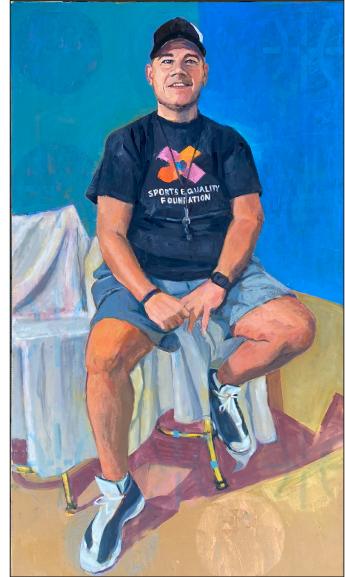
Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Bear

Would you add any adjectives to that? Masc

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I've lived in the city for 20 years. I was the head boys basketball coach at Saunders HS for 10 years and am currently chair of Mayor Spano's LGBTQ Advisory Board.

What would you say Yonkers is like for LGBTQ+ folks? Yonkers' greatest strength is its diversity and, because of that, a strong and vibrant LGBTQ has developed.

Is there any one story you'd like to share about being LGBTQ+ and connected to Yonkers? After coming out, Yonkers embraced my new life. From the Mayor to City Council to Public Schools, the support was tremendous and allowed me to become an advocate for the community.



ANTHONY
Oil on canvas, 48" x 28"
Fall 2023



CHRISTOPH AND SHAKA Left to right: Preliminary Study: Gouache on paper, @ 48" x 26"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Christoph Sawyer

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Neuroqueer • Would you add any adjectives? extra

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I have many connections to Yonkers revolving around art. I work at an art framing studio located in the Ludlow neighborhood. I'm connected to the queer and art communities in Yonkers, specifically at the downtown Riverfront branch of the Yonkers Public Library. Most importantly I'm doing archival research on the photographer, George Daniell, who was born in Yonkers in 1911 and photographed skinny-dippers along the Hudson River in the 1930s.

I first connected to Yonkers in 2015 when my New Media (art) classes at SUNY Purchase were meeting in the city and working with local organizations. I connected with the queer and art communities.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? I started with the Mayor's LGBTQ+ Advisory Board. However, I've recently found community in the Yonkers Pride mixers, which foster community and bring folks together all year round. The LGBTQ+ community in Yonkers is diverse, including but not

limited to many artists, politicians, athletes, educators, and librarians.

What would you say Yonkers is like for LGBTQ+ folks? In my experience, overall the city is a welcoming place. The strong LGBTQ+ community in Yonkers exists today because of various supportive organizations and groups. These institutions form the foundation of the LGBTQ+ community

One story about being LGBTQ+ and Yonkers? This past summer, I had the pleasure of speaking on an artist panel at the Riverfront Art Gallery in the Yonkers Public Library about being queer and an artist.

Shaka McGlotten

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Queer

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? My partner has worked there for over six years and we visit queer folks there often.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? Yes. Artists and agitators!



CHRISTOPH AND SHAKA Oil on canvas, 48" x 32" Fall 2023

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? It's hard to know because I don't live there, but it seems to be an exciting and supportive place for LGBTQ+ folks.



EILEEN *Left to right:*Preliminary Study: Gouache on paper, @ 50" x 26"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Eileen M O'Connor

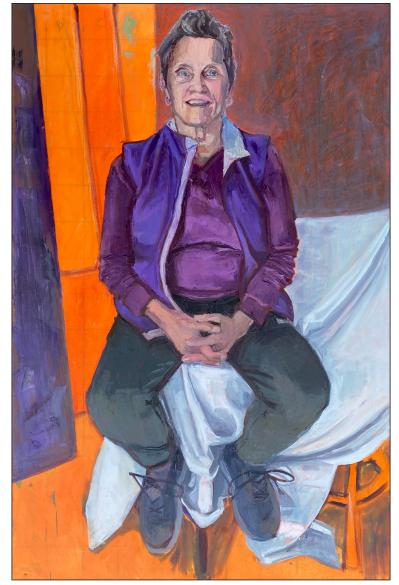
Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Lesbian

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I moved here in 1995; I am active with our local neighborhood residence association, I am a Democratic Party Ward Leader, and I am involved with the Yonkers Paddling and Rowing Club.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? Yes, with neighbors, political work and folks I have known through the Mayors LGBTQ Advisory Board

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? Pretty friendly— so much more so now. The Pride Festival has been a game changer.

One story about being LGBTQ+ and Yonkers? The utter joy of marching with the LGBTQ Advisory Board in the St Patrick's Day Parade for the first time; afraid of getting hecklers or worse. People in the crowd were 98% supportive and cheering for us.



EILEENOil on canvas, 48" x 32"
Fall 2023



EVA AND XANDRA *Left to right:*Preliminary Study: Gouache on paper, @ 40" x 26"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Eva Sanchez

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Bisexual

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? Just a local resident living in Yonkers for 10+ years

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? No, but I'd love to be a part of one.

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks?
Boring, there aren't any gay or lesbian bars in Yonkers. Some spots like Guapo or Saints and Scholars is a little more down to party with the rainbow but they're not labeled as a lgbtq bar

One story about being LGBTQ+ and Yonkers? It's nice to know that the City of Yonkers supports the LGBTQ community.

Xandra Williams

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Lesbian

Would you add any adjectives to that? Masc

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I've been a resident of Yonkers for 10 years.



EVA AND XANDRAOil on canvas, 48" x 36"
Fall 2023



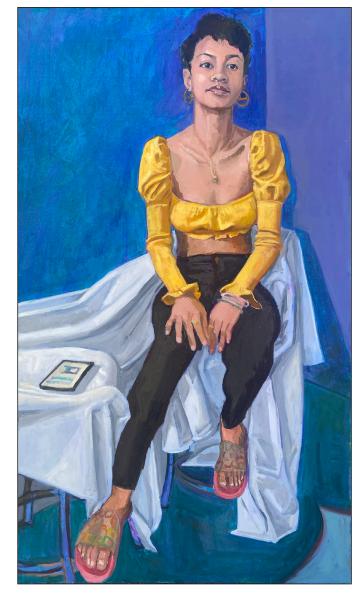
JAYLA
Left to right:
Preliminary Study: Gouache
on paper, @ 48" x 24"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in



JAYLA Oil on canvas, 48" x 28" Fall 2023

Jayla Thomas

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Lesbian (or Homoflexible)

Would you add any adjectives to that? Stem (alternating between feminine and masculine)

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I've lived in Yonkers for almost my entire life. It's where I grew up and where my family resides to this day.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? My Yonkers LGBTQ+ community is just my group of friends (:

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? I think Yonkers is a very welcoming city for the LGBTQ community.

One story about being LGBTQ+ and Yonkers? I met my first girlfriend in a Yonkers public school!



WUNDERKIND IN A PLAID JACKET (MAEVE)

Left to right:
Preliminary Study:

Oil on unstretched canvas,

@ 48" x 24"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Maeve O'Connor-Bethune

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Queer! And non-binary

Would you add any adjectives to that? Masculine of center

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I moved here when I was a baby and was raised in Yonkers.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? I moved away from Yonkers when I left for college but I was fortunate enough to be raised by 3 queer parents, so I have always had a rich and loving LGBTQ+ community here.



WUNDERKIND IN A PLAID JACKET (MAEVE)Oil on unstretched canvas, 48" x 24"
Summer 2022



MICHAEL AND ROBERT Left to right: Preliminary Study: Gouache on paper, @ 48" x 30"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Michael Sabatino

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Gay male

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I am a former city council majority leader and first openly gay elected official in Yonkers. I am currently the Director of Constituent and Government Affairs for the City of Yonkers. My husband Robert Voorheis and I sued the State of NY to recognize our Canadian marriage and won.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? Yes, we're involved in Yonkers Pride with LGBTQ residents that make up the community

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? It's very welcoming; highly rated for the last 9 years by the Human Rights Campaign (100% for gay rights).

One story about being LGBTQ+ and Yonkers? My husband and I fought for marriage equality. (Godfrey vs Spano); we have been instrumental in forming Yonkers Pride.

Robert Voorheis

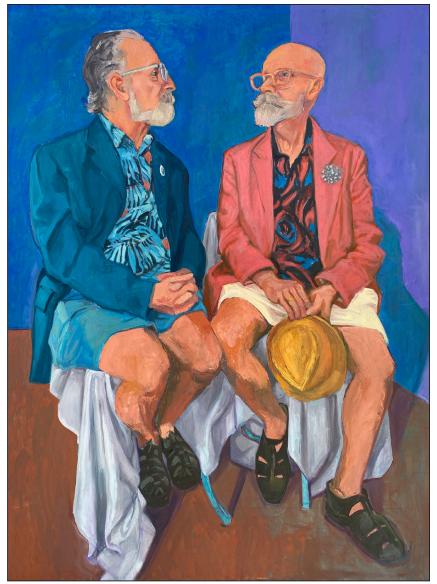
Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Gay Male

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I've lived here since 1981. I fought for Marriage Equality (and won) while living here. I campaigned for my husband (twice) for Yonkers City Council Member (and won). I've worked with the City of Yonkers on civil rights issues related to city employees. I am a founding member of YonkersPride.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? I am connected to LGBTQIA youth through Center Lane. And I have worked hard to establish YonkersPride as a vital entity in Yonkers. I am a progressive member of this community of all ages/races.

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? Yonkers is a safe place for LGBTQIA people. My husband & I along with Mayor Spano (and others) have worked hard to achieve that.

One story about being LGBTQ+ and Yonkers? A few years ago, a women approached me in a grocery store parking lot with outstretched hands. I was baffled by this until she said "I just want to hug you and say thank you for all you have done



MICHAEL AND ROBERT Oil on canvas, 48" x 36" Fall 2023

for me" That made me realize that I had made a difference. To this day, my husband Michael and I still have people who recognize us and say thank you. It's an incredible high.



NOAH IN PINEAPPLE SHIRT Left to right:
Preliminary Study:
Gouache on paper,
@ 40" x 26"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Noah Parnes

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Gay

Would you add any adjectives to that? queer, exploring, gender questioning..., who knows:)?

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I was born here 24 years ago, grew up here, still live here!

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? I think my Yonkers LGBTQ+ community is mostly you (the artist) and Eileen! :) I think I see more of my queer friends in Manhattan and Brooklyn

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? Having been to Yonkers Pride a few times, it's always lovely and wonderful!

One story about being LGBTQ+ and Yonkers? My parents tell a story about me that when I was in fourth grade at PEARLS, a bully pushed me up against the wall of a stairwell and said "you gay or something?" and I just replied "yes," and he was so shocked that he... walked away. I will say that I don't fully remember that story now, but it does seem like something I might do.



NOAH IN PINEAPPLE SHIRT Oil on unstretched canvas, 48" x 24" Fall 2022



RENEE AND JOAN Left to right:
Preliminary Study:
Gouache on paper,
@ 48" x 31"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Renee Toback

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Lesbian

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I have lived in Yonkers 19 years and have been fairly active in community, city, and county social and political activity.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? I am not connected to the LGBTQ+ community in Yonkers at this time.

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? I cannot speak for LGBTQ+ folks in general. My community is accepting, and I have not met with problems related to this part of my identity.

Joan H. Wilce

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? bisexual lesbian

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I've been a resident since Nov. 2005.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? No official connection— just a couple of neighbors.

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? It seems to be whatever one makes it.



RENEE AND JOAN Oil on canvas, 48" x 36" Fall 2023



RIDIKKULUZ Left to right: Preliminary Study: Gouache on paper, @ 48" x 24"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Ridikkuluz

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Queer

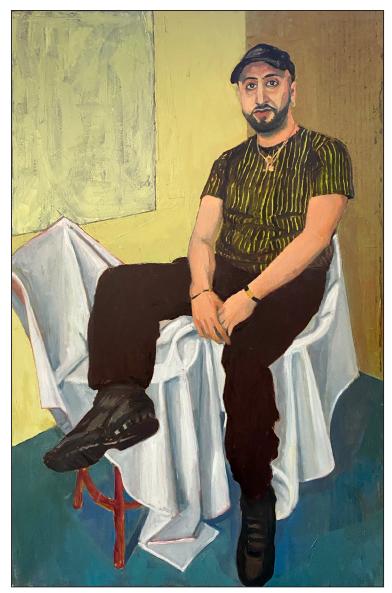
Would you add any adjectives to that? Any

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? Born and raised — Alder Street baby

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? I live in Harlem now.

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? Up and coming

One story about being LGBTQ+ and Yonkers? I helped throw the first ball at the Hudson River Museum.



RIDIKKULUZ Oil on canvas, 48" x 32" Fall 2023







Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in

Shannen Hogue

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Lesbian Would you add any adjectives to that? Masc

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I am a 30-plus-year resident, Detective Specialist (YPD), community stakeholder, as well as the founder of a non for profit created to help marginalized students in the city.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community? I believe in the Kinsey scale, therefore, I'd say the entire City of Yonkers makes up our community and we are better for it.

What is Yonkers like for LGBTQ+ folks? Yonkers feels safe for members of the LGBTQ community. Yonkers is a place where everyone can thrive.



SHANNENOil on canvas, 48" x 28"
Fall 2023



SIMI
Left to right:
Preliminary Study:
Gouache on paper,
@ 48" x 24"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in



SIMI Oil on canvas, 48" x 32" Fall 2023

Simisola Macaulay

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Bisexual, Non-binary, gender non-conforming

Would you add any adjectives to that? Androgyne

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I've lived in Yonkers my whole life. First on South Broadway, and now, right by School 16.



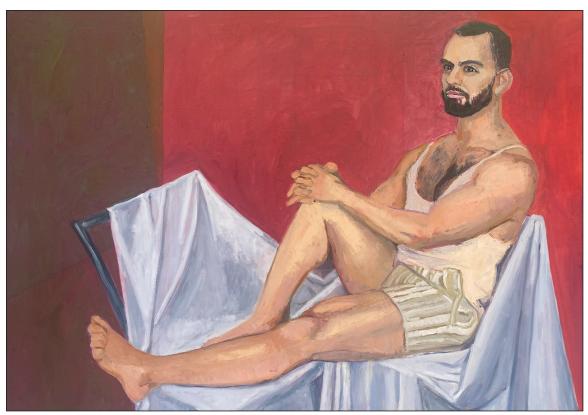
Preliminary Study: Gouache on paper, @ 24.5" x 30"



Underpainting



WIP with figure blocked in



STEVE Oil on canvas, 36" x 48" Fall 2023

Steve Cruz

Where do you see yourself on the LGBTQ+ continuum? Gay

Would you add any adjectives to that? Very

What's your relationship to the city of Yonkers? I'm a current Yonkers resident and have lived in Yonkers for 29+ years. I attended Yonkers Public Schools K-12. I've been a member of the Mayor's LGBTQ+ Advisory Board, founding Board Member of Yonkers Pride and previous Yonkers Pride Festival Chair. I worked for Yonkers Partners in Education for six years supporting Yonkers Public School students and volunteers.

Are you connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community, and if so, how? I am very lucky to be connected to a Yonkers LGBTQ+ community through friendships, colleagues, and activists. The Yonkers LGBTQ+ community is made up by the most wonderfully diverse group of pro-LGBTQ+ people in our city — a wide range of sexual orientations, gender expressions, and life experiences.

What would you say Yonkers is like for LGBTQ+ folks? Yonkers is truly what you make of it. It's not hard to find a friend or two. People are friendly and the community is vibrant!

Is there any one story you'd like to share about being *LGBTQ*+ *and connected to Yonkers?* Picture it. Yonkers, June 9th, 2018. A young, olive skinned, peasant boy shows up to Main Street. The street was lined with rainbow Pride flags, filled with three thousand festival goers. In the crowd was a long lost lover, a Queens hookup who was thought to be lost forever. The two lock eyes, exchange a smile, and a passionate hello kiss on the street. That young peasant boy was me, and the long lost lover was Marc Jacobs. Fine—it wasn't Marc Jacobs, he just wore Marc Jacobs. The point is that someone traveled from Queens, NY, to the first ever Yonkers Pride! Every year since, on the second Saturday of June, the festival kept getting bigger and better and has never lacked for a friendly hello kiss from a cutie in the crowd.

ABOUT "OUT IN YONKERS"

"Out in Yonkers, Portraits from the Yonkers LGBTQ+ Community" is a series of formal portraits that mostly created in the summer and fall of 2023, and generously funded by an ArtsAlive grant from NYSCA through ArtsWestchester.

Because I am a lesbian figurative painter, my images have typically centered around intimate depictions of my gay home life, as I explore the poetics of an LGBTQ world.

Interestingly, I don't usually paint formal portraits. I was inspired to create this series after a recent trip to the Uffizi, during which I found myself enchanted by the vitality of some Bronzini portraits of De Medici children. My experience with these 500-year-old Uffizi portraits demonstrated to me oil paint's expressive power. I developed this project so that I could explore the capacity that oil paint has for conveying the embodiment of our corporeal selves and surfaces. It is that nuanced skin of paint and painting of skin that I hope will live again in the eyes of future viewers.

Why LGBTQ?

In the current political climate, the LGBTQ community is at risk of persecution and erasure. I It is important that an LGBTQ voice and vision be among those who represent an LGBTQ presence; to have a GAYS GAZE. I am focusing on LGBTQ folks because I want to connect the members of a marginal community to the European portraiture tradition that celebrates the wealthy and powerful. The paintings of this series are formal portraits, with the sitters very intentionally posing in that tradition. I am hopefully creating a record that celebrates our existence and our humanity that will endure for as long as the Bronzini portraits have spoken the quiet poetry of those children's lives. In the 1970's, Harvey Milk encouraged queer people to come out wherever they were, to increase awareness not only of the ubiquity of LGBTQ folk, but also our incredible diversity and ordinariness. In my own fashion, I'm answering Harvey's call.

Why Yonkers?

Why the Yonkers LGBTQ community? Because it is my community and home. The name Yonkers in any title calls to mind the play "Lost in Yonkers". But you can be found in Yonkers too. And you can be "Out in Yonkers" as well. Yonkers is a local-feeling, small city full of diverse neighborhoods. Quotidian and ordinary on one hand, it is extraordinarily rich in its specificity and history on the other. Yonkers is New York City-adjacent, but so much itself as to never be confused with its much larger neighbor. My subjects all have a relationship to Yonkers that is particular to the conditions of our community. This portrait series hopes to honor that connection.

Notes on process

This series of formal portraits is a bit different from the usual narrative energy of my work. It was very much inspired by my encounter with the Bronzini portraits of the de Medici princesses at the Uffizi, where I appreciated the value of a direct and formal portrait to communicate the essential personhood of the subject. I chose my subjects by reaching out to friends and acquaintances.

Some I knew very well, other I met for the first time when they sat for me. I began with large acrylic-gouache painted sketches on paper. I did this in order to get to know my subjects a bit better, not just as personalities, but also as forms in space. I was able to develop a kinesthetic relationship to their real-life scale and volume.

I used these sketches and a series of photographs of each subject as references for the final paintings. I used photography for expediency; I was painting many portraits in a compressed period of time, and scheduling sittings was unwieldy (especially for my two subjects who subsequently went off to school). I also used photography as a compositional aid. I have a strong interest in the design of the painted rectangle, in how the shapes that compose it read as pattern while they are also making the illusion of form. Photography flattens out images enough to find and interpret those shapes more easily. I began each image with very saturated underpainting because I find that intense color creates light in painting. As I worked up the images the saturated underpainting became a kind of light source.

My Subjects

I was surprised at how interpersonally engaging and fun the process of working with my subjects has been. Although they sat only for the preliminary sketches, I developed a bond with them that helped me to envision them and their energy while working to embody their likenesses in the final images. It has been such a pleasure to share the images with them as works in progress, and I feel that they have been wonderful partners in this project.

Here are some of their remarks about being involved in "Out in Yonkers".

It's really humbling to be featured alongside some amazing members of the LGBTQ community. Watching Liz work and being part of her vision was an amazing experience.

— Anthony Nicodemo

I've been in a privileged position of watching this project unfold; seeing the drawn studies of us, and then the portraits evolve, Liz attended to each portrait with patience and love. The broad strokes, the underpainting, the attention to detail; we all came to life. I feel like we are all talking with one another! Amazing!

— Eileen O'Connor

Being asked to be a subject for the "Out in Yonkers" Portrait Series is an incredible honor. But far more than that, I hope that those who come to see the exhibition will be inspired by the individuals represented and importantly our life stories. Everyone should have the confidence to be themselves and live their truth out loud.

— Angie Piwinski

Being a subject feels great, it feels exciting and unifying to be painted in community with other queer people in Yonkers. I love seeing how everyone's personalities come through in their portraits and love seeing myself among them.

— Noah Parnes

It's moving to see the diversity, beauty and expansiveness of the queer community portrayed in such beautiful works of art that truly reflect each person's individuality. The fact that the artist is my mom is just a massive bonus. I feel so lucky and proud to be a part of "Out in Yonkers"!

— Maeve O'Connor-Bethune

ABOUT ELIZABETH DE BÉTHUNE

I am a Yonkers, New York, based representational image-maker and visual story-teller. I have lived in Yonkers for 28 years, and New York State for 45. I make pictures of everyday life, of the quotidian world, of people, places, and things; situations at once familiar to many, but singular in their specificity. The particulars reflect my vision and experience but welcomes the viewer in with empathy. I look to make seen the unseen, to bring the poignancy of our awareness to the ordinary. I see stories in the off-note moments, the seemingly unnoticed and intimate, the space between the beats of action. My imagery develops from observation and my personal daily cell-phone photography notetaking. I have always been taken by the informal, and cinematographic aspect of modernist representation and the personal, subjective gaze.

Drawing is my first language. From my childhood, drawing and the vitality of the handed mark have anchored my art practice; my earliest memories are of drawing on the backs of the lab notes my father gave his chemistry students. One of ten children, my siblings and I drew our way through our childhood. We all told stories through drawing, a practice that has remained magical for me to this day.

I have a BA in Fine Art, (Yale University 1979) and an MFA in Painting and Drawing (SUNY Purchase 1991), with additional studies at the New York Studio School, Brooklyn College, with the painter Brenda Goodman, and Manhattan Graphics Center (scholarship). I have had fellowships in monotype printing at Women's' Studio Workshop (2003, 2005) and Vermont Studio Center (2006). I was an inaugural member of the Bronx River Art Center Artist Studio Program and a part of the YoHo Studios community for many years. I currently work out of my home studio barn. After having retired from working as an Art Teacher at the High School of American Studies at Lehman College and as a Teaching Artist through NYC and Westchester County for a total of 30 years, I am presently on the faculty of the Pelham Art Center. I am proud to have been a CritLab critter since 2022. I have exhibited locally and regionally.

-Elizabeth de Béthune, Yonkers, NY, January 2024

I would like to acknowledge the help and support of the following:

White Plains Library

Kathleen Degyansky, Assistant Library Director Elaine Summers, President, Library Board of Trustees

All of my subjects

Angelique Piwinski

Anthony Nicodemo

Christoph Sawyer

Shaka McGlotten

Eileen O'Connor

Jayla Thomas

Michael Sabatino

Robery Voorheis

Renee Toback

Joan Wilce

Ridikkuluz

Shannen Hogue

Simisola Macauley

Steve Cruz

and my original muses, Maeve O'Connor-Bethune and Noah Parnes

The CritLab

Patricia Miranda and all my fellow Critters

My family

Maeve and Erica Jamieson Catalina O'Connor Mia de Béthune and always, always, always, Eileen

