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## Behind-the-Scenes at The Eugene Celebration

Friday, September 17; Eugene

Learn the history and operations of this award winning community event, including opening-night festivities.

## Foundations of Festival and Event Planning

Friday & Saturday, October 8 - 9; Eugene

Two-day general overview introduces essential concepts, processes, and tools involved in successfully planning and presenting festivals and events.

## Event Nuts & Bolts - Operations, Production, and Programming

Friday, November 5; Portland

Topics include site planning, signage, recycling, timelines, risk management, crowd management, and more!

## Visual Arts BY SYLVIE PEDERSON

# Oil on Marble

Image/word interplay in the art of Marchini

Together, the recent works of painters Claudia Cilloniz Marchini and Kris Ibach form contrapuntal odes to the human face and the intensity of human emotion and experience. Their work shows at the Jacobs Gallery through Sept. 2.

### PART II: CLAUDIA CILLONIZ MARCHINI

Man has painted on stone since Paleolithic times. For Marchini, visiting the Lascaux Caves, part of the Golden Age of ice cave wall paintings in France, was the equivalent of a pilgrimage. She said the paintings, created between 15,000 and 10,000 BC, appeared wholly contemporary to her. So when Marchini started painting, the use of stone as a support came to her naturally. She used slate and limestone for their irregular surfaces, painting on them with the ancient encaustic technique. Recently, she turned to oil on polished marble slabs.

Born in Lima, Peru, Marchini spent much of her youth on her father's Southern Peru farm, with its many employees of African descent. The one percent Afro-Peruvian population, mostly concentrated on the coastal region near Lima, are descendants of enslaved Africans brought in the 1500s by the Spanish conquistadors. Slavery was abolished in 1854, following Peruvian independence. Despite persistent color discrimination, the Afro-Peruvian minority has influenced Peruvian culture with its dynamic music and way of life.

"I grew up with them and played with them," Marchini said of the workers on her father's farm. "They formed me. I learned a lot from their outlook on life, their positive thinking. They had pride regardless of what they went through. They were strong."

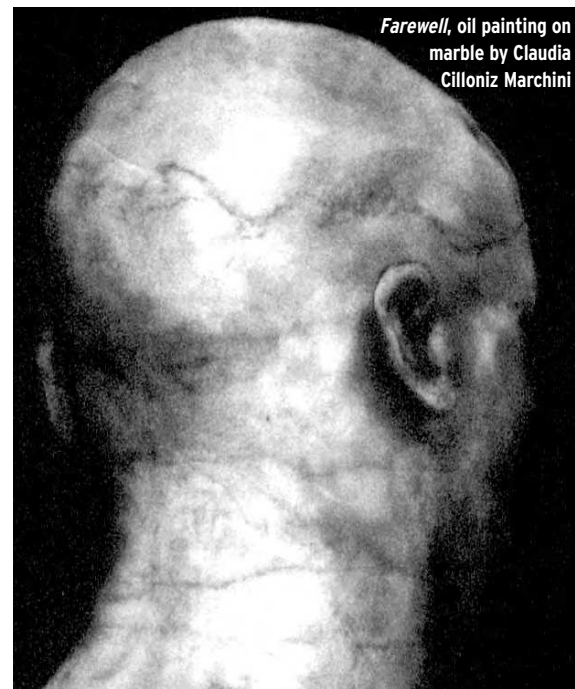
*Homage to Slaves*, Marchini's show, was inspired by *Slave Testimony* (1977), a book edited by the late John W. Blassingame, an African-American studies scholar. "The testimonies and letters written by the slaves touched me deeply," Marchini said. "These personal documents are very powerful — more powerful than history books."

Marchini rightly chose to display the texts next to the individual paintings they inspired, so that we may directly respond to them as well as to her visual mediation. Voices from the texts resonate with extraordinary emotional force and truth, surging unvarnished from the depth of human souls who, more than most, experienced the breadth of human anguish and somehow found capacity for hope.

For the work in this show, Marchini painted on smooth 12" x 12" marble slabs a series of imaginary portraits of the men and women whose words or stories moved her most. Their heads are usually shaved, their faces beautiful. "I like the shape of the bald heads," Marchini explained. "It's a personal preference, not symbolic of anything except perhaps of beauty itself." In the absence of further visual context, these portraits appear new yet familiar.

Marchini takes advantage of the marble background by incorporating the stone's color and veining into the painted image. Sometimes, marble veins suggest cranial-bone sutures visible through the subject's skin (*Farewell, Portrait of Emily's Husband*). Sometimes horizontal or vertical veins add life and movement to the painting, amplify emotion and extend the range of possible interpretation (portraits of *Emily*, *Phebe Brownrigg*, *Kin-na*).

"I paint with oil, and then I add a layer of wax to protect the surface and remove the glare," Marchini said. "For some of the paintings, I used dry pigment mixed with the oil to



Farewell, oil painting on marble by Claudia Cilloniz Marchini

add more intensity to the color." Marchini's technique references the earliest function of oil-based paint. Before Jan Van Eyck (credited with the invention of oil painting in the 15<sup>th</sup> century) used the medium for panel-painting, pigments mixed with drying oils were employed for painting on stone and metal.

Often Marchini's faces are merely drawn or sketched with a brush, allowing the bare marble surface to suggest skin and flesh. Only the negative space around them is covered with paint (*Clap You Sang*, portraits of *Emily*, *Ka-Le*, *Sargry Brown*).

When dark, highly-textured marble is used, the effect is startling, almost unsettling, as in *Portrait of Pauly Murray* with its burgundy-black-and-white marble skin. The motley texture is a metaphor for the heterogeneous views the man has been subjected to and the complexity of African-American identity that has resulted.

In *Portrait of Albert Perkins*, a small, dark, realistic portrait in the center is surrounded by larger, sketched versions that allow the white marble to show through. The images are oriented at different angles against a black background. One is irresistibly reminded here of the plight of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*.

Marchini's work may raise such perennial issues as the interplay of words and images, history and fiction, experience and imagination, or even the old Renaissance debate over Nature's (marble) relationship to Artifice (painting). But first and foremost, this work confronts us directly with ourselves. **EW**

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