

Under the Volcano:

Simon Cerigo, Dan Asher, Nancy Smith

Curated by Kate and Theo Cerigo

Text by Nancy Smith, artloversnewyork.com

'UNDER THE VOLCANO' . . . is the digital re-creation of an actual indie, as in independent - art exhibit that took place over the span of one weekend, in the Lower East Side of NEW YORK CITY, in the summer of 2015. As such, it is the first digital re-creation of an actual, historical show - on the Virtual Dream Center platform. The artworks themselves are photographs of the works in the show, while the surroundings have been rendered very close to as they were - through the magic of digital imaging.

So, this is a historic or archival project, as opposed to an imagined one.

Going one step further on the 'looking backwards - but projecting forward into the infinite digital future' !! . . . the show itself was also historic and archival, in that all of the works were made in the 1980s and early 1990s, during the height of the artistic activity on the Lower East Side, or LES as we called it, by three friends: Dan, Simon, and Nancy. Dan Asher worked & lived out of a raw walk-up loft

space on 2nd Ave, while Simon Cerigo and myself, Nancy Smith, worked & lived, out of a rough, illegal storefront on Rivington Street. 5 Rivington St - East Storefront, just two doors up from the Bowery, right in the eye of the storm.

'UNDER THE VOLCANO: SIMON CERIGO, DAN ASHER, NANCY SMITH' . . . was presented in a 'pop-up' space, an empty storefront just going through renovation, in Chinatown, on the southern most edge of what is known as the Lower East Side of Manhattan, NYC - just a few steps from Delancey on the Bowery, or just about four blocks away from where the action had originally taken place, all those more than three decades, ago.

Everything about this show was indie, as in . . . independent of the mainstream art world: the art works, the three artists, the pop-up venue, and even the two young curators, who had never curated or produced a show before. But like all things, 'Under the Volcano' . . . of time and the intensity of random dynamics, the apparently irrepressible creativity, and still mostly unknown work of these three artists, . . . has come to find a way to burst to the surface, and break through the repressive crust - of the mainstream establishment art world.



**Under the Volcano:
Simon Cerigo
Dan Asher
Nancy Smith**

A pop up painting show:
Lower East Side 80's art scene, New York City

**June 6 Saturday 2-10pm
June 7 Sunday 11am-6pm**

Opening reception: June 6 2015, 6-10pm

169 Bowery Street New York NY 10002

Curated by Kate and Theo Cerigo

Simon Cerigo, Dan Asher, Nancy Smith, NYC Fall 1981

note: the archival photograph on the show card is collaged to, and drawn on with blue oil pastel - on 'newspaper' piece by SIMON CERIGO. Black & white photograph by Sheldon Moskovic

also: BRIEF BIOS for all three artists can be found on the 'virtual' walls of the show



The show's curators, THEO CERIGO and KATE CERIGO on either side of NANCY SMITH, who is their Mom.

Me and Simon came to NYC from Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in the summer of 1980 or was it 81? We were both just turning 30, and we lived for art. Because of border issues, we couldn't go back & we never wanted to. We never looked back. We supported ourselves by our tippy tip toes, under the radar, total art/street smarts. Trading, buying and selling art. Flipping street art, signed show posters, audiophile equipment and various vinyl record, comic book, and photograph collections. Simon did some off-the-books art consulting, and I did some art assistant, archiving gigs. at some point, 1986, Simon had his own short-lived, but influential SIMON CERIGO GALLERY, on Ave A. We clued

in early, just like in Brooklyn today, that having your own indie was the only way to get your work, but financing was too tough, and same as today, the art buyers are too slow & not that bright, or perhaps more properly put: not that 'courageous.' Much, much later, with 30 years of taking photos of my friends at their openings under my belt, I landed my own photo-based 'report' at artnet.com, in its heyday: 2002-2004.

Dan Asher, came to NYC from Chicago, pretty much the same time as we did. A very intense, brooding, super smart but temperamental guy, alienated from his family by both his extreme personality & his artistic ambitions, in a word just like us !! he was also like us, a cultural 'immigrant' with no family or friends here. so we three became fast friends & in essence: family. We were each pretty intense, and insanely art-driven - in our own particular ways.



SIMON CERIGO, and me, NANCY SMITH . . . with our two small children, KATE & THEO, outside our storefront on Rivington St, just two doors up / east from the then, very hard-core, notorious & wild Bowery, ca. 1989. Photo by Scottie Harrison.

Simon Cerigo / b. 1952, passed away on Jan 20, 2013.

Dan Asher / b. 1947 had already left this earth, a few years earlier on April 23, 2010.

Me, I was born in April of 1951, and I'm still around and kicking / living to tell the tale.

It's kind of ironic because of the three of us, I was the least known, or at least until I got my art world photos & reports - up on artnet. but, my first published photo on artnet was in 2002, I arrived in 1981 . . so that's 20 whole years that nobody paid much attention to me, let alone my art, drawings & watercolors. and even at artnet no one got my art, or even that my photos - were art, and in fact they still don't. that's one of the reasons my kids decided it was time to let the the world know what was . . 'Under the Volcano', so to speak !!

Dan had received the most recognition of the three of us, in his lifetime, and he always could hustle up some sales and shows. Just he was such an over-the-top & ultra-contrarian personality, he scared everybody off. Talk about biting the hand that feeds you, let's not even go there. R.I. P. Dan.

Simon on the other hand, never got recognition of his own art, even though he really was a brilliant artist who busted out hard - with a raw East Village voice. But he was a great partier, and he knew everybody. He also went to like 100 openings a week and I'm not even kidding. He was the life of the party, and he knew his art. but he had a hard time translating that knowledge into hard cash, due to the love

of the party and wanting to be the most popular guy in town. the art scene has never been the same without him, he transmitted a lot of information as he made through the scene, drink in hand.

Of the three of us, me and Simon and Dan, apart from being the female, with two small kids no less, I was the most shy and over-looked. it was like my creative intensity, and presentient art radar - made me autistic. and invisible. hard-core & defiant in my own way, I hated parties, and couldn't stand the rich collectors & dealers Simon & Dan hobnobbed with. the true definition of an outsider 'insider', I roamed the streets for the 'first' shows, the 'first' artists. and I did call that art, and that's when I started taking a lot of photos, just to prove that yes, damn it - I had been there, and was the first to call it !!

So, yeah. Me, Dan and Simon, we were all imbedded deep into the scene, and between the three of us, we knew everybody, and called a lot of the shots, and told a lot of stories. but, we also more importantly lived in and through our art, and struggled hard to survive, and keep making more. So you will see, our art was very different - among us, but the intensity and the desire to reach out - and speak with our voices - was mutual. that was in fact the glorious essence of the Lower East Side scene of the 80s and 90s. Being overlooked didn't mean even a pin drop, it just meant to us at least, well . . . that was what it was like . . . to fly over everybody else's head.

Intense, dramatic, rich, broke, heart-broken, love-struck, driven, temperamental, angry. knowing you had it over

everybody, but hurt, rejected, under-paid. creative juices that flowed though your hands with little prompting, but met little career success, visions that reached into the far flung future, and all-knowing eyes, the three of us careened . . through our lives, and took poor little Kate and Theo along for the ride. they went to every important, and FIRST (!!), opening of any consequence in the entire scene, from day one.



UNDER THE VOLCANO: SIMON CERIGO, DAN ASHER, NANCY SMITH'
a photo of the show before the big opening - Saturday June 6, 2015

that's Dan Asher's fiery 'shaman' on the entrance wall, and my charcoal drawings along the wall on the right. You will see how true to spirit, the Virtual Dream Center has re-created the space when you enter . . the game. I mean, check out those scuffy borders - where the walls meet the floors.

so, yeah, Kate and Theo lived 'Under the Volcano' - of the crazy powerful dramatic creative rush . . of the glory days of the Lower East Side, up close and personal.

when his dad died, Theo felt it was about time to get the work out of storage, and let the world really know - what the underground forces that shaped those crazy head-strong times, were REALLY all about.

Grand sushi dinners from before they could even ride a bike !! Basquiat and Keith Haring openings. We drove them crazy - fists full of dollars one day, and having them search for pennies - that fell behind the couch the next week, fighting, struggling, 'knowing'. and all the time, art, art, art and more art. name some names: Mariko Mori, Jack Goldstein. but best of all, mine, and Dan's and Simon's - all over the walls. and Under the Volcano / under the 'forces' of a busted-out Lower East Side underground, bursting into life, and then hidden away - into storage over the years.

'Under the Volcano' time to get that work - out.

note: while building this platform, we did add a digital deviation to the original show - an annex with 26 more artworks !!

Look for the staircase down to the - digital basement !!

NANCY SMITH, NYC. December 30, 2016.
artloversnewyork.com