



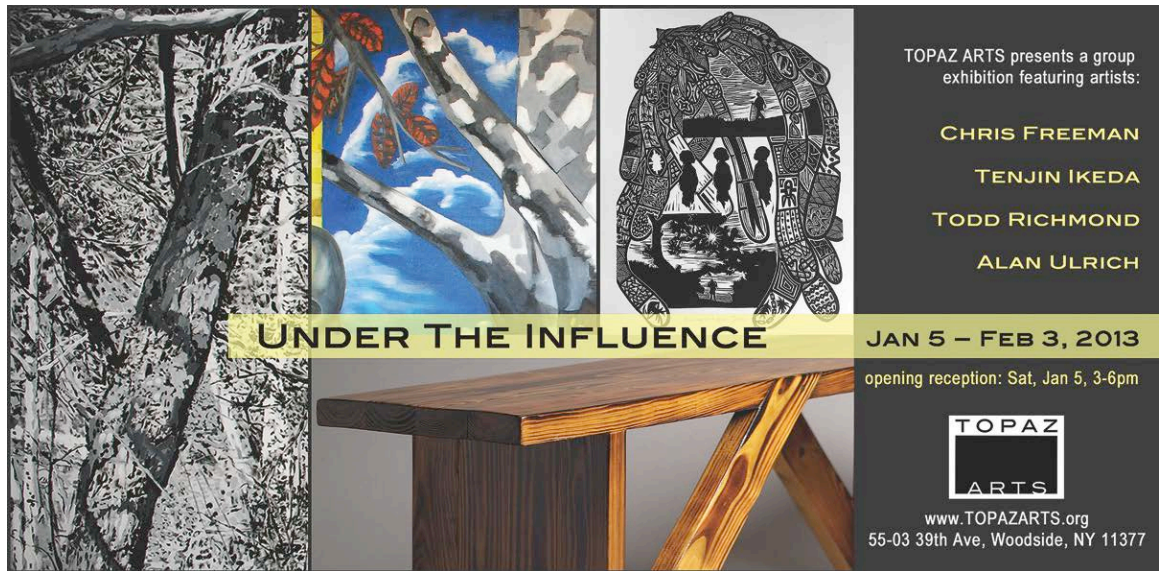
TOPAZ ARTS, Inc.  
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TOPAZ ARTS, Inc. presents a group exhibition of new work

### *“Under The Influence”*

— four artists and former assistants of Richard Artschwager reunite  
curated by Todd B. Richmond and Paz Tanjuaquio

**Chris Freeman** (painting)

**Tenjin Ikeda** (printmaking)

**Todd Richmond** (painting)

**Alan Ulrich** (sculpture)

**on view January 5 to February 3, 2013**

Viewing hours are Saturdays 12–4pm or by request – please email [info@topazarts.org](mailto:info@topazarts.org) to schedule an appointment. **The TOPAZ ARTS Gallery is located at 55-03 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Woodside, Queens.** Easily accessible by subway: #7 to 61st St; R to Northern Blvd; or LIRR to Woodside Station; details & directions available at [www.topazarts.org](http://www.topazarts.org).

TOPAZ ARTS is pleased to present *Under the Influence* - a group exhibition featuring four artists who were among the assistants of sculptor **Richard Artschwager**. Having worked intensely together during the 1990s, the artists reunite to present new and recent work, each having been influenced by the experience and the creative process of making many major works for Artschwager. While differing in medium, each artist uses precision to arrive at whimsical forms. **Chris Freeman** creates large monochrome paintings, deceptively photo-realistic to hypnotic effect. **Tenjin Ikeda's** printmaking series “Egungun” combine ancestral forms and urban imagery. **Todd Richmond's** vibrant large-scale paintings tap into the realm of allegory. **Alan Ulrich** crafts distinct sculptures and furniture from materials found from nature and on construction sites – a member of the band **The Moto-Wraps** who will perform their signature Retro Surf-Rock at the opening reception. *Under the Influence* is organized by TOPAZ ARTS Co-Founding Directors Todd Richmond and Paz Tanjuaquio.

About the Artists: [Artists Featured in The Wall Street Journal >](#) [Video Interview of the Artists on ArtInfo.com >](#)

**Chris Freeman**, born in 1961 in Riverhead, NY, lives and works in Hudson, New York. His first attempts at photography came from a stolen Brownie Camera from a yard sale, when every roll of film he shot came back black, until the lady at the store showed him how to load the film. His paintings today look very much like the photographs he took in 1973, or what they might have looked like. Since then his photographs have been published in the Suffolk Sun Newspaper and, at 17, was hired as photography teacher by the B.O.C.E.S Occupational School- adult night-classes, to help pay for his schooling. An avid skateboarder, he is considered a pioneer since the early 1980s, building his first full-scale vertical skateboarding “Half Pipe”, and featured in the cult surfing films “Flowing Free and Sunwaves”, “Transworld Skateboarding Magazine”, and has won “Freesyle, High Jump, and Best Overall

Skateboarder.” In 1985 Freeman graduated as the first S.U.N.Y Purchase Student to graduate cum laude in two disciplines of Art: Photography and Woodcutting. From 1986-1989 he was fabricator, engineer and installation supervisor at David Kennedy Studio in Brooklyn, NY. In 1989 he was hired as foreman and installer at Richard Artschwager Studio, by Tom MacGregor. In the 1990s he had his first solo exhibition of paintings and photographs at Private/Public, participated in “Exquisite Corpse” at The Drawing Center, “Auction” The New Museum, shot his first art films: “Candy’s Picnic” and “The Secret Missing OJ Tape”; among many projects and performances in NYC. From 2007-2011 he restored the fifth oldest Synagogue in the U.S. as his home and painting studio, located in Hudson, NY. Recently he built his first drag race truck and won the prestigious “12 Best Builder Award” at the Syracuse Nationals Hot Rod Show 2012. Today he dedicates his time to Painting and Drag Racing.

**Tenjin Ikeda** is an Afro-Puerto Rican artist born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. Initially a self-taught artist, he has been seriously making art for the past 20 years using the various mediums of painting, sculpture, and printmaking. He attended the School of Visual Arts in New York first focusing on graphic design and then Fine Arts. It was at the Art Students League that he discovered printmaking which has been his focus over the years. He is a member of the Society of American Graphic Artist (SAGA) and the Arts Student’s League. He has various works in private collections in the US, Canada, Mexico, Bahamas as well as acquisitions by The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The Print Club of Albany, and the Art Student’s League. In the 1990s, Tenjin has worked as an artist assistant to Richard Artschwager for 6 years as well as Keith Haring. He presented a solo exhibition in 2003 at TOPAZ ARTS and has participated in many group shows in different parts of the country and internationally.

**Todd Richmond**, born in Pittsburgh, PA, is a visual artist, composer & filmmaker. His very early exposure as a child in art labs at Carnegie Mellon University and later studies at the Art Institute of Chicago influenced his philosophy in using many media, from painting and sculpture to music and film. From 1990-1995 he was artist assistant to sculptor Richard Artschwager, where he created and assisted in the design and construction of many major works exhibited at museums and galleries worldwide. His dance films have been shown at the American Dance Festival’s 15th Annual Dance for the Camera at the Nasher Museum of Art, NC; Queens Museum of Art, NY; Merce Cunningham Studio, NY; among many NYC venues. His collaborations in dance began in 1993, working as composer, set designer and filmmaker for choreographer Paz Tanjuaquio as well as with many New York City and international choreographers. He is the founder and Co-Director of the nonprofit arts organization TOPAZ ARTS, Inc. established in 2000 with Paz Tanjuaquio to foster their collaborations and provide for a creative development center, implementing and designed the 2,500 sq. ft. facility.

**Alan Ulrich** grew up on the east end of Long Island, always drawing, making art from a young age. An avid skateboarder, he has built ramps on long island and different locations in the nyc area. He attended the School of Visual Arts in 1989 and worked for Richard Artschwager from 1991-95. While doing home renovations, he became interested in building furniture. Working as a carpenter, he now lives in Center Moriches, NY where he continues to make art and play drums in the Moto-Wraps.

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#### About TOPAZ ARTS:

**TOPAZ ARTS, Inc.** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization founded in 2000 by artists **Todd Richmond** and **Paz Tanjuaquio**. TOPAZ ARTS fosters the creative process and offers public programs for the performing and visual arts. Providing affordable space, technical support, and presentation opportunities, TOPAZ ARTS enables artists to realize their projects and the process shared with audiences.

The **TOPAZ ARTS Visual Arts Program** is supported by NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, and by Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Arts Advancement Initiative.

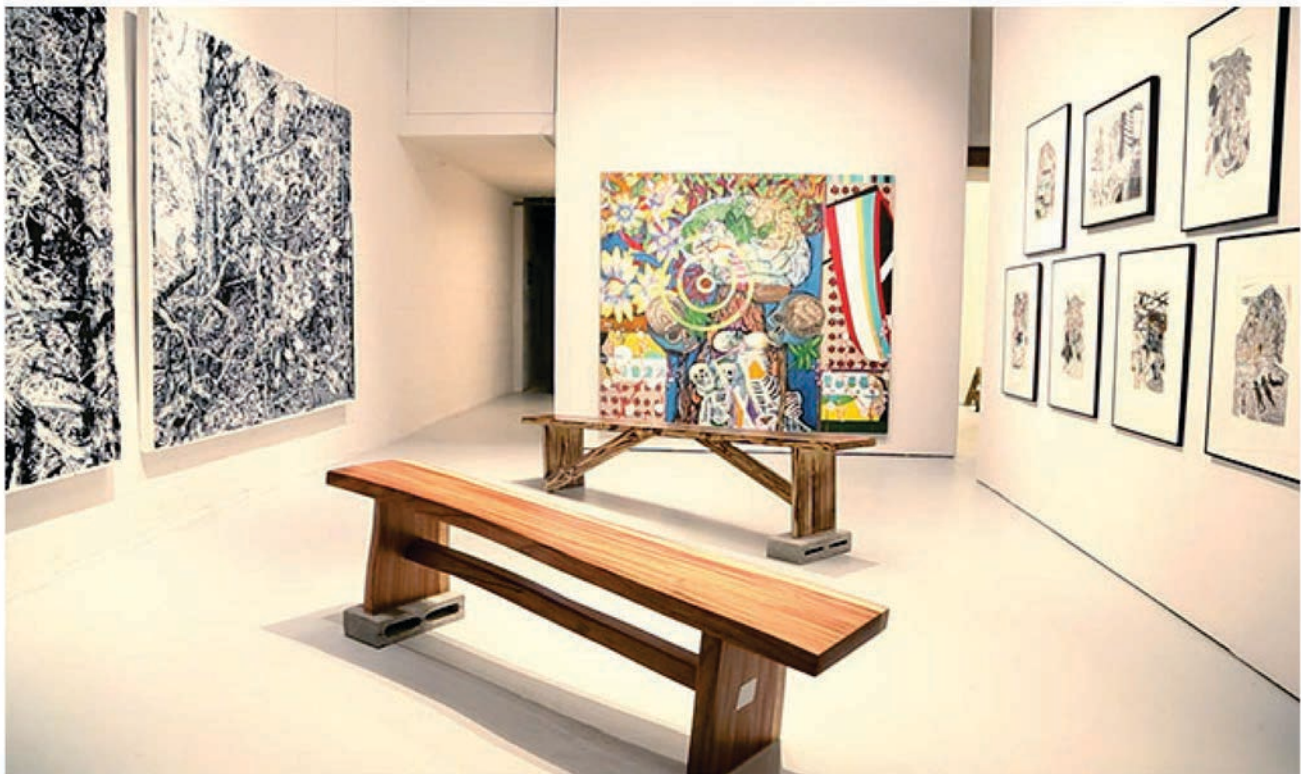


TOPAZ ARTS is made possible, in part, by public funds from NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency; foundation support from Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Asian Cultural Council; Bloomberg Philanthropies; The Mertz Gilmore Foundation; The New York Community Trust; NYS DanceForce with funds from NYSCA Dance Program; Material for the Arts – a program of DCA and the Dept. of Sanitation & Board of Education; and by the generosity of private individuals. More information is available at [www.topazarts.org](http://www.topazarts.org).

**Language**

English

## VIDEO: Former Richard Artschwager Apprentices Reunite For a Group Show



BLOUIN ARTINFO

Installation view of "Under the Influence" at Topaz Arts

by BLOUIN ARTINFO

Published: January 11, 2013

After working intensely together as assistants to Richard Artschwager during the 1990s, artists **Chris Freeman**, **Tenjin Ikeda**, **Todd Richmond**, and **Alan Ulrich** split ways to build their careers elsewhere — and have now reunited 20 years later for a group show at **Topaz Arts** in Woodside, NY, titled “Under the Influence.” The exhibition features a diverse array of pieces including monochromatic and vibrant paintings, linoleum prints and wood sculptures. The artists shared with **ARTINFO** their experiences working for Artschwager and discussed how it has shaped their work since. **Watch:**

NY CULTURE | October 18, 2012, 9:48 p.m. ET

## The Sculptor's Apprentices

By PIA CATTON



Andrew Hinderaker for The Wall Street Journal

Former Richard Artschwager assistants Tenjin Ikeda, Alan Ulrich and Todd Richmond at Topaz Arts, where their group show will be presented.

When the Whitney Museum of American Art opens its retrospective of painter and sculpture Richard Artschwager next Thursday, the exhibition will span the breadth of his career, from paintings on the building material Celotex to sculptures made of Formica to the flat, oval "blps" that became public art.

Underlying the show is Mr. Artschwager's process of discovery through art-making. "He's trained as a scientist, he's working question to question," said Jennifer Gross, a curator at the Yale University Art Gallery which worked in association with the Whitney. "He's a maker."

In stretches of his long career, Mr. Artschwager, who is 88, engaged in that process as an individual. But from about 1986 to the late 1990s, he, like many artists, employed assistants who produced at prolific levels but went unacknowledged. Young artists hired by his studio manager, Tom MacGregor, would travel to a woodshop in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, to create multiples, execute complicated joinery and turn the artist's mock-ups into full-scale reality.



Enlarge Image

Courtesy of Tom MacGregor

Chris Freeman, Tom MacGregor and Mr. Ikeda with a model of an Artschwager sculpture circa 1991.

The studio became one of those New York scenes that coalesces for its time, then fades to a footnote. The scene dissipated by about 1999, when Mr. Artschwager turned toward a more private practice. But several ex-assistants have recently regrouped for an upcoming exhibition of their own work, aptly titled "Under the Influence."

Though hardly as camera-ready as Andy Warhol's Factory, the environment at Mr. Artschwager's

studio was rigorous both in the creative process and the carousing. "It was a boys' club, and we had a wild time," said Mr. MacGregor.

By all accounts, Mr. Artschwager was above the fray. He didn't hang around or sit in with the studio band, Pooder, which made its own recordings, but never actually booked a gig.

"It got a little too crazy in terms of drugs," said Alan Ulrich, who arrived in 1991 at about age 20. "Looking at back, it was a little much—staying up late, using power tools."

Mr. Artschwager, who was not available for comment, did make daily appearances at the studio to discuss models or approve the selection of, say, Formica panels. But he'd then retreat to work on other projects. Having worker bees around was not unfamiliar for the Washington, D.C.-born artist, who had been a professional furniture maker and ran a commercial wood shop.



Richard Artschwager/Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Mr. Artschwager's "Portrait II" (1963), which will be included in his retrospective at the Whitney.

20 shipping crates (four of which are in the new Whitney show) that became art themselves.

"He didn't need to make them in his own hand," Ms. Gross said. "He wasn't going to learn anything new."

The hired guys, however, were on the learning curve. In an effort to explore the long-term influences (the good ones) of their time with Mr. Artschwager, four former assistants—Mr. Richmond, Mr. Ulrich, Tenjin Ikeda and Chris Freeman—will show their work together the Topaz Arts space in Woodside, Queens, which is run by former assistant Todd Richmond and his wife, Paz Tanjuaquio. "Under the Influence" opens Jan. 5.

On the surface, the four may have little in common aesthetically. But the variety reflects the multiple perspectives of Mr. Artschwager.

The Brooklyn-based Mr. Ikeda makes prints that evoke his Afro-Caribbean heritage. His days of cutting Mr. Artschwager's Formica for inlays gave him an eye for precision. "You're using heavy machinery to cut it off," he said. "There is sanding and scraping. That translates to how I carve and cut."

Mr. Ulrich learned woodworking (and played the drums) at the studio. Now living on Long Island, he applies his carpentry skills to home renovations and has continued to make art furniture incorporating found objects and aluminum bands. The latter, he said, is "a direct link. That's a material I learned how to work with there."

Mr. Freeman, who lives in Hudson, N.Y., makes large-scale black-and-white paintings. He also learned by keeping an eye on Mr. Artschwager. "Richard had built a small model of two walls joining in a room. And he had glued a couple of small pieces of Formica to where the walls joined, like two tiny lengths of wood touching at the corner," Mr. Freeman said via e-mail. "He just sat there staring at it like nothing more could happen."

Mr. Richmond, a Queens resident who lost the top of his pinky finger while making Mr. Artschwager's sculpture "Diderot's Last Resort" in 1992, initially shifted to film and music; his current paintings are filled with colorfully defined shapes.

One of his formative moments, he said, came while assisting on the painting "Hot Grotto": "Richard said, 'Add, take away, add, take away,'" he recalled. "The adding is allowing the creative process to flow. The taking away is the reflective process of seeing what's necessary to the composition. I always think about that."

Some two decades after their experiences with Mr. Artschwager, none of the four reports having an ongoing relationship with him. That their work was not recorded or attributed raises little resentment—that's the business. But they also know where the signatures are buried: Before laying down Formica, they would liberally add their names, poems or drawings to the wood bases inside the sculptures.

"The sculpture we built," said Mr. Freeman, "will be hanging in museums long after were gone, with all those little voices underneath the Formica keeping quiet."

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