

## Exhibition Review: Sam Bartlett and Benjamin Wigfall

*Low Stakes, Plywood Cutouts & Everyday Comix* is an exhibition by Sam Bartlett at the Baron and Ellin Gordon Art Galleries. Bartlett puts a lot of emphasis on community. The exhibit brings to mind Laurie Fendrich's "*When an Artist Becomes a Community: The Life and Work of Benjamin Wigfall*", published in the online magazine, *Two Coats of Paint*. Both Bartlett and Wigfall share similar ideas in regard to the aspect of community.

Sam Bartlett is an American folk artist, public-art instigator, cartoonist, performer, musician, and composer. Bartlett is also a traditional musician known for his mandolin, banjo, and guitar playing and has such music playing as the scene setting in the exhibit. In reference to Bartlett's visual art, Sam focuses on painting and cutting sculptures from salvaged wood. Bartlett does practically no planning and/or sketching prior to creating his work. This is his way of keeping his work authentic. He tends to utilize the theme of "complex physical relationships between people." This exhibition in particular makes use of this theme through comics.

Bartlett has stated that he loves to "unleash confidence and enable flow in a team of people who have no idea how powerful and satisfied they can be as creators." He claims to not be concerned with the quality of the art, but rather concerned with what "art is good for", being the empowerment of the people and their imaginations. Bartlett has worked on major art pieces with members of his community on multiple occasions. He makes sure to give back to the community and give valuable

experiences. For instance, he has run classes on the subject of writing in art. In reference to this particular exhibition, Bartlett also teaches and expands upon the art of storytelling, even through comics.

Laurie Fendrich's "*When an Artist Becomes a Community: The Life and Work of Benjamin Wigfall*" is an article that displays Wigfall's interest in community.

Benjamin Wigfall is an individual that saw art as an "expression not of individuality but of community." Wigfall created an exhibition of paintings, assemblages, and more titled "Ben Wigfall & Communications Village" that took place at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art. Wigfall's main objective in reference to art is to share with the community.

Blazing a path that Bartlett eventually took, Wigfall was a teacher, especially for black artists. According to Fendrich, Wigfall prioritized teaching over his own studio work.

In conclusion, Sam Bartlett and Benjamin Wigfall are artist with similar morals in regard to art and its benefits. Laurie Fendrich intentionally titles the article "*When an Artist Becomes a Community*". Both artists want the community to come together. Bartlett's work and Fendrich's article help to illuminate each other. Whether creating a community driven exhibition or becoming a mentor or teach of the arts, both artists make sure to share their experiences with those around them through positivity.

## Citations

*When an artist becomes a community: The life and work of Benjamin Wigfall.* Two Coats of Paint. (2023, February 28). Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://twocoatsofpaint.com/2022/10/when-an-artist-becomes-a-community-the-life-and-work-of-benjamin-wigfall.html>