

Lawrence Brose returns to Buffalo art scene with 'Indicted'

BY COLIN DABKOWSKI

NEWS ARTS CRITIC

After spending six years largely in the shadows, the Buffalo artist and former CEPA Gallery director Lawrence Brose is back.

"Indicted," the first major exhibition of new work by Brose since his long battle

against federal child pornography charges began in 2008, opens Friday in the Body of Trade and Commerce Gallery on Niagara Street.

ART PREVIEW

"Indicted"

Opens Friday in the Body of Trade and Commerce Gallery, 1250 Niagara St.

Runs through July 24

Call 604-6183

or visit

btandcgallery.com

The show features prints from Brose's landmark 1997 film "De Profundis," many of which were included among 1,300 images referenced in the 2009 criminal complaint against the filmmaker despite containing no apparent illegal content.

The exhibition, organized by BT&C Gallery director Anna Kaplan, also will feature a new series of prints drawn from "De Profundis" as well as photogravure pieces from a new film in progress that Brose created as part of a March residency at Alfred University.



Prints from Lawrence Brose's film "De Profundis" will go on view with several new works Thursday in the Body of Trade and Commerce Gallery.

See Brose on Page C2

Exhibit is 'far from a babbling rant'

BROSE • from C1

Last April, after a bruising and expensive legal battle, Brose pled to a minor obscenity charge – not to possessing child pornography – and was sentenced to two years probation in December. The end of the sentencing phase, he said, has allowed him to focus his energy on relaunching his artistic career after more than a half-decade of fighting.

"People kept saying to me, you've got to make art during this," Brose said. "I was just screaming back: I can't do this. I can't think about it. I don't want to turn into Lenny Bruce, just reading the transcripts of everything until it becomes just a babbling rant."

"Indicted" is far from a babbling rant, though Brose's selection of old prints and creation of new ones for the show does in some ways subtly mirror his mental state during the court battle, when he was struggling with the loss of his identity as a community leader and unable to create new work.

The parallels between Brose's battle and the images in the show – figures in bondage or caged, facial expressions of pain and anguish – are difficult to avoid. So is the film's inspiration: Oscar Wilde's famous letter "De Profundis," which he wrote during his imprisonment on charges of gross indecency.

"The thing that's interesting is my relationship to my own work has changed because of this," Brose said of his legal battle.

Though he originally made "De Profundis" as a critique of Wilde's romantic existentialism, the mental prison in which he lived for six years during the legal fight helped him identify with the more emotional aspects of the letter.

"I needed distance to make something that could reflect back on this, and that's the process I'm in now," Brose said in the weeks before his Alfred residency.

During that residency,



Buffalo News file photo

"The thing that's interesting is my relationship to my own work has changed because of this." – Lawrence Brose

for one of the first times in more than six years, Brose felt confident enough to create new artworks. The series that emerged from his work at Alfred, drawing from a film he is currently working on, is provocatively titled "Crossing the Line" – a reference to ceremonies sailors engage in when their ships cross the equator.

For Kaplan, the political content of the show is unavoidable. She resisted a direct comparison to "Seized," a 2008 exhibition at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center critiquing the prosecution of University at Buffalo professor Steve Kurtz on bioterrorism charges, saying that the exhibition was more about "demystifying" Brose's artistic process than making a political statement.

"It's obviously titled after his experience and the images are related to that experience, but I'd like the focus to be more about this person as an artist and not necessarily an overt political statement about censorship," she said. "It's work that I feel should be seen."

email:
cdabkowski@buffnews.com