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Reverend Jen at the beach

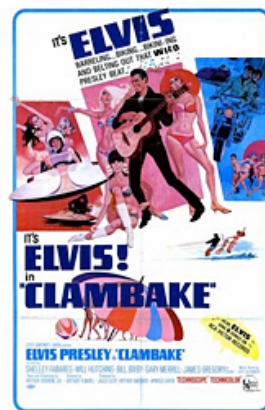


Claudia



Jen Junior

"What's Your Hobby?"  
curated by Beth Rudin DeWoody  
"Evening Amusements"  
Herman Bas, a solo exhibition  
the **FIREPLACE** project

Poster for *Clambake* (1967), starring Elvis Presley

## DIARY OF AN ART STAR by Reverend Jen

If 1967 was the Summer of Love, then 2007 has been the Summer of Rejection.

Practically everyone I know was dumped, cheated on or forced to break up with the un-dateable this summer. In June, my lover dumped me at a wedding in the Catskills. Heartbroken, I wandered off in the dark, fell in a ditch and busted my tailbone.

Two days later, I had a nervous breakdown: The cumulative result of a broken heart, a broken ass and seventeen years of not relaxing. EMT people stood over my inert body threatening to take me to "a hospital," which I knew was code for "nuthouse." I refused to go, citing the fact that I have to care for my chihuahua, JJ. I can't just pop in and out of treatment centers like Britney and Lindsay! I have responsibilities.

Instead, I spent the next month-and-a-half sitting on a donut-shaped pillow, visiting sliding-scale mental health professionals and popping Xanax. By the end of July, I was holed up in my parents' house in Maryland, wearing nothing but a filthy Sponge Bob nightgown and a look of weary resignation. I thought I would have to give up being an art star and spend the rest of my life working at the local Target and living in my parents' attic. I felt like Brian Wilson, circa 1971.

It was during this dark period that I happened to catch an episode of VH1's *The Fabulous Life: The Hamptons*.

From my sickbed, I listened as a Robin Leach-type narrator described the Hamptons as being the most expensive real estate in America. A barrage of images greeted my bloodshot eyes: rows of mansions, smiling celebrities, bikini-clad bodies, sand, surf, sun and P. Diddy.

I suddenly remembered that my friend, Claudia, had offered to take me to the Hamptons anytime. Unlike most of my friends, she has a car, a job and a tan. If she hadn't taken out exorbitant student loans or made a habit of hanging out with downwardly mobile art stars, she'd probably be in a much higher tax bracket than anyone I know. I called her up.

"Let's go next weekend," she suggested, adding that "a few days in the sun" might be just what I needed.

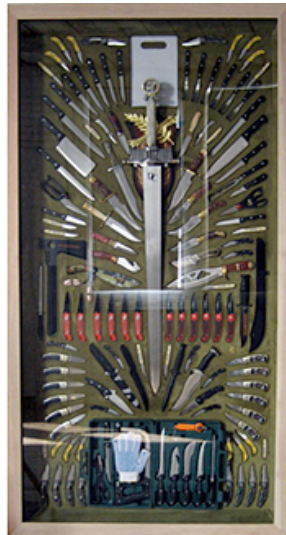
I hoped she was right. Maybe I could overcome adversity through glamour and Vitamin D. At the very least, maybe I'd meet a nice rich person willing to send me to an upscale mental hospital. And if that didn't work out, maybe I could write an article about my trip.

I emailed my Artnet editor to see if there were any cool art shows happening in the Hamptons. Seeing as how the only artworks I'd viewed recently were the frayed Garfield clippings hanging in the psych ward, I needed a little guidance.

He sent me back several leads and mentioned that Nicole Klagsbrun and Barbara Gladstone might be throwing a clambake after the Billy Sullivan opening at

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**Toland Grinnell**  
*Bonanza -- (TV purchase #7)*  
 2007  
 Fireplace Project



**Bob Wade**  
*Bug Lite*  
 2002  
 Fireplace Project



**Tara Donovan**  
*Bluffs*  
 2007  
 Fireplace Project



Guild Hall. I hoped my weekend would be like *Clambake*, the Elvis movie -- full of go-go dancers, regatta races and inexplicable song and dance numbers. The following Saturday, Claudia, JJ and I set out for sandier pastures. Just being in a car that wasn't a Chinatown bus headed for Maryland was exciting.

When we got to the Hamptons, the first thing I noticed was the shrubbery. I have never seen so many massive, well-trimmed bushes in my life -- rows of them eclipsing the very mansions the Hamptons are famous for.

The second thing I noticed was the considerable number of bald men crawling the sidewalks.

"No one here has hair," I said.

"I never noticed, but you're right," Claudia gasped. "It used to be Kojak was the only one and now everyone is bald. What happened to men's hair?" she asked, alarmed.

I don't mind the bald look, but it was creepy, like the beginnings of a cult -- as if Captain Picard had flown the Enterprise down to the Hamptons and given everyone a haircut to match his own. I theorized that the excessive shrubbery was grown in order to make up for the lack of hair.

We drove past the bushes and the chrome domes to a dog-friendly beach where JJ sunbathed as Claudia and I stealthily trolled for eye candy. I could find none. "How can this be?" I asked. "This is the most expensive real estate in America! If I were paying this much to live somewhere, I'd want to see models boning on the median strips every time I left my home."

Disappointed, I skimmed my book of Arthurian legends instead, occasionally wandering into the ocean where I pretended to be Lady of the Lake.

At some point Claudia checked her watch and realized it was already time to clean up and go out. Time flies when you're sitting on your ass in the sun.

Earlier Claudia had mentioned that her usual beach "crash-pad" had fallen through so we would have to use ingenuity to find a place to sleep and bathe. Furtively we cleaned up in a supermarket bathroom before making our way to our first destination -- Fireplace Project, a gallery in East Hampton where "What's Your Hobby?," a group show curated by Beth DeWoody, was opening. The press release promised art associated with hobbies -- needlepoint, stamp collecting, decoupage and so on.

The street outside was lined with cars. Clearly, this was the place to be.

Upon entering, the first piece I beheld was a box frame containing an impressive collection of knives. "Excalibur!" I exclaimed, admiring the large sword at the center. Upon further inspection, I noticed that the work, *Bonanza -- (TV purchase #7)* (2007), was by Toland Grinnell, a former SVA classmate of mine. I looked for him, hoping we could bust the frame open and do an impromptu performance wherein we reenacted the scene where the Lady of the Lake bestows Excalibur on King Arthur.

Sadly, Toland was not in attendance.

Before I could look at any more art, I needed a beer. The beach will do that to you. I was told the beer was "in the bull out back." This, I believed was an auditory hallucination until I found *Bug Lite* (2002) by Bob Wade, a sculpture of a bull with a beer keg head. I reached into



Claudia with Rob Wynne's *Classic Mushroom Group* (2007) at the opening for Fireplace Project's "What's Your Hobby?"



**Sylvie Fleury**  
*Padra Boots*  
2003  
Fireplace Project



**Type A**  
*Mantel*  
2005-2006  
Fireplace Project



**E.V. Day**  
*Mummified Barbie*  
2007  
Fireplace Project

its noggin and pulled out a Corona.

Meanwhile, a band called The xFrames, featuring art star Peter Dayton, who also has a piece in the show (a collage of naked ladies, zow!) began to play. An assortment of people gathered around wearing festive, colorful clothes you don't see in Manhattan. One man wore pants with whales on them. Another wore a slick, pink blazer with navy trousers. Even babies sported the latest trends in resort wear. One baby wore a dashiki, while another wore seersucker and another went preppy in a crisp polo.

A woman wearing a wide-brimmed hat and Lilly Pulitzer pants wielded a metal detector, pretending to be a metal-collecting "hobbyist." Someone told her they'd lost their cockring.

Back inside, Claudia directed my attention toward *Bluffs* (2007) by Tara Donovan, a sculpture made entirely of buttons and glue. It looked like something one might find on the planet Krypton, and observers noted it "made them dizzy." The act of gluing together thousands of buttons does not seem like a "hobby" to me, but an act of compulsion -- probably similar to the arts and crafts I'll soon be doing at the nuthouse.

In the furthest corner of the gallery, I admired two glass sculptures of mushrooms by Rob Wynne. They would look nice in my Troll Museum, I thought, but at \$22,000 and \$25,000 each, they weren't going home with me. I also coveted *Padra Boots* (2003) by Sylvie Fleury, a pair of bronze go-go boots. But they had already sold.

There were plenty of pieces to liven up the home, like Type A's set of framed needlepoint works, *Mantel* (2005-2006) featuring sentiments found on bumper stickers such as "My Other Car is a Piece of Shit Too!" There was even something for the little ones: E.V. Day's *Mummified Barbies* (2007) are sure to teach children Ancient Egyptian concepts of the afterlife while simultaneously livening up the Barbie Dream Home.

There was even a work by butterfly hobbyist Damien Hirst: *Nonchalant Yellow Kiss* (2006).

I was having a great time. So was JJ, who met other dogs to hang with. Still I fretted about missing the Billy Sullivan opening and my chance to finagle my way into the mysterious post-opening "clambake." I convinced Claudia we must depart for Guild Hall. When we got there, we discovered the opening had occurred several hours earlier. I suppose I should have looked at the invite. No clambake for us.

We drove back to the Fireplace Project but the party was over.

Disheartened, we left in search of food and shelter.

Claudia brought JJ and me to Nick and Toni's, a fancy restaurant where my elf ears drew confused stares. I guess they don't get many elves there.

Once our bellies were full, it was time to seek lodging, preferably in a "fleabag motel" on the outskirts of town. We drove for what seemed like many moons, looking for a place. "No Vacancy" signs flickered in the dark, taunting us.

"I can't believe there are no vacancies on a Saturday night in the Hamptons during the most beautiful weekend of the year," I mused. We were now far from town, driving through a frightening stretch of darkness "This is scary," I said, "I feel like 'Goat-Man' is gonna jump out of the woods."





**Damien Hirst**  
*A Nonchalant Yellow Kis*  
 2006  
 Fireplace Project



Billy Sullivan's *Klaus & Clarissa, 29 Palms*, on view at Guild Hall in the Hamptons



Outside Nick & Toni's restaurant



The mythical Hampton Star Hotel

"I hope the Goat-Man has a place for us to stay."

As we considered driving back to the city, something came into view -- a sign for the "Hampton Star Motel." They had a vacancy!

"They should call it Hampton Art Star," Claudia said, triumphantly. Because there was a massive "No Pets" sign, we had to sneak our littlest art star in, but having toured America, my expertise at sneaking JJ into cheap motels is unparalleled.

As we entered our two-bedroom suite, the first thing I noticed other than the unintentional minimalist décor was an inspirational calendar hanging next to the door, care of "Strong Oil Company." It featured a quote from Helen Keller, appropriate because it appeared Helen Keller actually decorated the Hampton Star! Wood-paneled walls, yellow curtains and pink and green sheets came together under harsh fluorescent light.

"It's like the set of a serial killer movie," I noted. My room was terrifying. It had no decorations -- only a wall where brick and wood-paneling came together in an existential song of despair. I tried to open the curtain and the curtain rod collapsed.

However, I noticed that in order to offset the existential tone of the suite, the proprietors had placed inspirational art throughout. A framed photo of a determined ballerina hung over Claudia's bed. Propped up in a corner, wall art featuring an image of a butterfly bore the anonymous quote, "As you walk through life, take time to enjoy the beauty of the flowers." A paper garland hung above the kitchenette.

I walked into the green linoleum bathroom and stared at my sun-kissed reflection in the mirror. As I did my hand was inexplicably drawn to the top of the medicine cabinet. I felt something: a postcard. I pulled it down. One side featured an image of a redheaded mermaid caressing a conch shell. The other side advertised a store selling "nautical items, fairies and angels."

At the bottom of the card it said, *Believe in Magic*. . .

Claudia and I stared at it as though it were the Holy Grail.

"How did it end up there?" I breathed.

"How did you know it was there?" she wondered.

I imagined many things. The proprietors put it up there for someone who really needed it: the sick of soul, heartbroken, downtrodden and tired. Or perhaps an elf traveled through a portal from the otherworld and put it there, just for me. We contemplated my discovery until exhaustion overwhelmed us. Determined to rise early so we could do nothing on the beach the next day, we turned in for the night.

I put the postcard in my book of Arthurian legends and lay in bed, staring at the spot where the paneling and brick came together. Maybe the Hampton Star wasn't a million-dollar mansion and perhaps its decorators hadn't the funds for matching linens or a new curtain rod. . . but at that moment I didn't want to be anywhere else in the world. I'd come in search of fabulousness only to find wisdom in the warm embrace of a fleabag motel. In the future, I would remember to enjoy the beauty of the flowers.

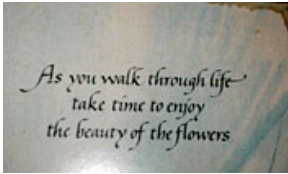


Décor at the Hampton Star

**REVEREND JEN** is an art star, urban elf, troll museum founder and up-and-coming celebrity personality. She is the author of *Reverend Jen's Really Cool Neighborhood* and *Sex Symbol for the Insane*.



The Hampton Star Hotel's song of existential despair



A sign



Reverend Jen, hangin' at the Hampton Star Hotel

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