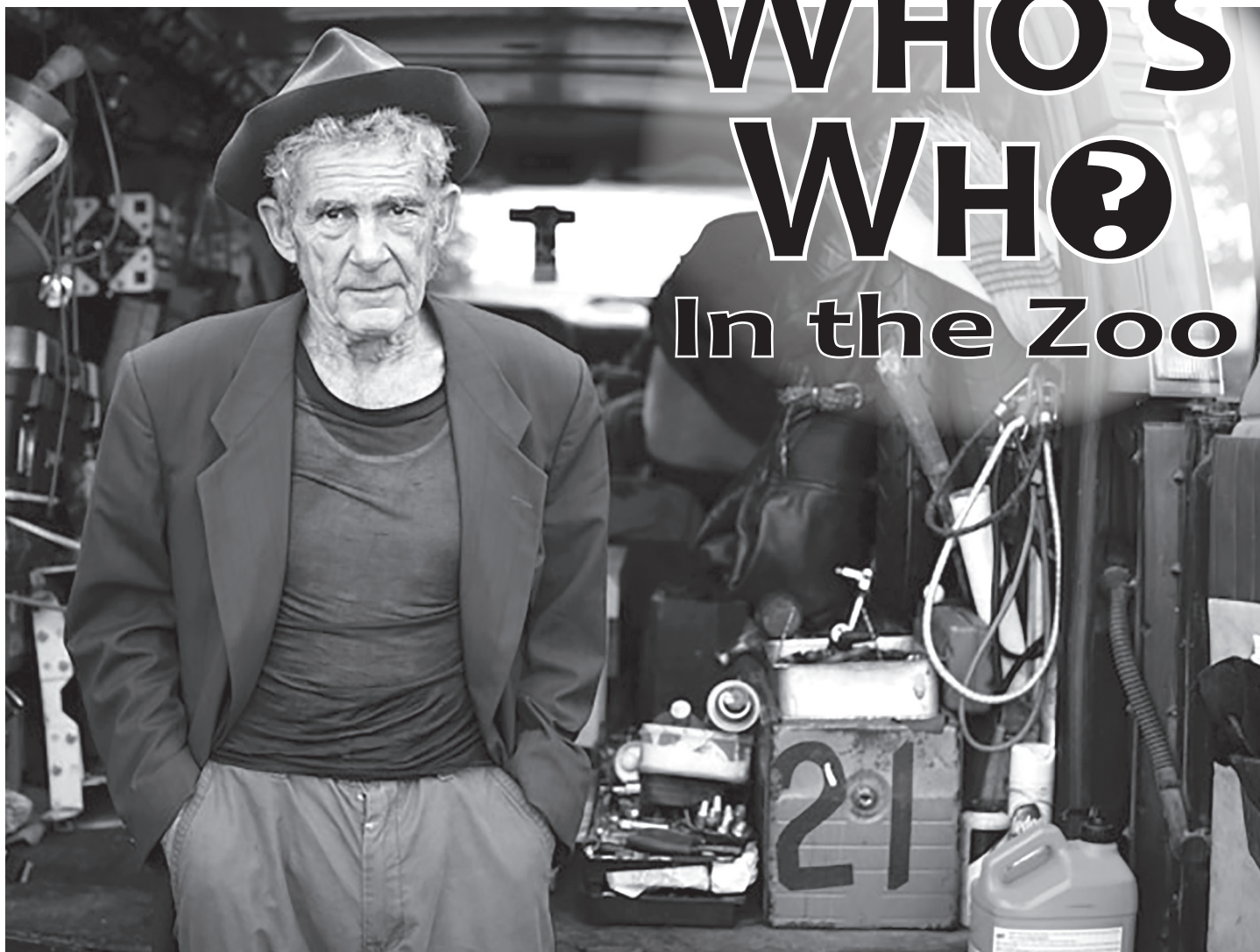


WHO'S WHO? In the Zoo



A Seat Full of Abstract

By Ron Melton

In a world that often seems black-and-white, AHRMA roadracer Larry Poons has dedicated his life to making sure that any place he goes is very colorful. In the world of abstract art, people could one day realize that our own number 21X might just be the Picasso of our era.

Poons' first interest was music. After graduating high school he attended the New England Conservatory from 1955-'57. However, it did not take long for Larry to realize music was not where he needed (or wanted) to be. He set a high goal, but knew deep down he would never be as great as Beethoven (one of his heroes). Like a click of his G50's Schafleitner, Poons changed gears and moved from music to painting.

After moving to New York in the late '50s, Poons – along with two fellow artists – opened The Epitome coffee shop on Bleecker Street. Not long after that he began showing at the now-defunct but well-known (and occasionally infamous) Green Gallery. Simultaneously, Poons had an ongoing interest in motorcycles. He began riding at the age of 16; his first bike was a 250cc BMW, and Ghost Motorcycles of Port Washington, NY was his local shop.

Larry used to ride his motorcycle through Central Park and Manhattan, and has called it “the ultimate road course”.

The 1960s Manhattan art scene was very historic, with the likes of Warhol, Rosenquist and a list of other heavyweight artists all playing their parts. Poons was one of the major players, with his now-well-known vibratory dot-and-ellipses paintings; after all this time, he is still on top of the world. The unique thing about Larry is his ability to change. He is constantly exploring, morphing and experimenting, never standing still, creating distinctive and innovative styles in his work. He has influenced artists of many generations.

Very few people can “make it” as an artist, and even fewer can maintain a long ca-

reer supporting themselves solely through sales of their art. *Really* making it in the art world brings real dollars, and in our world, dollars bring things like Matchless G50 and Ducati racebikes. The Seeley G50 Condor Larry bought new in 1971 was his streetbike for 20 years (and is still registered and licensed to this day), but during the past three decades, it has been adorned with number plates displaying the number 21X (and twice has had the 500 Premier number 1 plate on it).

Poons' voracious painting and racing appetite has led to a life of major accomplishments. Do a Google search of Larry and you enter a world very different than any other AHRMA competitor. He is truly a rock star in the world of art, but Google will never come close to telling the story of Poons' complex nature and never-ending search for truth and expression.

I've had the good fortune to be at several of his art openings around the world –

Madrid, Brussels, and here in the US. Talking with his friends and followers at these exhibits, I have learned how deep the talent goes. The constant, ever-changing evolutions in style and technique keep Poons on the top of the leaderboard to this day.

This longevity makes Valentino Rossi's racing career look like it's in its infancy – that's hard to do!

With a keen eye for what's "right", everything that Poons touches seems to turn to multi-colored chunks of gold.

It takes determination and focus – as well as amazing talent – to stay on top in the art world (as well as keeping a G50 and 250 GP Ducati competitive on the track), but Poons makes it look easy. A fellow racer once advised, "If you don't know the track, just follow Poons" – and this from a younger racer who is top in his class!

So the next time you pit next to the one-of-a-kind Larry Poons at the road races, enjoy the opportunity and soak it all in. He is not a mirage, he is the real deal, and at nearly 80 years of age, seems to be merely warming his engine for all the canvases and races ahead. ▲



(Left) Poons on-track with his 250 Grand Prix-class Ducati single. He also competes in 500 Grand Prix aboard a Seeley Matchless G50.



Larry Poons paintings, "The Flying Blue Cat" (2011) and "The Venetian" (2012) (Image courtesy the artist and Loretta Howard Gallery, New York)

