



Steve Joester, in his Water Mill studio, found a new mode of artistic expression through mixing his old photographs from the 1970s and 1980s with silkscreen, street art, and his own expressionistic use of color.

Jennifer Landes

## Steve Joester's Library of Superstars

BY JENNIFER LANDES

A first-time visitor would have no problem finding Steve Joester's Water Mill studio on his rambling property. The music playing, a steady mix of classic rock, is the first thing that beckons from a small building across from the house on the other side of the pool. Then there is the potent odor of paints and solvents and, once inside, a trail of graphic and brightly highlighted images that lead to his upper-level studio.

On the first really cold day in November, the windows were closed and the heat on. The chemical haze made for a heady interview, perfect for the scene created by the canvases of mashed-up images of rock stars from photos he took in the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, inspired by Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film, "Blow-Up." "David Hemmings made it look so cool," Mr.

Joester said of the actor in the film, the plot of which centered on a fashion photographer who may have captured a murder in one of his photos. The movie is loosely based on the life of David Bailey, the photographer who caught London as it was awash in 1960s hipness and youth culture. "I thought, 'Wow, you can make a living doing that.'"

Although Mr. Bailey worked primarily in fashion and portraits, Mr. Joester found that his own interest lay in music. "I got a camera, went down to London, and just started shooting things." At that time, London's music scene was still contained. "It was very small; there weren't a lot of places to put the photos." Melody Maker and New Music Express were the key publications. "If you could get your photo in one of those papers, everybody saw it."

Things happened quickly. He spent the next decade in the studio, on tour, and on location, capturing images, making friends, and living the rock 'n' roll life and all that came with it. "It was weird. You had 20 hours of boredom and four of real craziness, a dangerous combination. With access to anything you wanted, it could really lead to trouble."

During those years, he amassed an astounding library of superstars caught in their prime. Some of the faces looking out from repurposed mixed-media compositions, prints, and silkscreens include Neil Young, Bob Marley, Freddie Mercury, Sting, Deborah Harry, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and the rest of the Rolling Stones, the members of KISS, Thin Lizzy, the Sex Pistols, AC/DC, and Judas Priest.

But after 10 years, he was done. "That small

community grew pretty quickly," he recalled. "Merchandising came in, and the value of the image became very different. Then, the contracts came, saying you have to give up copyright. That's when I quit." Having retained the rights to his images up to that point, he wasn't ready to sign them over in exchange for the choice of only a couple of photos to publish or hold back for other purposes. With no extra money coming for the rights to the rest of those images, Mr. Joester walked away. "It became a whole different business."

He then landed in advertising. Back then, he said, there was "still a lot of fun and creativity, great campaigns that were irreverent and with shock value." He stayed there for another decade or so, but lost interest after the messages started repeating themselves in watered-down versions.

"After about 12 years of it, that was enough."

It wasn't long after that he returned to his archives. "I went back into my boxes. I realized I was sitting on something," he said. Having never sold his rights, he had carte blanche to use them. "I just needed to figure out how."

He came up with a mixture of Pop Art and Street Art, borrowing from icons such as Andy Warhol and Keith Haring. He has constructed several silkscreens from some of his favorite images, easily recognizable portraits of Mick Jagger, Sid Vicious, Sting, and even Warhol, whom he met for the first time backstage at a Judas Priest concert.

"Andy's head popped in backstage, and I said, 'Hey, come in. I want to take a couple of shots with you.'" He borrowed the lead singer Rob Halford's handcuffs to handcuff the artist to Mr.

Continued on C3

## Doc Fest Turns 10

BY MARK SEGAL

Now in its 10th year, the Hamptons Take 2 Documentary Film festival has grown from four films to 25, added a fifth day of free screenings, and created three new awards to enrich an already jam-packed program.

Opening today at Bay Street Theater in Sag Harbor and continuing through Monday, the festival will include such noteworthy films as Susan Froemke's "The Opera House," the history of New York's Metropolitan Opera, which premiered at this year's New York Film Festival and will be shown this evening at 8, and Friday night's Spotlight Film, Susan Lucy's "Spielberg," an intimate portrait of one of cinema's towering figures.

This year the Career Achievement Award will be presented to Liz Garbus, a two-time Emmy Award winner, whose credits include "Love, Marilyn," "Bobby Fischer Against the World," and "What Happened Miss Simone?" Starting Saturday evening at 7, a cocktail reception and ceremony will precede the screening of "Shooting Fire: Stories From the Edge of Free Speech," which will be followed by a conversation between the filmmaker and her father, Martin Garbus, a noted First Amendment attorney.

The Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Helen Whitney will receive the Filmmaker's Choice Award

on Saturday morning at 11:30 prior to a screening of her film "Into the Night: Portraits of Life and Death," in which people of all ages wrestle with the inevitability of death.

The Sunday Night Spotlight Film is Sabine Krayenbuehl and Zeva Oelbaum's "Letters From Baghdad: The Story of Gertrude Bell and Iraq," a documentary about the British archaeologist, explorer, and spy whose work in the Middle East during and after World War I played an important role in shaping the region.

"The Killer Bees," Ben and Orson Cummings' exploration of the world of the renowned Bridgehampton High School basketball team as it prepares to defend its state championship title, is the festival's closing night film, set for Monday at 7.

The festival's new Breakout Director Award, which recognizes an original and exceptional vision, will go to Catherine Bainbridge, whose film "Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World" illuminates the contribution of Native Americans to rock and popular music history.

Also new is the Sloane Shelton Human Rights Award, which honors



Dr. Blake Kerr may be known locally more for a stethoscope than a light meter, but in "Eye of the Lammergerie" he directed a film about China's military occupation of Tibet.

courage in the face of social injustice. This year's recipient is Josh Howard's "The Lavender Scare," a documentary about discrimination against government homosexuals in the 1950s.

The Hector Leonardi Art and Inspiration Award acknowledges a film that embraces the vibrancy of an artist whose work expanded our spirits and lives. Richard Kane will receive the award at the screening of "I Know a Man... Ashley Bryan," a film about the 93-year-old African-American poet-illustrator, on Sunday at noon.

As usual, films engaging social and political issues predominate. Some focus on the challenges facing individuals, among them "Crazy," Lise Zumwalt's film about Eric, a young man diagnosed with schizophrenia who must choose between traditional mental health

Continued on C4

### Long Island Books

## High Achiever

BY JAMES I. LADER

The only element I might question in Jenner Conant's new biography of her grandfather James Bryant Conant is the title. "Man of the Hour" does inadequate justice to the lofty accomplishments of Mr. Conant, not to mention the span of time during which his influence was felt. But perhaps I quibble.

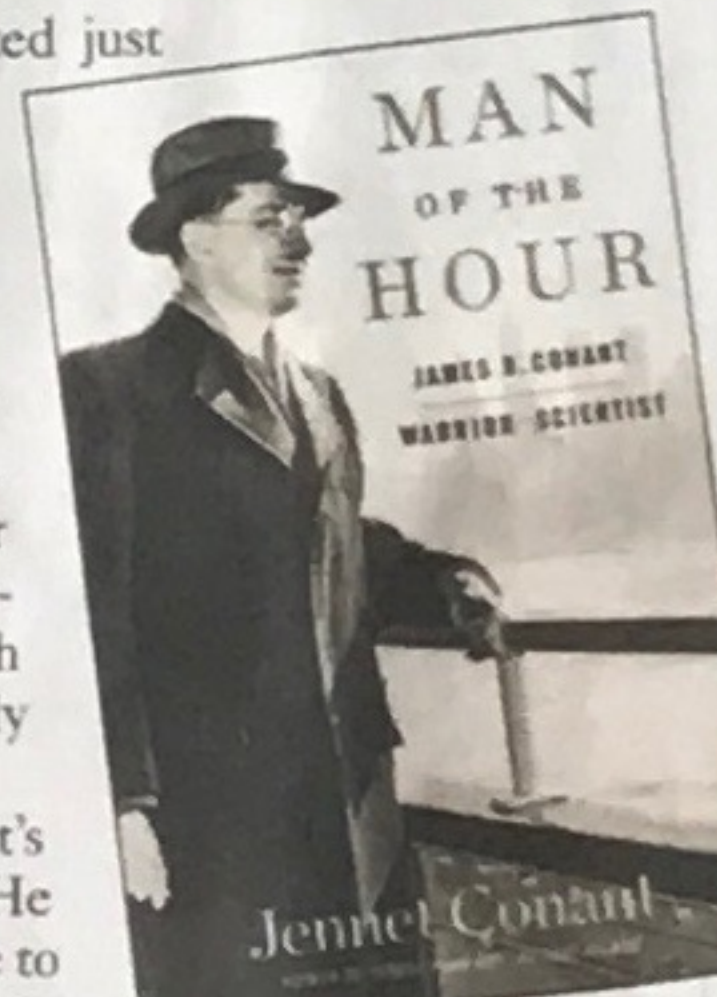
Over the course of a lifetime that lasted just short of 85 years (1893 to 1978), Mr. Conant established an early reputation as a brilliant chemist, headed a unit of the Army's chemical warfare division during World War I, served as the president of Harvard University for 20 years, was one of the leaders of the Manhattan Project, which developed the first U.S. nuclear bomb that brought World War II to a conclusion, and served as the American high commissioner for Germany during the early Cold War years. Among other things.

By just about every measure, Mr. Conant's was a life of significant achievements. He brought a flinty New England competence to everything he tackled. His granddaughter, a New York Times best-selling author, brings comparable skill to the potentially tricky task of recounting that life.

Family standing mattered tremendously in the Boston of Mr. Conant's birth. His own family was second-tier, at best. Rather than arriving on the Mayflower in 1620, the first Conant to reach America came on the sister ship Anne in 1623. Instead of residing in fashionable Back Bay or Beacon Hill, the family made its home in old but plainer Dorchester, and young Jim Conant graduated from the local Roxbury Latin School, not from one of the traditional boarding schools where most Harvard students of the day prepared for college.

Upon entering Harvard College, however, his academic prowess distin-

Continued on C5



The lamb in winter: smelly but satisfying

C2



Finding darkness in light in Southampton

C3

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# The Art Scene

BY MARK SEGAL

## The Craft of Weaving

"Woven," a group exhibition of work by artists who explore and expand the art and craft of weaving, is on view at the Rental Gallery in East Hampton through Jan. 31.

Mia Romanik, an art adviser who lives and works in Los Angeles, has organized the show. Of its genesis, she said, "I began to tease out connections between contemporary art and traditional craft, specifically through the practice of woven textiles. In the warp and weft of the fabric itself, in the meditative act of weaving, and in the commitment to the craft passed down through generations of practitioners, we see something timeless, something that dips beneath the surface of art history to engage with something innately human."

Artists featured include Alvaro Barrington, Alighiero Boetti, Jodie Carey, Anne Cathrin November Høibo, Dan

Coopey, Lucy Dodd, Sam Falls, Josep Grau-Garriga, Liza Lou, Jayson Musson, Antonio Pichilla, Marina Pinsky, Sterling Ruby, Samantha Thomas, Ruby Sky Stiller, Kaari Upson, Hank Willis Thomas, Brian Wills, and Margo Wolowiec.

## Holiday Show at Ille

Ille Arts in Amagansett will open its annual holiday show with a reception on Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m. It will run through Jan. 15. The gallery has issued an open call for up to three works on paper per artist, with a size limit of 22 by 30 inches and a maximum price of \$1,000. According to the gallery, works by hundreds of international, national, and local artists will be on view.

## Plein-Air Painters

The East Hampton Library will present an exhibition of work by the plein-air painters of the Wednesday Group

from today through Dec. 30, with a reception set for Dec. 9 from 3 to 5 p.m. Participating artists are Teresa Lawler, Jean Mahoney, Alyce Peifer, Gene Samuelson, Cynthia Sobel, Frank Sofo, Bob Sullivan, Aurelio Torres, and Pam Vossen.

## A New Joint Studio

Many artists have shown at the space at 4 North Main Street in Southampton over the past eight years, but few as often as Paton Miller. In a somewhat unusual arrangement, Mr. Miller and Scott Bluedorn, both mainstays of the East End art scene, have turned the venue into a joint studio of sorts, with paintings, drawings, and prints on view by appointment only, through Dec. 17.

Studio visits can be arranged by calling Mr. Miller at 631-885-1289 or Mr. Bluedorn at 631-838-7518.

## Joester's Library

Continued from C1  
Halford and then to the radiator. "Andy loved it; he thought it was cool. But I was thinking, 'What the hell is he doing at a Judas Priest concert?'"

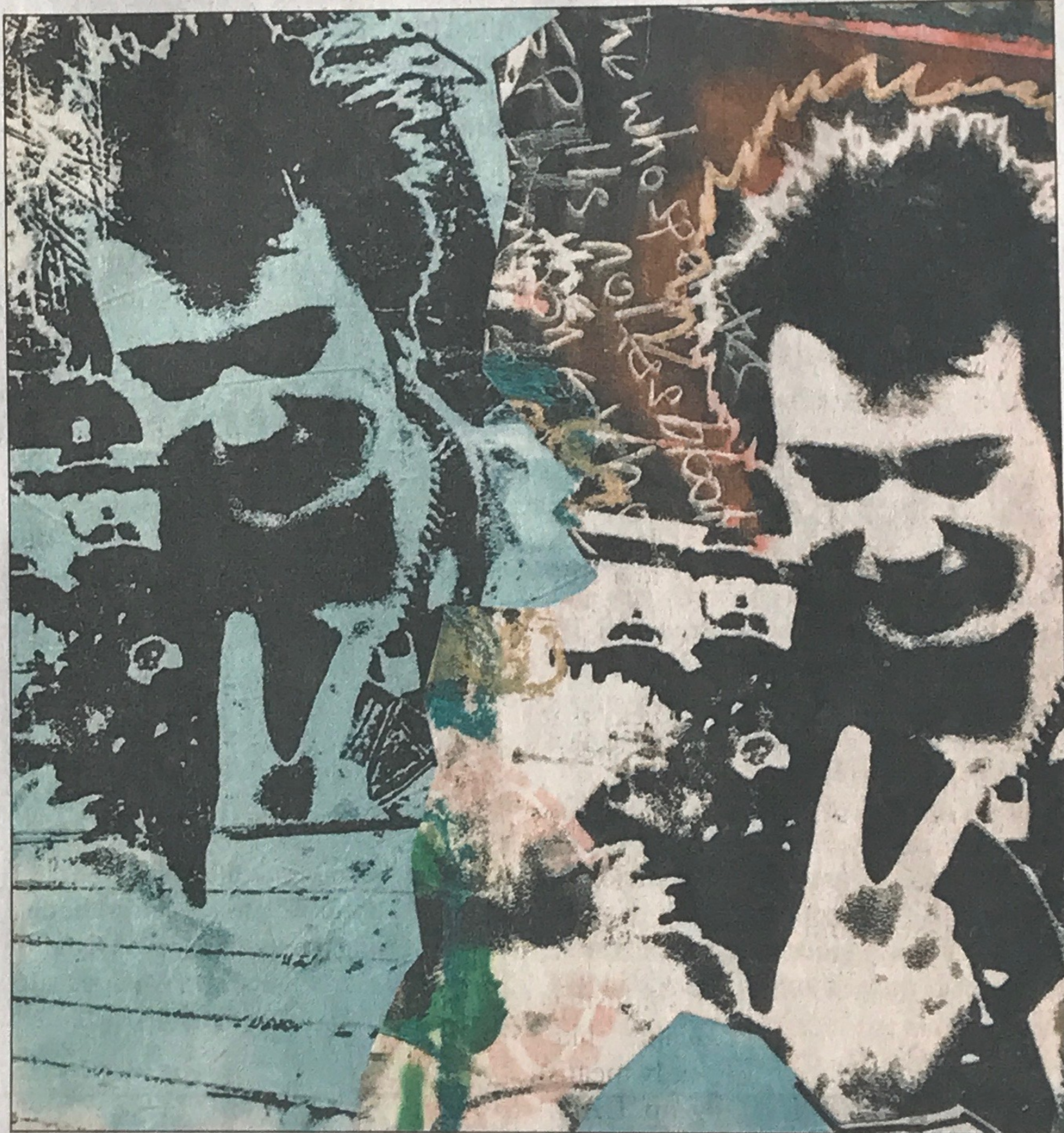
Mr. Joester saves his more portrait-like images for the silkscreens and uses the images of the bands playing live in his multimedia works, where the prints vie with paint and other applied surfaces to form a coherent composition. Sometimes, he uses just one very large print, but often he adds smaller ones or contact strips.

Even his portraits are mostly of the performers in concert. "I only like shooting them live, because that's what they do," he said. "When you meet them in a regular setting, they're not that interesting, but when they're out onstage they're mesmerizing."

Back in those days, he was working with film, which required patience and agility. "You would have to chase after them as they were moving around onstage, then change the film, usually missing the best part as you were winding it." Although he eventually got a self-winding camera, he still had no idea what he had until it was developed a couple of days later. An image of Mick Jagger looking right at him from a Stones concert was only a split second among hours of his stage strutting.

He said he tries to recreate some of the intensity of those moments in his compositions. "It was craziness with an order, because you had to be ready, you really had to be there to get it all on film." And it happened even with all of the vertigo and discombobulation of touring.

"There was no reason to know where you were. Someone would knock on the door when it was time to get on the bus or to the show." He recalled one night out at dinner with KISS. "They took fake blood capsules with them, and we bit into them in the middle of dinner. We were in a Midwestern restaurant



An icon of punk rebellion, Sid Vicious was already "just so out of it" when Steve Joester took photos of the Sex Pistols in the 1970s, one of which is now a silkscreen he uses for his artworks.

with blood coming out of our mouths," he said with a laugh. From this perspective, he said the film "This Is Spinal Tap" did a great job of "summing up the politics and nonsense of touring."

In the studio, he works on a variety of supports, including paper, canvas, and even pallets, which have a shadow box kind of feeling to them. He likes to work collaboratively, bringing in people like LA II (also known as Angel Ortiz), who worked with and inspired Keith Haring, to add their characteristic marks

to his canvases. He recently had members of the Tats Cru — Nicer, BIO, and BG-183 — add drawings and tags to compositions he had started with his photographic images.

Recently, he has added erotic subject matter to his oeuvre, which helped inspire "Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll," a show coming up in December at the White Room Gallery in Bridgehampton. His work is also on view in New York City at John Allen, a men's grooming club on Wall Street.