GEORGE NAMA
AN EXHIBITION FEATURING
A PORTFOLIO OF ETCHINGS FOR
LIBERATOR
A SHORT STORY BY
GEORGE A. ROMERO

September 19th through October 14th 2017 (Shepherd W&K Galleries)
October 28th through December 23rd 2017 (Jack Rutberg Fine Arts Inc.)
CATALOG: Stephanie Hackett

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Keith Stout

TECHNICAL NOTES: All measurements are in inches and in centimeters; height precedes width. All drawings and paintings are framed. Prices on request. All works subject to prior sale.
Liberator draws its title from one of George Romero’s final works – a short story written specifically to be illuminated by his friend, the artist George Nama. The exhibition revolves around Romero’s poignant story inspired by the Golem – an ancient folkloric legend – and George Nama’s related etchings, drawings, and collages. Their collaboration has resulted in a newly published limited edition Liberator, which includes Nama’s hand colored etchings and Romero’s evocative short story, published for the first time in this rare limited edition of 35 numbered portfolios, and 10 artists’ proofs, signed by both artists.

The exhibition of Liberator in New York and Los Angeles was conceived by Romero and Nama to celebrate their 60 year friendship. The exhibitions were originally planned to coincide with the anticipation of George Romero being honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. With Romero’s recent death on July 16th, 2017, the gallery exhibitions will now be presented in memoriam.

Robert Kashey
David Wojciechowski
Shepherd W & K Galleries

Jack Rutberg
Jack Rutberg Fine Arts
As a young artist, I was becoming aware of the vast possibilities of form that could become art. At first, I thought that one would have to create something as grand as the Sistine Chapel masterpiece of Michelangelo, in order to qualify as an artist. As I began looking further at creative works, I saw the idea of art was complex and simple at the same time. A small collage by Kurt Schwitters can be monumental and a large collage by Matisse can be personal and intimate. I came to realize that this combination is rare and I understood why – it’s difficult to achieve.

*LIBERATOR* was a challenge for me on many levels. George R. wrote the story specifically for our endeavor. After my initial reading, I was immediately drawn to the atmosphere. It was a performance in a changing landscape. Elements of theatre, opera, ballet or film seem to be apparent in this narrative of a folkloric legend of the Golem. The tale is rich in imagery and we are witness to this choreographed drama as it unfolds. My task was to make a transition from viewer to participant and try to find that vein.

It was through this atmosphere that I could see clearly to enter the mysterious “garden” in the text. It was there I could create my own vision.

George A. Nama
This portfolio is the only art collaboration George Romero ever did. He was looking forward to standing beside George Nama to present it at the gallery opening. Unfortunately, this was not to be, as George Romero passed away Sunday, July 16th, 2017.

I met George Romero when I was 28 years old and a young actress trying to make my way in the NY theatre. George was the most important (and only) film director in Pittsburgh. He head shot one of his early films (Jack's Wife) in my parents’ home. They became good friends and of course they told him about their “actress” daughter. We first met over the holidays when I was home visiting. George offered to help me produce and audition tape and we had fun working on it in his small sound studio. A couple of months later he called to tell me he had written a script (Martin) and there was a role in it for me. This began a 29 year relationship and marriage that produced two children and 8 films that we worked on together.

George often told me about his friend from Carnegie Tech, who was a wonderful artist and had become very well known in the art world. He loved telling stories how when the two sat beside each other in art history class, they would tell jokes and do silly voices, etc. He laughed about how he would fill-in for the bass player in George Nama’s jazz band, when he got sick. “I didn’t know you played the bass” I said, and George smiled and said “I didn’t, I just strummed the notes and hummed the sounds.”

He introduced me to George Nama in 1977 when we bumped into him on the street outside a diner in Chelsea. We had been carrying the rough cut of Martin with us. George Nama invited us to come over to his loft and screen the film on his wall that evening, something they had done in the past with another film in Pittsburgh. It was a great night, full of laughter and college stories. I listened to the two men reminisce about old times and hear how they had wanted to collaborate on a project together and how disappointed they were that they never got it going.

Jump cut to the year 2013. George Romero and I have divorced. He is remarried and I am living with George Nama. We again bump into each other and over a glass of wine the guys decide it was “now or never” to do a project together. The result is this portfolio LIBERATOR.

This work represents themes that George Romero explored throughout his career. It is a dark and brooding piece. “What I’m trying to show” he is quoted as saying about his work, “is how the monster, the evil, is not something lurking in the distance, but something actually inside all of us.”

I know he is here in spirit watching this exhibition take place…..and smiling.

Christine Forrest Romero
This portfolio is a collaboration consisting of seven etchings printed on Arches Velin paper to accompany an original short story by George A. Romero. Overall sheet size: (approximately) 19 1/2” x 25 3/4” (49.5 x 65.4 cm). Signed by both George A. Romero and George Nama.
Samuel turned the lights on in the Roxper Room. It was shortly after three a.m. Samuel had gone to lie down on his bed four times but had never been able to sleep into the peaceful oblivion of sleep. This was partly because he was old. Eighty-six. The aches and pains of age kept him awake. And fear kept him awake. Not the fear of death. He'd been free of that fear for some thirty-five years. Fear since he had positively proven that God actually did exist. Still, the main reason he couldn't sleep was because his doctors had told him that he only had weeks to live. He was afraid of what might happen to the children once he was gone.

You'd never know, by looking at him, that he was eighty-six. People who saw him on the street thought he was sixty. An obvious power remained in his voice and legs. The power of a man who had done physical labor most of his life.

He had been twenty-one years old when World War II ended. He had been a farmer, working in a vegetable garden behind a cattle barn near Strasbourg, France. There was a large lie blaring in the garden. Samuel should have been delighted to meet his “liberators” but, oddly, he refused to join them until the fire had burned out completely.

Was he concealing evidence? Actually, yes he was. Had he committed some crime? That was a matter of opinion. In the eyes of the world, there had been worse crimes committed. Far worse.

These, for example, that brutalized Samuel’s people, the Jews.

He had believed, at the time, that their persecutors were evil. Or at least inspired by an evil force. All he ever did was strike back. In the only way he knew. A way that, in the end, strengthened his already near-religious faith. Because, to his astonishment, it worked.

Realizing that the enemy was closing in, Samuel had turned to his Lord God, and to an ancient Catholic text which, in the end, saved his life and the lives of two dozen others.

Samuel never married. Perhaps that’s why he has always valued family highest among his blessings. Among the others “liberated” from behind that cattle barn were Samuel’s mother and father, his three brothers, two sisters, and all of his nieces and nephews. They numbered twenty-six in all; Samuel identified them as members of his “tribe.” There seemed to be something significant in his use of the word. “Tribes.”

The so-called “liberators” who eventually arrived believed themselves, with the arrogance of not being persecuted, to be savages of Samuel and his family. Had they examined things a bit more closely, they might have understood the improbability . . . some would have called it an impossibility . . . that twenty-six Jews, who had never done anything to deserve themselves, could have survived on a farm near Strasbourg through the most hazardous three years of the war. It simply could never have been. Not without some sort of protection. Fortunately, Samuel’s “tribes” had all the protection they needed. They had the promised protection of the Most High.

LIBERATOR
George A. Sciamano
That fire in the garden? What sort of evidence might Samuel have been trying to destroy? Why would something done in God’s Name need to be held in secret? Because the force behind it was strong enough to crush anyone...any thing...that stood in its way, including the one, or ones, who conjured it.

If it was conjured wrongly...out of greed, or for any other of self-serving purpose, as opposed to something that benefited the community...the “tribe”...the conjurer himself, or herself, would be punished with “equivalence.” If one were to wish for undeserved prosperity, one might be rewarded with poverty. If one were to wish that some harm be visited on a fellow who, in God’s view, was undeserving of such harm, then the conjurer himself would be punished in a manner similar to that which he might have imagined for his victim. Should an accuser prescribe a specific punishment which, in God’s estimation, is unwarranted, God will impart that very same punishment on the accuser.

How? Yes, God’s judgements are often harsh, or they seem so. Diving with the Amalekites had always been a dangerous game. Back during the war, Samuel had taken his chances. And, as it turned out, he and his family benefited. Because there was nothing prudent in Samuel’s heart. Those who he saw as the enemies of his tribe were, in most people’s judgement, on the wrong side of virtue.

Apparently the Lord God agreed with him.

In those three terrible years before “Debation,” God, through His Avenging Agent on Earth, chose frequently to intervene on Samuel’s behalf. That’s why he and his family were never found. In that time, while Samuel’s “tribe” was hiding in plain sight, a rash of heinous crimes raged the countryside near Shechem. Most of the crimes were murders. Some were so brutal that they were thought to have been done by wild animals. Very powerful wild animals. One victim, a female, was torn completely apart. Her body was found, spread like some horrible spreadsheet, over a field that stretched more than a hundred yards.

Eventually authorities reasoned that, since most of the victims were either German nationals or French sympathizers, the murders, which shockingly numbered thirty-two, must have been the work of the “Vestiges” which was violently active in the hills nearby.

Actually, there were more than thirty-two murders. There were fifty-five in all. Some of the victims appeared to have suffered accidents. Others were simply never found. Not that God’s Avenging Agent ever gave a thought to covering facts...but...tracks. Circumstances sometimes sent a victim to the bottom of the river. Once a woman’s corpse turned up in northern Italy. It had been jammed into a truck. It was found to be so badly mutilated that it couldn’t be identified. Once again, wild animals were blamed.

Over the years, Samuel became more and more confident that the Lord had found no fault with his methods. That, in the end, his cause must have been a just one. Because the Avenger had never turned against him.

LIBERATOR
George A. Romero
The Thing he had set abroach the day the "Liberator" arrived was, in fact, the Avenging Agent itself... [Itself!] As instructed by those Caballistic texts, Samuel had taken its life out of it first, then set it ablaze. He couldn't help but feel pangs of guilt. Even though he had taken its life, he couldn't help but think of it as... well... the real "Liberator." A sort of guardian angel, called a "Golem," that had seen him and his "Tribe" through the worst of all days. Now, the war was over. The Creature had no further purpose. The same "Book of Light" that had taught Samuel how to give it life had taught him how to take it away. He prayed that that was somehow an act of mercy. The gratitude made it seem important that he try to be as merciful as possible.

The ancient craft which Samuel had used was not an obscure one. Amazingly, to this day, instructions can be found in texts that appear in most Jewish handbooks. Anyone can read those instructions. Anyone can construct God's Agent. Most people have never tried. Most probably believe that it's just a lot of horse-pox. Back during the war, Samuel, faced with what he believed would be certain death at the hands of the Nazis, decided that there was nothing to lose. So he followed the Lord God's instructions. He constructed a Golem using river mud that he had harvested.

Three years later Samuel, with heavy heart, found himself destroying The Thing. As inescapable as it was of feeling pain, it was just as inescapable of feeling devotion, or any sort of concern. It had no survival instinct. Losing its life had no more meaning to the creature than if it had lost a shirt button. Of course, it did... (It)... have no buttons. When Samuel had first crafted the thing, he hadn't bothered to incooperate details like buttons. All that had mattered at the time was that the Creature had arms. Large hands for beating things apart. Inappropriate locations on The Thing's head, Samuel had made clumsy indentations that loosely resembled eyes. These were basically just holes made in the mud by Samuel's fingers. The Creature didn't at all need eyes. It could see quite clearly without them.

Then Samuel had carved letters into The Thing's chest. Letters that spelled the word "Life" in Hebrew. (To take it's life away, he would later carve letters that translated to "No Life,"... it was as simple as that.) As Samuel watched the Creature become animated... (how omnious he was when it actually did)... he felt a sort of guilt. He felt as if these false, unnecessary "eyes" were staring at him... staring all the way into him, all the way into his soul, as if he had done something terrible. He was overwhelmed by the certainty that the Creature was somehow trying to frighten him... warn him.

Then the Golem spoke. Or did it? Perhaps it only spoke into Samuel's mind. It was a warning. And Samuel dropped to his knees. "Steward," the Thing said. "You are safe. Never call me again. Never dare. For fear of your soul. Unless you are certain that your cause is just."

"I... I am certain."

"And so I will help you. But in days to come, be just as certain before you ask more."

Liberator
George A. Rovisco
In the end, when the war was over and Samuel set The Thing on fire, he recalled as he watched it burn, imagining that the creature itself never felt. He almost expected it to scream. It never did. The only vocalizations came from the furnace itself. Popping. Cracking. Splutting. The spits were quite unworthy of the Almighty force inside the belly of the beast.

All of that happened many years ago.

Now, Samuel, having had no sleep, turned the light on in the Rumpus Room. The light made his heart feel heavy. Nearly as heavy as it had felt back in the war years.

The Rumpus Room was where he and his closest family gathered several times a day. There were seven of them. Children, none older than twelve, who, for one reason or another, had been captured by the system. Samuel had been sheltering them for years now. It was technically illegal. In fact, just as it was technically illegal for Samuel to be sheltering two dozen Jews during World War II. His only difference. He felt just as responsible for these children as he had felt for his nieces and nephews. They had become his new "tribe."

Samuel looked at three large, open boxes meant to hold toys. There were toys scattered all over the floor of the Rumpus Room but none at all in the bins. The bins were filled with modeling clay. What seemed like mountains of it. Samuel began to sweep out handfuls of the stuff.

Modeling clay used to be sold in blocks, slightly larger than quarter-pound sticks of butter. Samuel had been buying them all his life. He remembered when they were a nickel apiece. Remembered when the price jumped up to a dime. Then to fifteen cents. Twenty. And eventually up to a quarter. Sometime before it hit fifty cents, he stopped buying. He felt that he had plenty, just under two hundred pounds. More than enough to build something the size of a man.

Modeling clay was available in three colors: red, green, and yellow. None of these colors lived up to their reputations. The green looked like pea soup. The yellow like milk. The red was only slightly brighter than rust. Whenever the children wanted to use the clay to sculpt something, they would normally sweep out handfuls of it. Just as Samuel had done, and when they were finished, pour the stuff back into the bins. Once in a while, once the clay had been pushed, pressed, and squeezed onto itself, the colors blended and it was impossible to separate them. So all of the children's sculptures were streaked with variegated morsels of these dull, indistinct colors.

An alarm clock rang somewhere in the house. Eight a.m. One at a time, the children got out of bed. They made their separate ways into the Rumpus Room where Samuel would normally be waiting with some sort of breakfast. This particular morning Samuel was waiting with something else...

...a full-sized man that he had crafted out of modeling clay, its flesh streaked with variegated morsels of dull, indistinct colors.

Liberator
George A. Roman
Samuel told the children that he was dying. There were tears in his face. He told them how God had protected him in the war. He told them that this man of clay would present them in much the same way.

And, of course, he warned them. His voice didn’t have the dynamic power of the voice he believed he had once heard... "Not every cause is just. Never more. For fear of your soul. Unless you are certain that your cause is just..." but he spoke the words as solemnly as he could. The children listened. Unfortunately they only heard what they wanted to hear. They didn’t have the benefit of having suffered in a war. They didn’t have that sort of automatic wisdom. No one spoke the thought, but each of them secretly saw in the Golem a path to a much more comfortable future.

Samuel pressed on, teaching them how to give the Golem life, and teaching them how to take it away. No one listened to that part. How to take it away. They believed they had been blessed, yes, but by a Golem rather than a God. They had visions of gold coins on the horizon.

When the time came, Samuel carved letters into the clay man’s chest and gave The Thing birth.

Less than three weeks later Samuel went to meet the God that had once provided him with “liberation.” At the moment of his death, he seemed to hear words in his head again. “The cause you left behind? They may not rise. They do not have faith. Faith is what enables us to live without this.”

The cause left behind, Samuel’s children, his “tribe,” gathered in the Kriegs Room where the clay man was lying silently. One of the boys, Samuel’s son, spoke fervently to The Thing. “Hey, Frankenstein, how about you go out there and score a million dollars for each of us?”

The Golem slowly turned its head and “looked” at James. It had no eyes, only that pair of indentations made by Samuel’s fingers, but it “looked” directly at James. Then it stood up on the heaps of clay that were its feet. And a moment later it began to walk toward the boy.

“No,” James shouted, “No!”

The other boys tried to approach the Golem, thinking to carve the words “No Life” in its chest. The Golem swept them away with mighty arms.

James ran, and ran, and ran, fearing all the while... knowing all the while... that the Golem would follow him...

... possibly until the end of time.

Meanwhile, Samuel, in his after-life, was sleeping peacefully, believing that he had left things perfectly in order.

LIBRATOR

George A. Rodgers
This portfolio is a collaboration consisting of seven etchings printed on Archival Velin paper to accompany an original short story © by George A. Romero. First edition.

* The text in handset and Linotype Melior type was printed by Darrell Hyder, The Sun Hill Press, North Brookfield, Massachusetts. 
  Etchings were made by Jim O'Meara and Tony, Hope Lindsey, Providence, Rhode Island.
  Etchings printed by Kathy Caraccio.

* All prints are signed and hand colored by the artist George A. Romero and all copies are signed by the author in an edition of thirty-five copies numbered 1 – 35.

* Ten additional sets are artist’s proofs numbered A.P. 1 – A.P. 10

This is copy.
CATALOG OF RELATED WORKS

1. Untitled, 1962. Charcoal on rag paper. 26 1/2” x 40” (67.3 x 102 cm). Signed and dated.

2. Untitled, 2002-2017. Etching. 16 1/2” x 14” (42 x 36 cm). Signed.


4. Garden #1, 2017. Gouache, charcoal, and collage on antique paper. 40” x 50” (102 x 127 cm). Signed.

5. Garden #2, 2017. Gouache, charcoal, and collage on antique paper. 40” x 50” (102 x 127 cm). Signed.


SELECTED ONE MAN EXHIBITIONS

2017    Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Inc., Los Angeles, California
2017    Shepherd W&K Galleries, New York, New York
2016    Shepherd W&K Galleries, New York, New York
2013    Shepherd W&K Galleries, New York, New York
2011    Shepherd & Derom Galleries, New York, New York
2010    Boston Athenaeum, Boston, Massachusetts
2009    Galerie Claude Van Loock, Brussels, Belgium
2008    Galerie Chantal Grange, Paris, France
2008    Galerie Arnoldi-Livie, Munich, Germany
2008    Schleswig Holstein Music Festival at St. Petri, Lubeck, Germany
2008    Shepherd & Derom Galleries, New York, New York
2007    Galerie Arnoldi-Livie, Munich, Germany
2007    Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Inc. Los Angeles, California
2006    Galerie Patrick Derom, Brussels, Belgium
2006    Galerie Arnoldi-Livie, Munich, Germany
2006    Shepherd & Derom Galleries, New York, New York
2005    “Yves Bonnefoy: poesie et peinture 1993-2005”, Tours, France
2004    Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Inc. Los Angeles, California
2003    Galerie Arts et Lettres, Vevey, Switzerland
2003    Shepherd & Derom Galleries, New York, New York
2003    Galerie Artemisia, Paris, France
2003    Galerie Patrick Derom, Brussels, Belgium
2002    Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Inc., Los Angeles, California
2001    University of New Haven, New Haven, Connecticut
2001    Shepherd & Derom Galleries, New York, New York
1975    Diogenes International Galleries, Athens, Greece
1974    Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, New York
1967    Galerie d’art, Brussels, Belgium
1965    Print Club, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1965    Agra Gallery, Washington, D.C.
1964    University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia
1963    Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Bibliothèque municipale de Tours, Tours, France
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France
Bodleian Library, Oxford, England
Boston Athenaeum, Boston, Massachusetts
Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York, New York
The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Hammer Museum, UCLA Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts
Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Germany
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York
The Morgan Library and Museum, New York, New York
Musée Jenisch, Vevey, Switzerland
National Academy Museum, New York, New York
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia
The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, Pennsylvania
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut