

Art: Red Hook's Gallery Small presents "American in Paris"

by Elizabeth Graham

The sights of Paris are on display at a Van Brunt Street gallery, but although visitors will find representations of the Eiffel Tower and other iconic Parisian attractions at Gallery Small New York, what they won't find is typical postcard images of the French city.

"American in Paris" is a collection of work created by a group of artists, all of whom are from New York, in reaction to time spent in the City of Light. What binds

the show is a shared perspective. Each artist captures moments that are often overlooked or ignored through different styles and mediums in a city where tourist attractions monopolize landscape and the attention.

"In each case it's trying to take the icon out of Paris, each one of those artists is responding to Paris non-iconically," said Alexandra Mondschein, the gallery's director and owner.

A lithograph by Frederick Dickinson Williams is a classical representation of the Parisian landscape, while the rest of the show ranges from dark and moody to sunny pieces. AK Corbin's architectural drawings of places like the Eiffel Tower, done on black paper, evoke mystery and a

sense of loneliness. Her work hangs alongside that of her father, Leonard Corbin, whose landscapes and loose, almost impressionistic style seems to offer a peek into quiet corners of the Old World.

The show follows "French," a collection of drawings and illustrations from France dating back to 1840 to 1940.

The gallery's street-level location in a former liquor store, where the door is usually propped open as in invitation to passersby, represents its aim to appeal to a wide-ranging audience.

"We like people to come in, we want to be street level, nothing hoity-toity," Mondschein said. "We want people to come in and react" to the art, all of which bears some connection to New York or Paris. The gallery seeks out work that represents "the small side of it, an-



Above: *Resting Mid Bridge, Paris* - AK Corbin; lower left: *Afternoon Break* - Madeleine Kraeler



other way to look at the city which you take for granted."

The gallery hosts several shows a year, with a focus on emerging artists. Soon, submissions will be accepted for a show spotlighting illustrators, along with one titled "Beautiful Junk," which, Mondschein says, will be a collection of eye-catching

castoffs and trash.

"American in Paris" is on display through the end of May at Gallery Small New York, 416 Van Brunt Street. Their hours are Thursdays 1 - 5 pm, Friday and Saturday 12 - 6 pm and Sunday from 12 - 5 pm Smallnewyork.com, smallnewyorkcity@yahoo.com, (347) 782-3729.

Dining: Frankie's 457 continues to shine on Court Street

by Erik Penney

Legend has it that the two Frankie's who own Frankie's 457 Spuntino on lower Court Street met - or reunited - after losing touch for 18 years while fighting over a parking spot in Manhattan. After recognizing each other, I can imagine they embraced and in true Italian-American style insisted on sharing an enormous meal together. Both chefs by trade, they quickly realized that they shared the same passion for the same foods from their childhood. They decided that they should open a restaurant together that served the best of what they remembered eating as kids, and thus Frankie's was born.

I have to believe that a restaurant as good as Frankie's must have sprung from a beautiful coincidence such as this one, and we are all the better for it.

My first visit to Frankie's actually came after a failed attempt at a table at Prime Meats, a nearby restaurant that they also own.

The room is small, casual and almost always full. Classic rock pipes through the house system. What they are doing here with the menu is simple and seems obvious, but it is something that's surprisingly rare in restaurants today - staying true to the classic recipes of the past while improving them with all of the exceptional ingredients that are easily available today.

The great thing about Frankie's is that they do not try to reinvent the wheel or deconstruct the beloved Italian-American dishes so many of us, Italian or not, grew up on. The menu is, therefore, entirely recognizable. Intelligent, creative ingredient sourcing and top-notch culinary expertise take these dishes to their apotheosis.

The first dish I had at Frankie's was a house-made cavatelli pasta with Faicco's hot Italian sausage and marinara sauce. Faicco's, has been sating New Yorkers' Italian sausage and meat cravings for generations. That Frankie's chose to use their product speaks to my point about ingredient sourcing. In this dish the use of exceptional sausage pushes it over the edge for me. The pork is fattier and more flavorful, the fennel taste and aroma are deeper and fresher. Perfectly al dente pasta, a wonderful, light marinara and a grate of fresh Parmigiano Reggiano round it out and I defy you to find a better plate of pasta anywhere.

Linguini with fava beans and toasted breadcrumbs is also an astonishingly good dish. That's all it is, except maybe with a good glug of excellent extra virgin olive oil. Simple and beautiful, the contrasting textures are perfect and just delicious. Faicco's again appears in the sausage, peppers and creamy po-

lenta, and a light tomato sauce ties together this rich plate. All of these things are the very best of their kind.

Some small plates are available at the bar. They have a list of crostini. One night we shared 4: sweet eggplant caponata; fresh, milky ricotta and speck; canellini beans with lemon, capers and anchovy; and cece beans with guanciale. The whole list is delicious and interesting and also fun to share. They have a form of charcuterie menu. From there you can get ribbons of prosciutto, capicola, and sopressata, all of which I am sure come from a carefully chosen artisan who takes enormous pride in producing the best of what he can. And now Frankie's has it.

Pork braciola marinara has been braising slowly for eternity until it reaches the apex of tenderness. The sauce has taken on a remarkable meaty, silky weight. Meatballs are made with pignoli nuts and raisins in a welcome nod to the deep Southern tip of Italy, if not Sicily. Also braised in their marinara, these are intense and highly textural. They are authentic and utterly true to their Southern roots, but also unique to the American palate, where putting raisins in your meatballs might otherwise elicit scrunched noses from the kids at the table. The sweetness permeates through the meat

and into the sauce. While it is clearly Italian it is also different and fascinating to eat. Again, top quality meats in both make them spectacular.

The sandwiches on the menu, again, are mostly typical, Italian-American "heroes" that I have gotten in delis and at street fairs all my life, but these are something different. Faicco's sausage and broccoli rabe. Fresh mozzarella, tomato and roasted red peppers. Meatball parmigiana. And finally Sicilian tuna with tomato, red onion and arugula. All are made with superlative ingredients. The tuna is imported and is likely caught on small boats, the tuna herded into enormous hand-nets by old Sicilian fishermen in the same way as has been done for centuries. You think I'm being sarcastic but this is entirely true. The process is regulated and sanctioned by the Sicilian government to protect both the Mediterranean tuna populations and the local fishing industry, and it produces some of the most incredible tuna you will ever taste. After trying it you will be ruined for anything in a can with a pull-tab for the rest of your life. It is fishier, fattier, oilier and saltier. This is truly the prized ingredient that causes a whole line-caught tuna to sell for tens and even hundreds of thousands of dollars in some markets. It also makes for one of the best \$12 sandwiches I can think of.

The wine list is also intelligently crafted, and starts with a perfectly good \$6 glass of the house red, currently a Montpulciano d'Abruzzo. A rotating list of regional options includes an excellent Nebbiolo and an equally good Morellino. The selection pairs well with the simple, almost rustic menu.

I do love Italian food. But maybe what I really love is what it represents, which to me is big dinners at big tables with parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, nieces, nephews and loved ones. And the food - big steaming bowls of pasta and sauce, flavorful roasted and simmering meats and fish, huge loaves of crusty bread and olive oil and cheese, and lots of wine. The food here at Frankie's is genius, but equally genius is that they manage to make you feel like you are at a table like this, everyone brought together by their love of food and each other. And the Led Zeppelin coming through the speakers doesn't hurt either.

Frankie's 457 Spuntino, 457 Court Street (corner of Luquer)
www.frankiesspuntino.com

Recommended dishes: Braised octopus with Dandelion Greens and Castelvetrano vinaigrette; crostini; cured meats; linguini with fava beans and toasted breadcrumbs; Faicco's sweet sausage with roasted red peppers and onions over creamy polenta; meatballs; red wine prunes and mascarpone