

HOME

# Eric White stars at opening, not girlfriend Patricia Arquette

By **Carolyn Zinko**

Updated Sep 19, 2015 6:37 a.m.



Actress Patricia Arquette (left center) and Eric White (right center) entertain attendees of the U.S. premiere of White's "New Works" exhibit at Serge Sorokko Gallery in San Francisco, California, on Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015.

It was tempting to wonder whether artist [Eric White](#)'s first show in San Francisco in 15 years would be eclipsed by the presence of his famous girlfriend, Hollywood actor [Patricia Arquette](#). But at the [Serge Sorokko Gallery](#) on Geary Street on Thursday night, the star was the figurative realist, while Arquette quietly circled in outer orbit.

Guests packed the gallery so tightly it might have been easy to confuse it for a Dreamforce event, minus the bright blue conventioners' lanyards. It was easy to find White, who stands more than 6 feet tall, but Arquette was harder to spot, hiding in corners or occasionally going outside for a smoke. Yes, she had given him a very public shout-out while accepting her Academy Award for best supporting actress (for "Boyhood") earlier this year, but she wanted him, "the great love of my life," to have top billing this night.

---

### More By [Carolyne Zinko](#)

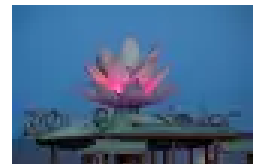
**Men's fashion steals the show at 93rd Opera Ball**



**Trends We Say No To: Camel as a fashion color**



**Scale, ambition of Burning Man art spill beyond playa**



"To meet someone who is a fellow artist in a completely different discipline and who can teach you so much about this whole part of the arts that you don't know so

intimately is wonderful,” she said. “Art is a celebration of the life force. Art is the creative force. To live with that being alive in your house, there’s nothing like it.

---

**ADVERTISEMENT**  
Article continues below this ad

---

“But don’t put that in there,” she added. “This is about Eric.”

And indeed it was.

### **Collected by DiCaprio**

White, a Detroit native, moved to San Francisco in 1990 after graduating from the Rhode Island School of Design. The painter, who has been collected by Leonardo DiCaprio and had his works shown across Europe, got his start making nachos at the Punch Line and selling goods at Flax art supply before landing jobs as an illustrator and caricaturist for the likes of Mondo 2000, a glossy counterculture magazine, and Colossal Pictures, among others.



Kelly Niland crouches to get a better look at a painting during the U.S. premiere of Eric White's "New Works" exhibit at Serge Sorokko Gallery in San Francisco, California, on Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015.

Connor Radnovich/The Chronicle

In 1996, he mounted a solo show at Billy Shire's [La Luz de Jesus](#) gallery in Los Angeles, and by 2000, had left for Brooklyn, N.Y. Actor David Arquette bought a piece in 2001, as did Patricia, which sparked a friendship with White that deepened in 2013, when the two began dating.

---

**ADVERTISEMENT**

Article continues below this ad

---

Unlike some art openings, where looky-loos from the street drop in for a sip of white in a plastic cup, the invite-only crowd contained trained eyes, like those of former Fine Arts Museums curator and author [Robert Flynn Johnson](#), who lauded White's "technical facility merged with amazing imagination."

White, 47, calls his own work, which contains cinematic and surreal qualities, "figurative painting that has a strange edge to it." White says his style is fed by his love of 1940s Hollywood films, of cars (influenced by his childhood in the nation's automaking center) and of psychology.

### **Edgy works**



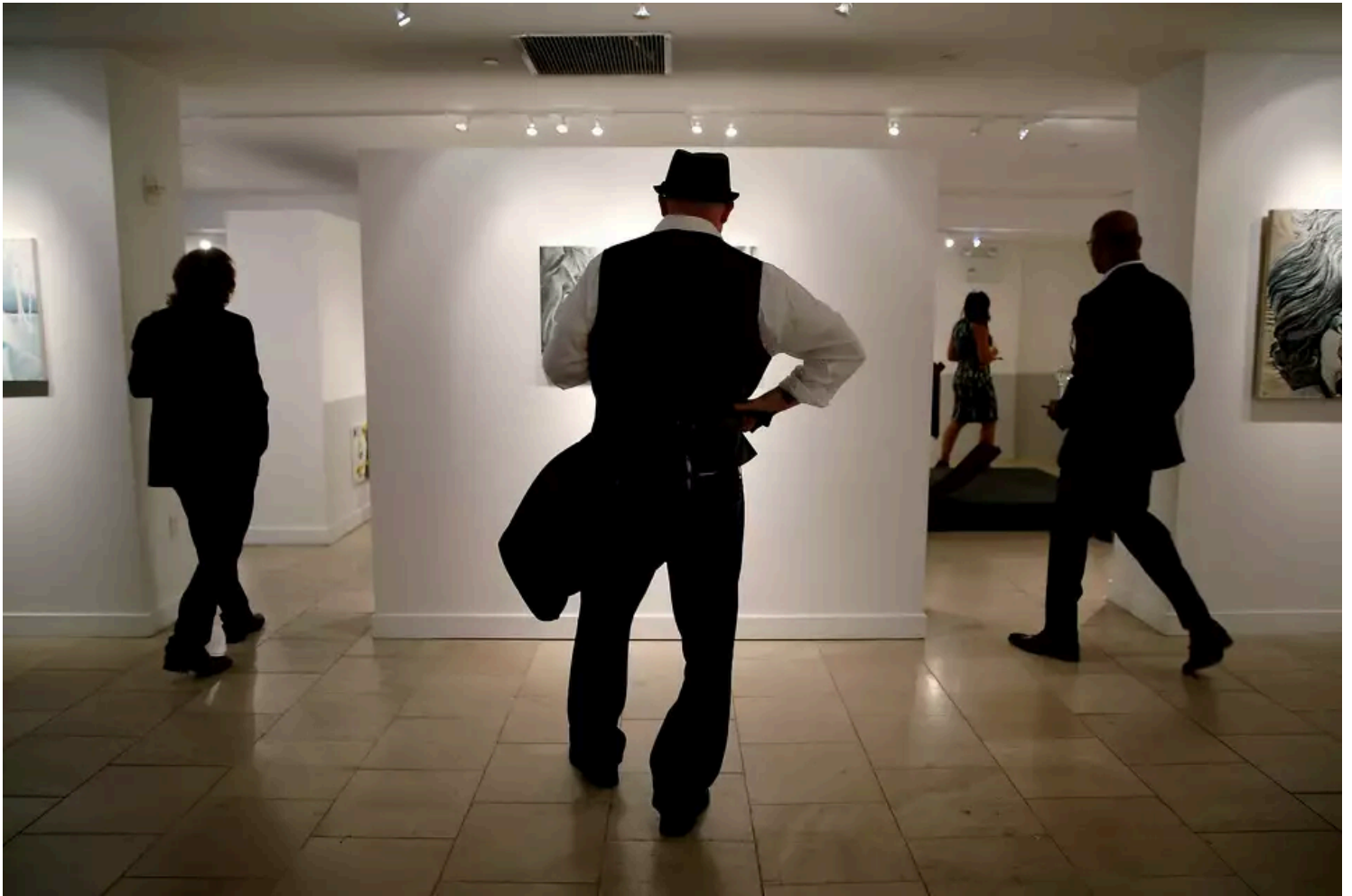
Mark Olson stands in front of a painting during the U.S. premiere of Eric White's "New Works" exhibit at Serge Sorokko Gallery in San Francisco, California, on Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015.

Connor Radnovich/The Chronicle

In one work, a woman drives a car — from a steering wheel in the middle of the dashboard. In another, the driver is White, who appears to be looking at his own eyes in the rearview mirror, but a closer look shows the eyes to be the driver's, peering back at himself from a giant billboard in the distance.

Paul Felder, a photographer who worked in the '90s with White, then illustrating author A.J. Jacobs' book "The Two Kings: Jesus & Elvis," said, "I knew he was super talented from the moment I saw his work." Why? "His ability to distort reality like a bad acid trip," Felder said.

San Francisco sculptor Jud Bergeron showed with White at 111 Minna Gallery in the '90s and except for those in Europe, has been to every one of his friend's shows since 1996. The two bonded over art and the musical equivalent of surreal art — Frank Zappa. White, bicoastal for the past two years, had his larger pieces sent to the gallery by truck from Los Angeles. But he put a few smaller pieces in his car, and upon arriving in San Francisco, stowed them in Bergeron's Glen Park garage, the day of an unseasonable rain, before they were hung later in the week at the gallery. The two celebrated the confluence of events by getting drunk on vodka, Bergeron said.



Daniel Rounds (center) inspects a painting during the U.S. premiere of Eric White's "New Works" exhibit at Serge Sorokko Gallery in San Francisco, California, on Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015.

Connor Radnovich/The Chronicle

“The thing about being an artist is, as jovial as we are at openings, most of our lives are spent behind closed doors — it’s almost a monastic existence,” Bergeron said. “When the occasion comes to celebrate the work we’ve been doing, everyone shows up.”

### **Cognoscenti attend**

Among the cognoscenti at the show — up through Oct. 18 — were interior designer [Gino Castano](#) of Pallateur, architect [Mark Dziewulski](#), Russian vice consul general [Andrey Varlamov](#), Yountville winemaker [Juan Mercado](#) of Realm Cellars, and [Patrick McDonald](#), the Dandy by the Bay, to name a few.

Also proud to watch the artist's career arc come full circle were White's brother, Justin, his father, Tom, his stepmother, Laurie, and his mother, [Terri Tate](#), who, although she had worked as a psychiatric nurse and hypnotherapist, couldn't quite fathom the meaning in the paintings.

"I'm a psychological type," she said with a laugh, "but his work is way over my head."

*[Carolyn Zinko](#) is a [San Francisco Chronicle](#) staff writer. E-mail:*

*[czinko@sfchronicle.com](mailto:czinko@sfchronicle.com) Twitter: [@CarolynZinko](#)*

Sep 18, 2015 | Updated Sep 19, 2015 6:37 a.m.



By **Carolyn Zinko**



Carolyn Zinko, a native of Wisconsin, joined The San Francisco Chronicle in 1993 as a news reporter covering Peninsula crime, city government and political races. She worked as the paper's society columnist from 2000 to 2004, when she wrote about the lifestyles of the rich but not necessarily famous. Since then, she has worked for the Sunday Style and Datebook sections, covering gala night openings and writing trend pieces. Her profiles of personalities have included fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg, Twitter co-founder Biz Stone and Emanuel Ungaro fashion house owner Asim Abdullah, to name a few. In a six-month project with The Chronicle's investigative team, she recently revealed the misleading practices of a San Francisco fashion charity that took donations from wealthy philanthropists but donated little to the stated cause of helping the developmentally disabled. On the lifestyle front, her duties also including writing about cannabis culture for The Chronicle and its cannabis website, [www.GreenState.com](http://www.GreenState.com) website.

---

**Top Of The News**





#### REAL ESTATE

## Renting versus buying a home: Has the math changed for today's Bay Area real estate market?

Is it better to rent or buy a home right now? Here's what the math shows for the Bay Area's biggest cities.

---

#### REAL ESTATE

## S.F. to take over former big tech headquarters building in Mid-Market

---

#### CRIME

## Newsom announces contract to install nearly 500 car-tracking cameras in and around Oakland

---

#### SAN FRANCISCO

## S.F. opened homeless housing in this wealthy neighborhood. Then the 911 calls began

# The cheesy pasta technique Bay Area diners can't get enough of

Top

About

---

Contact

---

Services

---

Account

---

**HEARST** *newspapers* © 2024 Hearst Communications, Inc. [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [CA Notice at Collection](#) |

[Your CA Privacy Rights \(Shine the Light\)](#) | [DAA Industry Opt Out](#) | [Your Privacy Choices \(Opt Out of Sale/Targeted Ads\)](#)