After learning about the life and work of Chilean artist Carlos Bautista Biernay, you will realize that it is fitting to open the exhibit on 9/11. It will be on view at City Lights Gallery until October 31, 2020. Along with an online version of the exhibit on the City Lights website, www.citylightsgallery.org

Gallery hours are W-F 12-5, Sat 12-4 or by appointment. Gallery address is 265 Golden Hill St. Bridgeport, CT, clgallerybpt@gmail.com

Right, Self-portrait by Carlos Bautista Biernay
Carlos’ need to make art that is lush, duplicitous, absurd, whimsical and macabre is fueled by his life’s experiences, growing up throughout his formative years, under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. His father and grandfather both died when Carlos was a very young boy. He was raised by women. He explains that his family like others in Chile during this time, needed to be resourceful, (to say the least), just to survive. He says, “We needed to make everything.” This is where his skills in making things began. Through this acquired survival skill, he finds a type of comfort from the realization of the absurdity of the human condition, man’s inhumanity to man, and the harsh acceptance that nothing was certain under the dictatorship of Pinochet. Carlos has memories as a 4 yr old when the military coup in Chile took place, in 1973 on September 11, yes 9/11.

As an artist he resonates with Dadaism, which was the reaction of artists like Marcel Duchamp, to World War I. Carlos studied art in New York. Years and now lives between Chile and the U.S. When he was confronted, horrified with the fate of the World Trade Center, those same excruciating feelings of peril and atrocity that he experienced as a child came rushing back.

“Scream and Shout”, the title of the exhibit and the focal piece of art aptly describes the artist’s frenetic acceptance of absurdity and Dadaism. We can scream and shout with the exuberance like that of a popular Beatles song with a similar title, wildly, freely expressing and enjoying life, art, music, dance and we can scream and shout with the fear and
rage of man’s capacity for brutality and the inevitability of death.

Carlos has modernized the visual vocabulary and sentiment of Francisco Goya’s Los Caprichos, and incorporates other art historical references in his work. On September 11, Patriots’ Day, we remember those who died in the towers and those who ran in to save them. It is a day when the country comes together for acts of service and to honor our first responder heroes. The sentiment for the 9/11 of 2020 is fraught with anxiety and loss caused by the Pandemic and the division caused by bias, perceptions, and actions and reactions of fear and rage. The cancer of division has metastasized, the body of our country needs to heal. We know, “a house divided cannot stand.”

Humans are blessed to have artists/empaths, like Carlos Bautista Biernay who are on this planet to hold a mirror to our actions, motivations and feelings. They absorb the pain and joy, the beautiful and the ugly. Their release is to synthesize what they have collected and to create art, the reflection of humanity. These creations are opportunities for all of us to meditate, assess our perceptions and motivations, remember our true heroes. As an absurdist, Carlos is not judgmental. His art is a touchstone that enables the viewers to think and feel for themselves. These writings will help engage viewers who can’t come to the gallery and get lost in the textures, and materials, and experience the impact of large textile collages, that shimmer and weave in and out, with knots and stitches and patches of nostalgic photographs on fabric, whimsy and macabre combined. During difficult times, art, even absurd art, that we can relate with may be the balm that we need. As filmmaker Akira Kurosawa said, “In a mad world only the mad are sane.”
Scream and Shout by Carlos Buatista Biernnay