

## The Unveiling

For one hundred and forty-four years The Lambs Club of New York City has presented itself to the world as a society of fellowship and love. Our incredible heritage of American, and more specifically Broadway show business history makes us utterly unique among the social clubs of this city, this country and indeed the whole wide world.

Tonight we have been called together to witness a time-honored tradition: the unveiling of The Shepherd's Portrait. This will be the thirty-fifth Shepherd to be honored with either a bust or, as in this case, an oil portrait.

What is a portrait anyway? For one thing it is more than a mere likeness. A photograph or a painting of a *stranger* is a likeness. A *portrait* is an exchange between the artist and subject. In this exchange the personality and character of the subject is examined by the artist and interpreted through the artist's skill onto canvas, paper or whatever medium the artist utilizes in capturing the essence of the subject.

Portraits exist for many reasons: to record an individual's unique qualities for posterity, to mark a notable historical event, to present a facade of respectability and/or power to the viewer and lastly to preserve the spirit and essence of the sitter's own universe over the course of time.

So why do we have portraits of all our Shepherds? Well, for all of the reasons listed above plus for making our extraordinary history a source of pride and respect.

How can our little flock continue to exist in this 21 century blur of hyper technical advancement and consequent alienation? Our cachet of great fame has mostly evaporated, no longer do the great stars of the Broadway stage strut through the marbled halls of the grand old Stanford White 44th Street Club House. No longer can our membership roll boast of more than one thousand members. Our little flock has shrunk to less than 200 lambs. The Zeitgeist has long left behind it the appetite for the kind of lingering sentimental *Bruederschaft* which was a mainstay of the old Club. No longer are we the all-male enclave of writers, singers, directors, and stars we once were.

But if we have lost all these things there are some things which we have gained. No longer can George Cukor claim as he once did that John Barrymore who played an outrageous, fatuous and pompous Broadway performer in his 1933 movie DINNER AT EIGHT, no longer can he claim that Barrymore's character represented an example of "a Lambs Club type actor".

No longer can members 'blackball' any new prospective member.

No longer are women barred at the door.

And if we have gained these things we have also managed to keep the most important element too. The fellowship evident in this room tonight is the proof of this. For that is what we were, are and evermore shall be — a fellowship. Like-minded in some things, diverse in many others it is the hunger for an enlightening social intercourse which remains the beating heart of any social club and certainly of The Lambs. In this our Shepherd, Marc Baron, has led the flock skillfully and devotedly to a safe resting place from which to pause and reflect. He has sacrificed much time and energy in running this Club. His knowledge of the rules and traditions has kept us legal and solvent even as we fight the headwinds of declining membership with outreach programs for young actors, lectures on the history of our Club to many outside groups, and grants of money and access to nonprofits from our Foundation.

And so it is more than fitting that we honor Shepherd Baron and his leadership at this time with this portrait by the esteemed artist and fellow Lamb Raymond Kinstler.

We have several examples of Kinstler portraiture in our collection and aside from adding to the monetary value of our art collection his portrait of Shepherd Marc Baron is yet another golden brick in that yellow brick road that winds into the future,

For it is for the future that the Lambs portraits really exist. To record for posterity who we were, to foster an esprit de corps for who we are and to point to a sustainable future of what we can become; these are the reasons we celebrate this Unveiling here tonight. These are the reasons we honor our Shepherd with this portrait. These are the reasons we feel tonight the joy in this room, the warmth of love for our Club, the pride of

Membership and the goodwill toward any and all who subscribe to The  
Lambs tradition of embracing creative artists of all kinds.  
Floreant Agni.