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Poets Artists

December 2012, Issue #41

Cover *ARTIST*
Aleah Chapin



Cover **ARTIST**
Aleah Chapin



Laugh 2011 oil on canvas 40 x 48 inches

Contributors

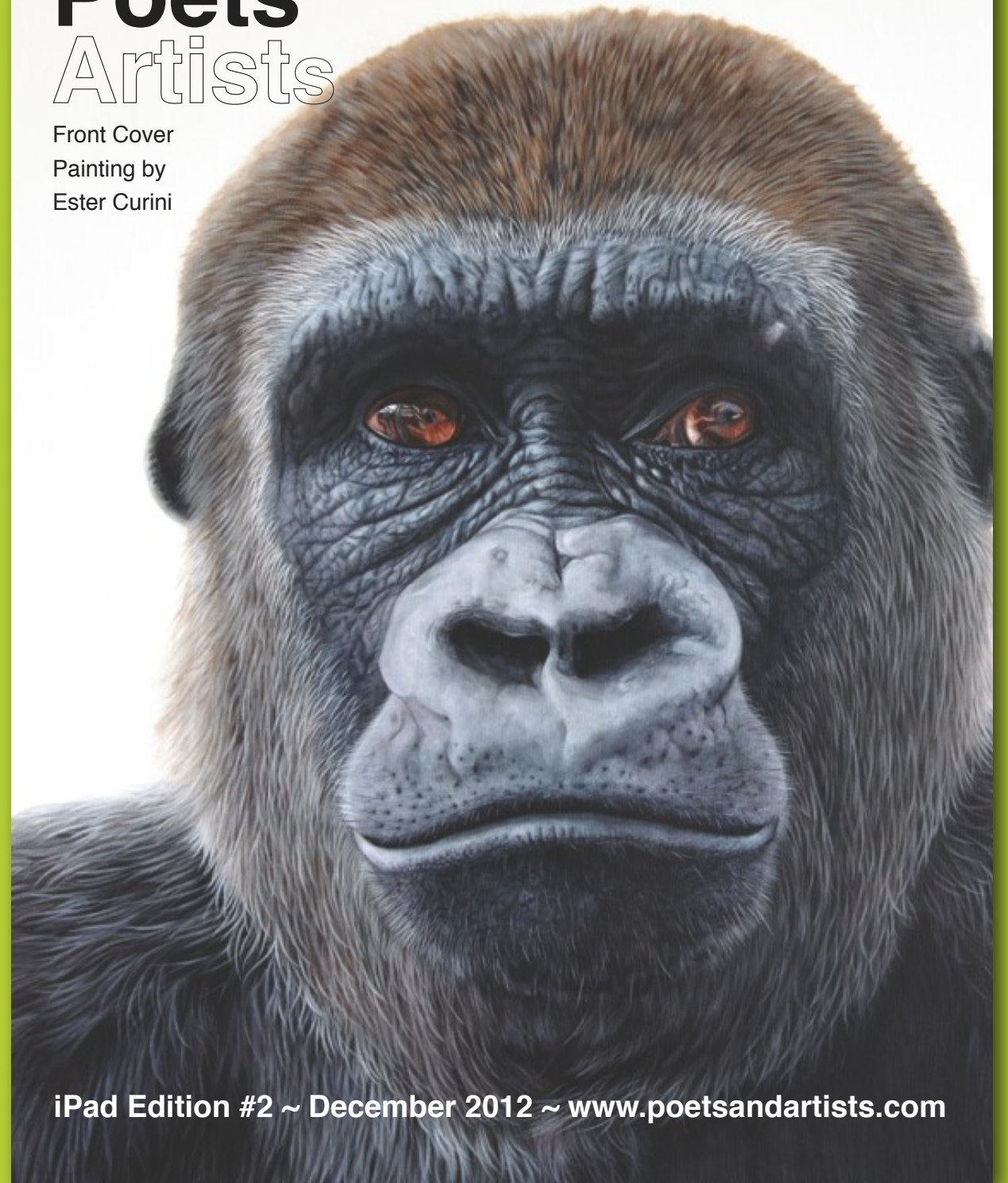
- Mònica Subidé
- Daena Title
- Carol O'Malia
- Carlos Gomez



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Front Cover
Painting by
Ester Curini

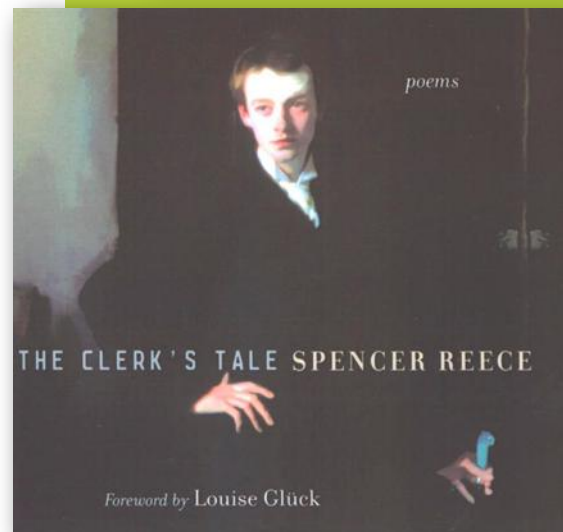


iPad Edition #2 ~ December 2012 ~ www.poetsandartists.com



Grady Harp Reviews

New Poetry Reviews by Terry Lucas **The Widening Spell**



Aleah Chapin

Born in 1986, Aleah Chapin grew up on an island north of Seattle. She received her BFA from Cornish College of the Arts in 2009 and her MFA from the New York Academy of Art in 2012. Chapin attended a residency at the Leipzig International Art Programme in Germany and has exhibited her work throughout the US and Europe. She has been the recipient of several awards including the Posey Foundation Scholarship, Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant, and is currently a Postgraduate Fellow at the New York Academy of Art. Most recently she won first place in the BP Portrait Award Exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

Its very important for me to have a strong personal connection to the people who I am painting. My final paintings are an outcome of a collaboration between myself and my subject and are painted free hand, oil on canvas. Each painting takes between one week and three months, depending on size and complexity.

The subjects in Aleah's recent work are women that she has known since birth. Titled The Aunties Project, this work “examines my personal history through the people who have shaped it. The process of painting these women allowed me a glimpse of their own journey through life and brought me into the present moment of our shared history.”



Twoness 2012 oil on panel 74 x 55 inches



Aleah Chapin

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Auntie 2011 oil on canvas 58 x 38



Emily 2012 oil on panel 16 x 16 inches

Aleah Chapin

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Momo, 2011 oil on canvas 58 x 38 inches

Mully 2012 oil on panel 16 x 16 inches

THE WIDENING SPELL: Dorianne Laux: Mining the Lyrical from the Status Quotidian

Review by Terry Lucas

I believe in love at first read. One poem, even one line, is sometimes all that it takes to forge a bond between reader and poet that will last a lifetime. We've all have our experiences of falling for certain poetry gods or goddesses. Collectively they become our personal canon. We turn to them when we are in distress, can barely take one more breath or get out of bed to recite one more line of our lives. We carry their pocket books of prayers in our purses, our backpacks, read them during our thirty-minute lunch hours, our mandated labor law breaks from waiting tables, from ringing up sales in department stores and retail shops for gifts that no one wants, as we worship at the altar of doing exactly what we want to do for one more minute.

Dorianne Laux is a member of the ranks of my personal, poetic hosts of heaven. How can one not be saved by poetry upon reading her following poem?

Waitress

When I was young and had to rise at 5 am
I did not look at the lamplight slicing
through the blinds and say: Once again
I have survived the night. I did not raise
my two hands to my face and whisper:
This is the miracle of my flesh. I walked
toward the cold water waiting to be released
and turned the tap so I could listen to it
thrash through the rusted pipes.
I cupped my palms and thought of nothing.

I dressed in my blue uniform and went to work.
I served the public, looked down on its
balding skulls, the knitted shawls draped
over its cancerous shoulders, and took its orders,
wrote up or easy or scrambled or poached
in the yellow pads' margins and stabbed it through
the tip of the fry cook's deadly planchette.

Those days I barely had a pulse. The manager
had vodka for breakfast, the busboys hid behind
the bleach boxes from the immigration cops
and the head waitress took ten percent
of our tips and stuffed them in her pocket
with her cigarettes and lipstick. My feet
hurt. I balanced the meatloaf-laden trays.
Even the tips of my fingers ached.

I thought of nothing except sleep, a T.V. set's
flickering cathode gleam washing over me,
baptizing my greasy body in its watery light.
And money, slipping the tassel of my coin purse
aside, opening the silver clasp, staring deep
into that dark sacrificial abyss.

What can I say about that tie, those years
I leaned against the rickety balcony on my break,
smoking my last saved butt?
It was sheer bad luck when I picked up
the glass coffee pot and spun around
to pour another cup. All I could think
as it shattered was how it was the same shape
and size as the customer's head. And this is why
I don't believe in accidents, the grainy dregs
running like sludge down his thin tie
and pin-stripe shirt like they were channels
riven for just this purpose.

It wasn't my fault. I know that. But what, really,
was the hurry? I dabbed at his belly with a napkin.
He didn't have a cut on him (physics) and only
his earlobe was burned. But my last day there
was the first day I looked up as I walked, the trees
shimmering green lanterns under the Prussian blue
particulate sky, sun streaming between my fingers
and I waved at the bus, running, breathing hard, thinking:
This is the grand phenomenon of my body. This thirst
is mine. This is my one and only life.

Auden notwithstanding ("For poetry makes nothing happen"), this poem, along with comments from another one of my poetry mentors, changed my life. Upon hearing Dorianne read it and Michael Waters say that if you're going to be a writer, be a writer full-time, I returned from the 2012 AWP conference and stepped down from a full-time management position to part-time sales in order to devote more time to writing.

Mònica Subidé



ARTISTIC PROCESS

I basically use oil, and always wet on wet. This allows me to paint different thick layers in order to give me the texture with which I see the person. I always visualize the finished portrait before the start, trying to keep it somewhere in my mind along the process. This helps me to know where I am going to.



We do not know ourselves entirely. We know ourselves in fragments. To me the portrait is a fragment of the body, it is not the whole. I try to work it as if it was a piece of body. Right the moment I work it this way, it distances myself from the physical and considerably approaches me towards the primitive, towards the essential. The idea is to search the carnal, the primitive and not so much the physical.

Mònica Subidé was born in April 1974 in Vilassar de Mar, in the province of Barcelona. She studied drawing at the Centre d'Art Massana, Barcelona, although as a painter she is essentially self-taught. Her work focuses on the observation of the human figure.

Guim and striped sweater 2012 oil on canvas

Mònica Subidé

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Captive Bodies 2012
oil on board

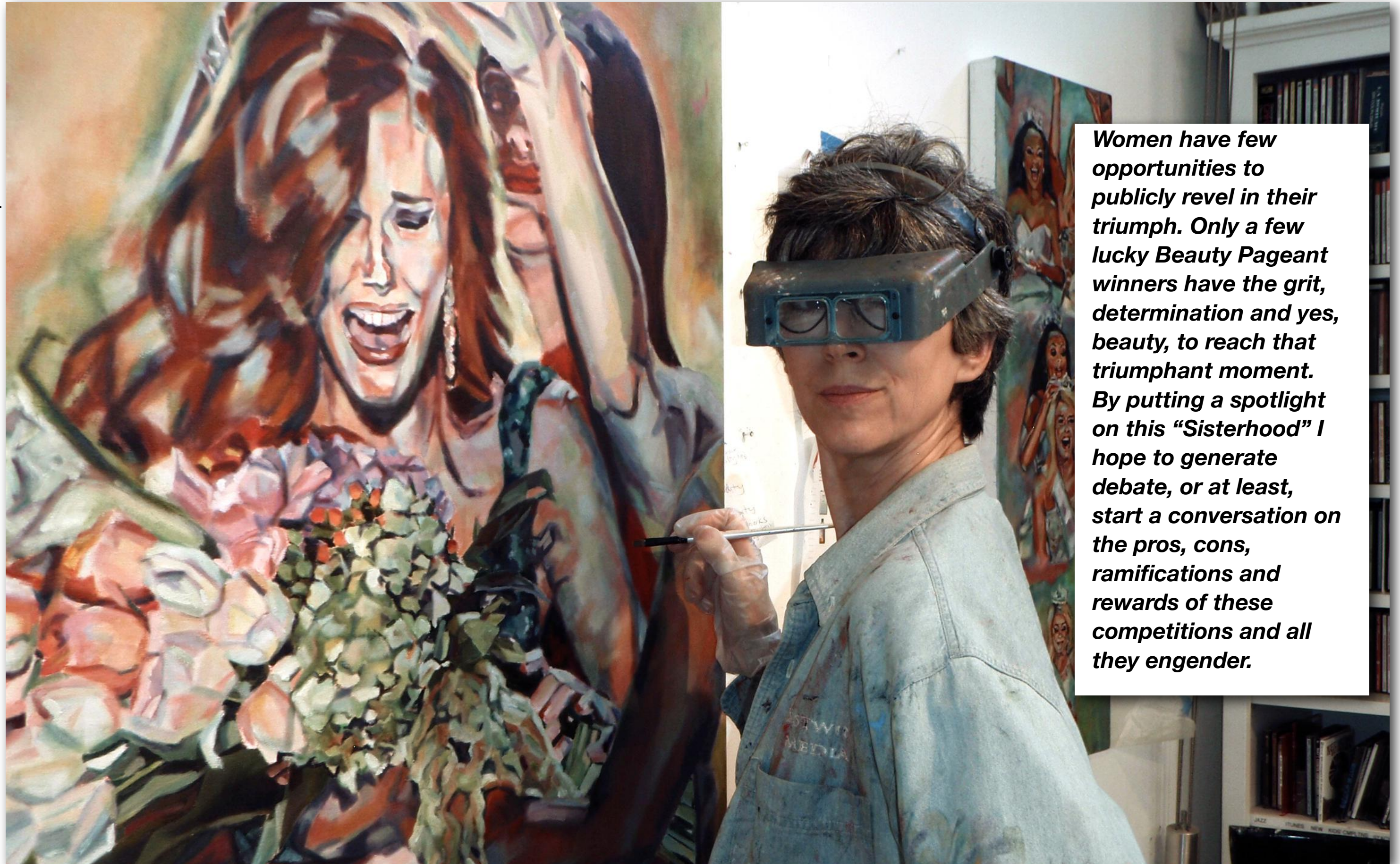
Mònica Subidé



Man Rested
2011-2012
oil on canvas

Daena Title

PoetsArtists www.poetsandartists.com



Women have few opportunities to publicly revel in their triumph. Only a few lucky Beauty Pageant winners have the grit, determination and yes, beauty, to reach that triumphant moment. By putting a spotlight on this "Sisterhood" I hope to generate debate, or at least, start a conversation on the pros, cons, ramifications and rewards of these competitions and all they engender.

Daena Title



Fists and Confetti 2012 oil acrylic and pastel on canvas 50 X 42 inches

ARTISTIC PROCESS

As my *Pageants!* paintings are of actual Beauty Pageant winners, my process begins by finding the perfect photograph, and obtaining the rights to use it. I search the online photo archives for moments of highest drama, those strange instances when ecstasy either enhances or overcomes beauty. Each photo differs in the unique way that women can physicalize their triumph, say for example, clenched fists, or a beatific calm. Emphasizing that expression then becomes my central focus. First I draw the figure in pastel and spray it with fixative. I choose the main color or colors that best reverberate the emotion in the photograph and apply those in a ground around the figure. I use acrylic paint at this stage as I like the effect of mixed media, the interplay of the canvas surface, pastel, acrylic and oil. That high key color ground will then determine the entire palette for that painting.

I don't use a set group of paint colors for each work, but rather, discover a new palette each time that is dictated by the key color/s. Once I've discovered those, I move forward in oils working section by section. My aim is to stay disciplined and not go back and overwork any one section until all the sections of the canvas that most call to me are handled. Only then can I assess what needs to be reworked, enhanced or added to emphasize that work's specific statement. That is my main focus these days and the hardest part, to not kill the painting. Rather, I seek to tenaciously focus on my POV without being seduced either by the many pleasures of painting itself, or by my idea of what a finished painting *should* look like. I try to bear in mind that I am less interested in the parlor trick of making every inch look real, than I am in trying to convey a vibrant overall experience of motion and emotion. I try to maintain a rawness and energy where the line is still evident, and where the marks, tumult, and color of the paint itself reinforce and communicate content. If I succeed, an opening is left for the viewer to enter into and complete the work. Often at this stage to get distance, I will turn the work upside down, or photograph it. When I've no idea how to make that POV's voice any louder, I fight to put the canvas away rather than fuss with it. Then I can congratulate myself that at least, at this point, the first draft is complete, and hopefully, the painting is still alive.

Raised on Long Island, Daena Title received a Bachelor of Arts in Art History and in Theatre Studies from Wellesley College, and then lived in Manhattan until 1991 where she has worked as an actress and writer. Title then returned to painting, finding it to be the best avenue with which to control her artistic message and mine her ongoing fascination/obsession with the relationship between women, beauty, identity and society. Her earlier "lives" are apparent in the narrative stories and emotional drama found in her work. Title currently resides in Los Angeles, California, where she is represented by the Koplín Del Río gallery. Her work is part of the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler On Line Feminist Art Base, resides in a number of prominent private collections, and has been seen recently in group exhibitions at the Torrance Museum and the Orange County County Center for Contemporary Art. Title has received critical praise for past solo exhibitions from the *Los Angeles Times*, *LA Weekly* and *Huffington Post*. Her work can be seen through December 15 at Koplín Del Río's 30th Anniversary show: "Self Possessed: Examining Identity in the 21st Century".

Daena Title

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Nirvana 2012 oil acrylic and gold gesso on canvas 54 X 36 inches



Point and Share 2012 oil acrylic and pastel on canvas 48 X 42 inches

THE WIDENING SPELL: Natasha Trethewey: A Poet Laureate for our Time

Review by Terry Lucas

For the time being, the poetry gods have smiled on the United States: we finally have a Poet Laureate who is at (or near – who knows how good she will get?) the peak of her powers. That she is a terrific poet (and from what I could tell of her in one ten minute conversation, probably at least as good of a human being) is a gift. And that she not only writes savory poetry, but is also committed to (and actively engaged in) the teaching of it, is a blessing that we have not had in some recent Poets Laureate. I learned all of this about her (and more) attending her reading earlier this week at Stanford as part of the renowned Lane Lecture Series.

Trethewey, the Charles Howard Candler Professor of English and Creative Writing at Emory University, has a list of credentials, of course, as long as the stage is wide in the 500+ capacity (yet intimate) Zambrano Hall on the campus of Stanford. Her honors include, but are not limited to, Guggenheim, Rockefeller, Bunting and NEA fellowships, The Cave Canem Poetry Prize (for her first book, *Domestic Work*), a Pulitzer Prize (for her third book, *Native Guard*), and an impressive list of state and national writing awards, including her recent appointment as US Poet Laureate.

But, most importantly, her poetry is virtuosic. In *Thrall*, for example, her subject matter (exploration of her own interracial and complicated roots) is highly significant, being at once deeply personal (without making herself the center of a new confessionalism), and globally significant (without devolving into a dispassionate chronicle), pursuing events and narratives that have been painted over on both her family's and history's canvas, for the sake of protecting its status quo images.

"Taxonomy," for example, with the epigraph, *After a series of casta paintings by/Juan Rodriquez Juarez, c. 1715, begins "The canvas is a leaden sky/behind them, heavy/with words, gold letters inscribing/an equation of blood –"*

On the sonic level, Trethewey's sonorous iambs frame a fresh vocabulary of the calculus of race with section titles that give the precise term for each child of several interracial unions: "1. DE ESPANOL Y DE INDIA PRODUCE MESTISO; 2. DE ESPANOL Y NEGRA PRODUCE MULATO; 3. DE ESPANOL Y MESTIZA PRODUCE CASTIZA." She writes "this plus this equals this – as if/a contract with nature, or/a museum label,/ethnographic, precise."

Add music and passion, and we could say the same for Trethewey's work: the result of a contract with the universe that brings her perfect-pitch voice to bear on score after score of skewed and sometimes hidden American stories – in order to bring them from their dim pages to our astonished and hungry ears.

I will have more to say about our new Poet Laureate in the days ahead. For now, I close with final lines from the ultimate poem in this collection: "Illumination."

So much is left

untold Between

the printed words and the self-conscious scrawl

between what is said and not

white space framing the story

the way the past unwritten

eludes us So much

is implication the afterimage

of measured syntax always there

ghosting the margins that words

their black-lined authority

do not cross Even

as they rise up to meet us

the white page hovers beneath

silent incendiary waiting

Carol O'Malia

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I strive to capture the fleeting moments that define us as human. A single hair, a fingertip, a brushstroke pins the figure on the picture plane, locked forever in space and time.

Carol O'Malia



Born in Boston and schooled at the Rhode Island School of Design and the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, she has shown regionally as well as nationally. Her paintings reflect a duality. She fuses two seemingly incompatible genres — the simplicity of abstract design and the classical

presentation of the human figure. Her combination of athletic, active gestures with the physicality of oil paint is vigorous and direct. O'Malia's approach to her subjects reminds us of the joy, the energy and the obsession of youth.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

My study of the male figure in action carries me into worlds that parallel many aspects of theater. In this series, the young men are otherworldly, detached—they are like actors playing out their thoughts and actions on their own stage.

I carefully collect the lighting and color palette from both theaters to connect and contrast the two worlds. I reference classical figure in motion, simplify their environments and show their quiet psychology.

While many of my different series are drawn directly from life, these flying, leaping, shifting figures are the product of much observation and camera work. As a painter, I am looking for something the camera cannot record. I know when I am close when my models seem to forget that they are modeling. I still have to interpret what my subject is feeling and to articulate this in oil. Large scale canvases allow me to manipulate the quality of the paint. Varied, textured brushwork reinforces the kinetics of the figure.



The Innocent oil on canvas 60 x 60 inches

Carol O'Malia

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Knockout oil on canvas 60 x 60 inches



Every Mother Knows oil on canvas 42 x 46 inches



No Strings Attached
oil on canvas
60 x 60 inches

THE PILLOW BOOK by JEE LEONG KOH

Review by Grady Harp

For those who are unfamiliar with the term 'pillow book', the following definition is offered: a pillow book is a collection of notebooks, notes, poems, and musings which have been collated to show a period of someone's life. In Japan such kind of idle notes are generally referred to the zuihitsu genre. Poet Jee Leong Koh references his new work by suggesting The Pillow Book is a book of observations and musings recorded by during her time as court lady to Empress Consort Teishi during the 990s and early 11th century in Heian Japan.

Sei Shōnagon Born in Singapore to Chinese parents Koh was educated in that former British Colony, still divided into four sectors – British/European, Chinese, Malaysian, and Indian - absorbing the experience of transplantation from his familial background of China with the flavors of Singapore's multicultural aroma. Early recognized as an exceptional student he traveled to England to read English at Oxford, teaching English in secondary schools before transferring residence to New York to study Creative Writing at Sarah Lawrence College. He has published three books of poetry and his poems have appeared in journals in Australia, China, India, Singapore, UK and the USA. He now lives in New York City and blogs at Song of a Reformed Headhunter.

Koh's ability to dissect fragments of memories or to jot down thoughts or responses or longings is an additional aspect of his gifts as a poet of growing stature: this book reflects time in Singapore and in New York and incorporates all manner of issues dealing with his sexuality, relationships, love lost and love missed, philosophy and heritage. And always his writings are personal: his opening offering begins 'I miss my bolster, the long pillow held between my legs and hugged to my chest from the time I was born to when I turned thirtythree.' And off he goes from there!

ALL THINGS

All things diminish as they grow older, a friend of many years said last week. Even the expanding universe must contract. This morning, as I am boiling water to make coffee, his words come back to me, as sure as before, but smaller, because the whistling of the kettle takes up space. The steam was not so long ago a patch of snow. Love is what life boils into.

WHY I MOVED TO THE UNITED STATES AND NOT THE UNITED KINGDOM

When I walked into McDonalds in Welshpool, the floor sucked at my sneakers. The server would rather rib his friend who came in after me than take my order. He gave me a cheeseburger when I asked for a quarterpounder with cheese. He counted my change laboriously. The fries must have sat in the sieve since morning.

That was in 2002, when the Queen celebrated her Golden Jubilee, New Labour was losing its shine, and Nelson Mandela called Tony Blair 'America's Foreign Minister'. When I walked out of that joint, I had made up my mind to Go where real power resided.

Since then I have discovered that the superpower does fast

food badly too. That the corner where McDonalds is done the way McDonalds should be done is Singapore.

AFTER THEY RETURN

After they return from field training, before they change out of their sweatstiff uniforms or muddy boots, the servicemen clean their M16s. They snap their rifles apart. They pull a steel brush through the barrel several times and several times more a strip of flannel held in the eye of the cleaning rod. They dismantle the bolt carrier group, the guts of the gun, to wipe the carbon off the bolt carrier. When the soot comes off, the firing pin is pure silver. Then the firearm is reassembled, the parts clicking into place. The steel body is brushed with motor oil and the buttstock blackened with boot polish. The rifles are returned to their racks, a chain is run through their charging handles, the showers hiss.

All this done with a fatigued swiftness still easy to recall now, so many years later, and so far away, sitting at my desk, writing. The speed and the exhaustion stay in the body, bright like a firing pin.

THINGS SUBTLE YET POWERFUL

A muscular back. The fragrance of shaving cream late in the day. The outline of summer lightning. There are things subtle but not powerful, like a woman's voice. There are things powerful but not subtle, like a man's opinion. Then they meet and tumble, drunk, in bed, and Sei Shōnagon is born.

Winston prizes delicacy. In music he prefers the tone poems of Debussy to Beethoven's symphonies. I am drawn to strength, brimming but restrained by the lip of a cup. The restraint I learned from him.

The influence of a good teacher. That of a bad one. Freshly fallen snow.

Many of Jee Leong Koh's works plead with the reader to pause, let the mood and the words seep into the mind where they will bloom into experiences that will remain at least as long as when our own heads lay on our pillow. The privacy he shares is far more universal than Koh even realizes. Reflecting, he remarks that these offerings 'were penned for the author's own amusement. Perhaps they will amuse you as well.' In the meantime he has provided us with our own bolster: for hugging

Jee Leong Koh is the author of three books of poems, including the recently published *Seven Studies for a Self Portrait*, *Payday Loans: Poems and Equal to the Earth*. His poetry has appeared in *Best New Poets* (University of Virginia Press) and *Best Gay Poetry* (A Midsummer's Night Press), and in journals such as *Cimarron Review* and *PN Review*. Born and raised in Singapore, he lives in New York City, and blogs at "Song of a Reformed Headhunter".

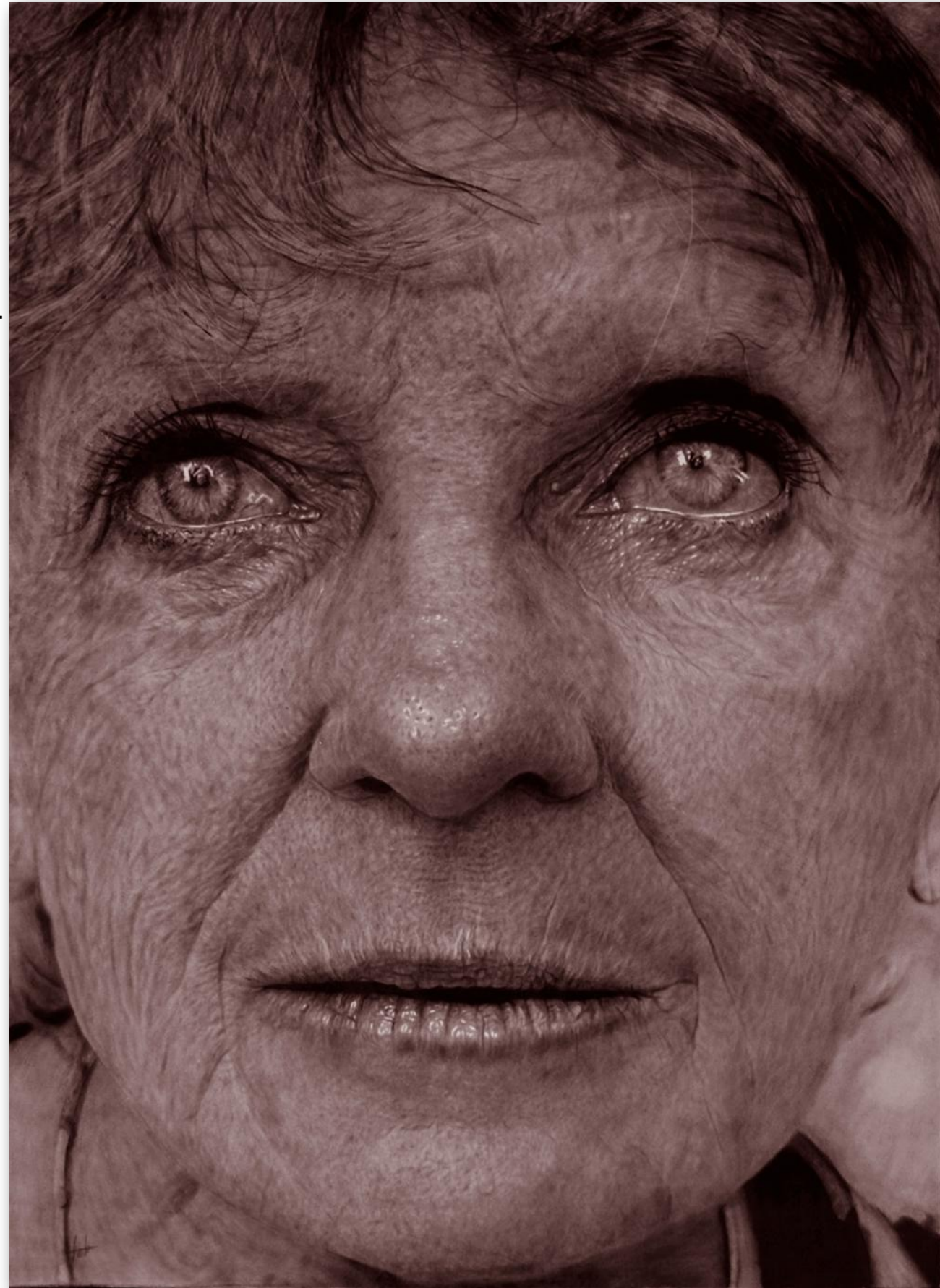
Carlos Gomez

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Carlos Gomez Mojica was born in Dominican Republic, Santo Domingo, 1986 and studied at Altos de Chavon School of Design. He later moved to Mexico to study visual arts at UNAM. He currently lives in Mexico City.



Carlos Gomez



los matices de la carne III charcoal on pane 150 x 110 cm

“We are nothing more than a repetitive cell, a infinite web all the same and yet all distinct. By exploring each of these cells in my work, I reveal what becomes the skin”.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

I work with wood, carbon and pencils. I first apply an acrylic layer comprised of marble powder to the wood. I set it aside to dry for at least a day. I take the images I am working from into the computer and size individual squares measuring 10 x 10 cm. on average. I then start applying layer by layer of pencil and carbon marking the various irregularities and abstracts found on the skin when seen up close. Once I have the gist of the work, I concentrate on finishing the details. The last layer is the fixative used for carbon works.



la perpetua moda de la piel charcoal on panel 140 x 180cm

Carlos Gomez

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la perpetua moda de la piel VIII Charcoal on panel 150 x 110 cm

Carlos Gomez

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la perpetua moda de la piel VI Charcoal on panel 110 x 150 cm

Carlos Gomez

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la perpetua moda de la piel V charcoal on canvas 110 x 150 cm

SYNESTHESIA, LOGIC, STATIC VELOCITY – The Art of ROBIN PALANKER

The big artist keeps an eye on nature and steals her tools.

Thomas Eakins

Review by Grady Harp

The paintings of pastel artist Robin Palanker may appear to be out of focus. The various influences that motivate Robin Palanker to make art are unique in nature. The difference between grouping the input of the mind with the disciplines of science, music, theater, film, literature, nature and so on and conveniently labeling them a Muse, and the penetrating acknowledgment of what allows Robin Palanker to create the challenging and mysterious works she does is her confrontations with what she knows are her motivators. Though her range of subject matter is quite broad, the connecting threads that interrelate all her works are her fascination with movement and striving to create the concept of the physics of movement in the static velocity of her paintings, her absorption with Logic, and her, likely, genetic trait of synesthesia. More than observing and interpreting a stimulus that results in an artwork in the manner of most artists, Robin explores her perceptions as they are processed by a mind attuned to dissection of what defines the space in which her subjects exist – or in other words, the physics of motion: a change in position of an object with respect to time, motion being typically described in terms of velocity, acceleration, displacement, and time.

Originally from Upstate New York, Robin moved to California to study art at California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, a highly regarded multidiscipline arts school where she could be exposed to dance, film, videography, photography, and sculpture as well as the traditional drawing and painting classes. On graduating she continued making art while at the same time nurturing her obsession with movement by watching martial arts and observing and studying ballet leading to the discovery that 'ballet is simply physics' and that information she was able to directly transfer to her art.

Robin works exclusively with dry pigment (pastel) on heavy Cold pressed watercolor paper using only her fingers to apply, or rather to push and beat, the image into the surface: she never uses a brush or other tool. The result of this technique is a heavy impasto of dry pigment with the images emerging from the matrix in a slightly out of focus manner as though they are in motion. Her models are her friends who agree to perform the acts she is capturing on paper and she often uses videos of these model friends to study the bodies as they move, wrestling with the air and the status above the ground or even in elevating them into flight.

Every exhibition she creates is based on a theme – somnolence and sleeplessness, unease, the school of velocity, longing and desire, in praise of flight – and in turn each theme is dictated by Robin's synesthesia or grapheme. Synesthesia is a neurologic condition in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway. Grapheme or color synesthesia is the connection between numbers and colors: 1 = white, 2 = gray, 3 = red, 4 = green, 5 = yellow, 6 = black, 7 = brown, 8 = blue, 9 = pinkish, 0 = clear. As an example, her work *Navigator* in which she confines her color for her 6 figures to black (=6), 6 being divided into 3 + 3 which is expressed in the placement of the figures in the foreground and the background, the source of light coming from 3 windows with 6 reflections (3 on the floor, 3 on the ceiling) all in a room glowing with light (of yellow /5 plus white/ 1 = 6) that enhances the feeling of movement of the figures in their apparent static positions!

The charm of Robin Palanker's paintings is that though they are grounded in scientific concepts of logic, movement, spatial relations, and synesthesia, the end result is works they glow with light and the mystery of nature. Her passion for dance is evident not only in the pensive *The Pursuit of*

Property and motion filled *In Praise of Flight*, but also in the strange dichotomy between the static figure and the elevated figure in *Longing and Desire*. Her works *Safety* and *O Sleep* defy the force of gravity, a capitulation of her absorption with movement, things that could be moving or might be moving, velocity in a static form, and those accompaniments of sleep – dreams.

A fine summary of Robin Palanker's exploration of her motivations and the characteristic tension and excitement that her elements of inspiration create are well defined by the painting *What I Remember*. In this painting she obeys her life focus of logic - the science that investigates the principles governing correct or reliable inference – and her involvement with the drama inherent in the human form when asked to interact with fluid space.



The Pursuit of Property 1992 pastel 34" X 39"

It is very well to copy what one sees; it's much better to draw what one has retained in one's memory. It is a transformation in which imagination collaborates with memory.

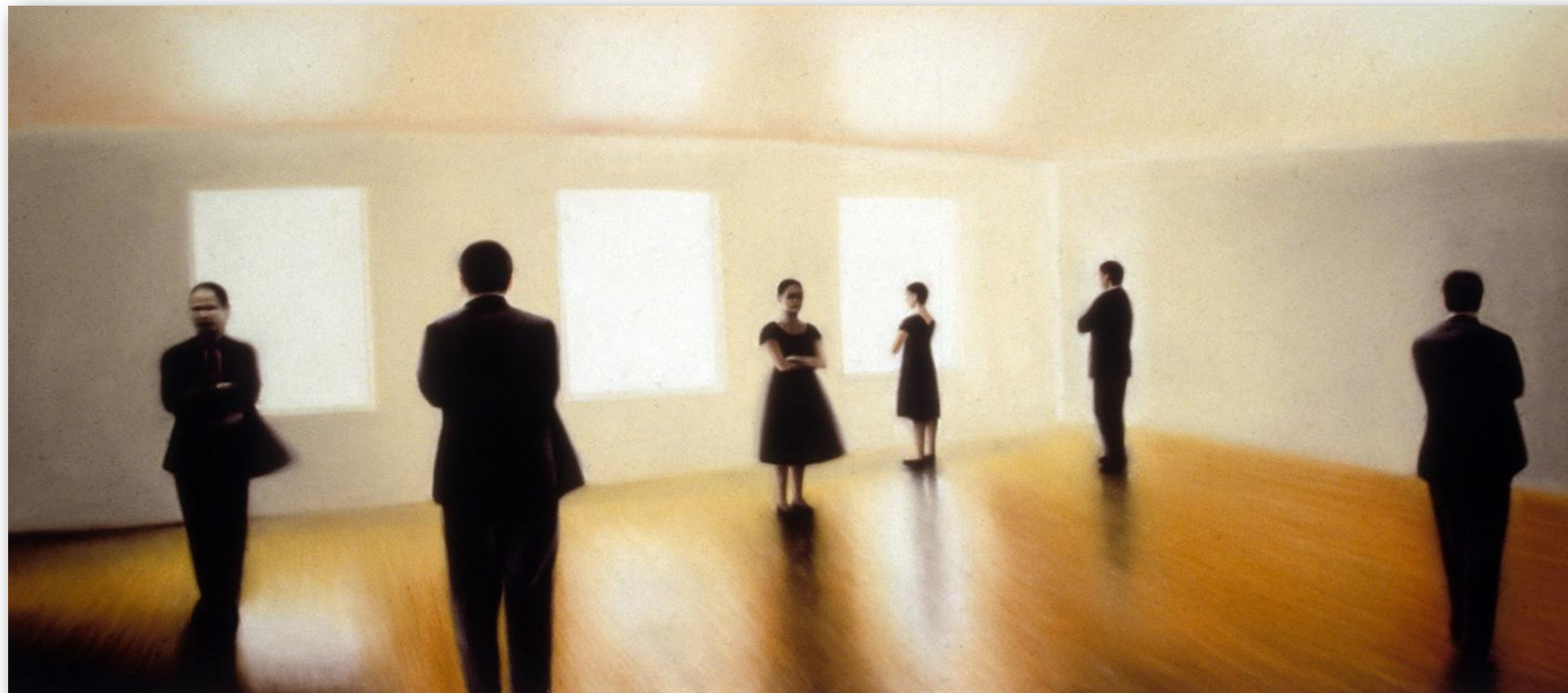
Edgar Degas



Safety 2000 pastel 45" X 80"



O Sleep 2003 pastel 37" X 49"



Navigator pastel 1994 34" X 78"



In Praise of Flight 1994 pastel 40" X 59"

OF WAR AND WARRIORS: VIRTUAL REALISM and THE ART OF JOHN SCANE

Review by Grady Harp

If we don't end war, war will end us.
H. G. Wells

In retrospection the vagaries of history, of life have always been best defined by artists, whether in the written word of poetry and memoir and fiction, or in the constructed sculptural or architectural monuments to battles or heroes or the horror of mass destruction, or in the paintings of artists who have attempted to make visual the madness and the pity of war. And yet we iterate, as though time and the presence of historical space pleads a case for disregard. Children make war games as though that urge for combat is genetic, and now with video games replacing yesterday's toys, men and their kin can recreate battles and slaughter and implosions in an atmosphere of competitive entertainment.

But such disregard for truth is at the core of the current paintings of John Scane, a Los Angeles artist who is responding to the global combative crises with conviction and using this apparent disparity between video game fantasy fulfillment as a means to address the disparity between the violence and horror of war and the popular use of combat as a way to be entertained, to remain distanced. Scane is a realist painter, an artist capable of factual representational art. He paints in oil on canvas in a traditional manner and it is this gift that enables him to pull his audience into his paintings and challenge them to decipher the thin line between picture and reality.

Juxtaposing the theatrical super heroes of video war games with images gleaned from the immediacy of actual battles and fighting in action, courtesy of the availability of the Internet and clicks on the YouTube bringing such realities into our homes, Scane admixes our entertainment preoccupation with the moments of watching men/women/children dying from bullets or drones or suicide bombers. His paintings at once imitate and recreate war as those who have not experienced it can attempt to understand: standing before his canvases the viewer can readily relate to the clicking and moving of imaginary soldiers in virtual time to defeat the aggressors allowing that sense of heroism, patriotism, subliminal sociopathic/psychopathic urge to kill for enjoyment, competition, and camaraderie. Until the threshold is crossed.

John Scane, then, makes war visual, the terror accessible, related to famous paintings of the past by artists who dealt with war, artists such as Gericault, Goya, Thomas Waterman Wood, Peter Rothermel, George Edmund Butcher. He seduces the viewer by creating near cartoon images, such as the ones with which we feel comfortable in a video game, and by making them like objects of malleable moveable entertainment pawns, the warriors implant on our minds and suddenly the connection to what is happening in real time results in an interaction of recognition



You 2010 oil on canvas 18" X 14"



that war is happening and that we are not watching a screen or a proscenium arch or a painting. We are participating, if only as an observer, in war. The jolt is intentional: Scane causes a heightened awareness of ourselves, our immediate and distant world, and our strangely subservient participation not in playing at war games by escaping into the false virtual, digital world, but by failing to respond appropriately to that human reality of war.

Artists, such as John Scane accomplish this mission using their own particular technical language. Instead of settling for our shaking our heads in sorrow, in disbelief when we encounter such anti-war works as Benjamin Britten's massive and pungent *War Requiem*, the words from World War I poet Wilfred Owen, he asks us to stare and be aware and even perform that response all artists desire – to respond and act.

"Console - No matter what you've done Jesus can still forgive you" 2010 oil on canvas 44" X 36"

I am the enemy you killed, my friend...Let us sleep now.
Wilfred Owen



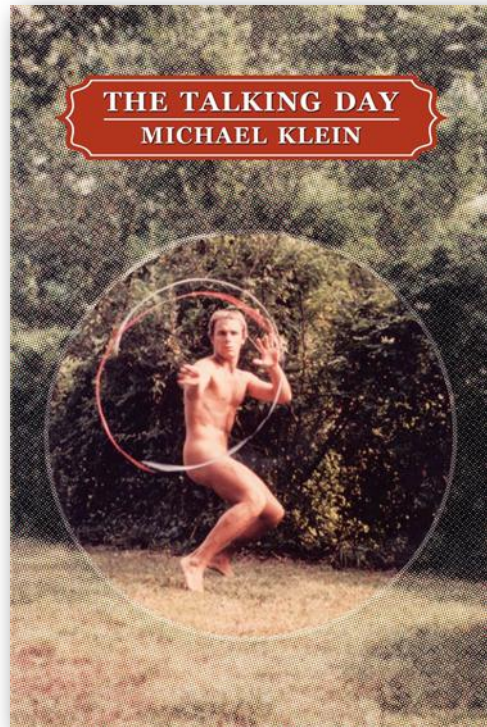
Life During Wartime May Study 2010 oil on canvas 22" X 28"

THE TALKING DAY by MICHAEL KLEIN

PoetsArtists
Review by Grady Harp

Reading the poetry of Michael Klein is like discovering the art of poetry anew. He is a man who is able to reflect on his life, on remembered lovers, on the incongruities of both life and death, on the veracity of dreams and perceptions, and all the while he is able to induce a reaction from the reader to stand within his vantage and share the wonder and the fear and the frustration and the other peculiar beauties of the world.

His perceptions can be transmitted with considered brevity as in the following:



WHAT HAPPENED

*Direct Sunlight.
Shadow of him, next to shadow of a dog.
The rest of light waits somewhere he's been to
And never thought he'd have.
Here in beyond – a little – the middle of his life.
He knows what happened.
He asked for love.
That was his first mistake.*

SATURN RETURNS

*Your story about your brother and his image
of God: rubber glitter of what got left when the shavings
from a pencil eraser's drawing of the sun and 10 or so
of its rays were blown away – meant he could see already
the parable of effect as I see it now after the reading
and lights for the reader: myself down here
in my fifties after a life of half remembered music listening more closely
whenever a story is this intricate, this beautiful, this fully laid down.
I wish I looked a little better, but my soul has arrived. At last.*

Yes, Michael Klein can address death and loss and return to the life we who remain are all living and never allow his grasp on where he is, where we are to wander. He can also bring before our eyes the smiles and the joys and well as the senseless inexplicable tragedies we encounter. A longer poem, the title poem, suggests this best:

THE TALKING DAY

Some lunatic with a gun killed some people at an immigration center in Binghamton, New York. Liz and her family live up there and David, her husband, teaches in the middle school which is close to all the action (the way, in any smallish town, everything is close to the action). I called Liz to see if everyone was all right and she was in her car driving to the elementary school to pick up Lily, her young daughter she brought back from China a few years ago. Lily was fine, but Liz wanted to move her outside the question of how to make sense of the broken pieces of "someone" with a gun walking into a public space and then firing. There's something called (I learned from a news report the day of the shootings at Virginia Tech) The Talking Day which

refers to the day immediately following the day when something wildly violent happens. No one quite grasps the reality of the situation and everyone spends the first day talking about what happened and reliving it as language – not so much to understand the violence but to make a kind of recording of it: talking about it, letting go of it, putting it down. And so I imagine it must be with Liz and Lily and David in Binghamton, New York today: letting "something" go. Liz is at her car after having just picked up Lily at school and driving back home through a town that suddenly makes no sense and she is telling the story about what happened when a young man walked into a building with a gun. And for Lily, who's had a pretty serene, un-violent United States time so far and whose endless joy has made her an adorable chatterbox, tomorrow could be her first talking day. Or if not tomorrow, some other day. We live in a talking day world.

After reading the poetry of Michael Klein we somehow gain better access to coping with both pain and with the past chances at happiness as well as the lovely things that occur around us - things that somehow reassure us that humanity is a state we can endure and even hallow. As Klein states in his opening poem CARTOGRAPHY, "I'm dumb about the world. To me, it always looks haunted." But then he spends the rest of his poems in this compelling collection changing fear into grace.



Michael Klein's previous poetry collections are *then, we were still living*, a Lambda Literary Award finalist, and 1990, which tied with James Schuyler to win the award in 1993. His books of prose are *Track Conditions*, a memoir, and *The End of Being Known*, essays. He lives in New York City and Provincetown, MA.

PASCAL VILCOLLET: FINDING DETAIL IN EXPRESSIONIST TERMS

Review by Grady Harp

PoetsArtists www.poetsandartists.com



PASCAL VILCOLLET: FINDING DETAIL IN EXPRESSIONIST TERMS

Review by Grady Harp

*Man wends his way through forests of symbols
Which look at him with their familiar glances.*

~Baudelaire

Pascal Vilcollet is a young painter who is quickly gathering attention in France for his passionate paintings of portraits of famous people, of dogs, of erotically charged female nudes, and currently he is moving in the direction of large-scale narrative imagery. Following the career of this gentle giant is an art lesson in itself, as he has moved from a classically trained graphic artist into the realm of fine art with rather extraordinary speed.

Born in 1979 in the Melun, in the Île-de-France region suburb of Paris and moved to Pontault-Combault where he studied and worked until moving into Paris, Pascal Vilcollet studied Graphic Art at the École Professionnelle Supérieure d'Arts graphiques et d'Architecture de la Ville de Paris from 2001 to 2005 after working as a draftsman of technical design and practicing offset BPE printing. For a while he illustrated children's books and worked as a storyboard artist for an advertising company. Always aware of his desire to draw he took the path of polishing his skills with the pencil and pen before venturing to the satisfying world of painting. He currently lives in Paris' 11th arrondissement where he finally has a huge studio in which to practice his gift of making very large, highly charged paintings in acrylic on canvas.

When asked which artists he most respects he speaks of his profound respect for the French artist Pierre Soulage, for past painters - Caravaggio's use of light and shadow and drama, Velasquez and Francis Bacon for their compositional profundity - and for current painters, the British artists Jenny Saville and Justin Mortimer. From this brew of influences emerged Vilcollet's own style of very large scale paintings that combine expressive abstraction's thick brush strokes and colors with an uncanny attention to detail, a trait which moves him into the neighboring genre of representational painting.

Vilcollet first gained attention with his huge portraits of celebrities (Visages), people marked by time such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, Mick Jagger, Jimi Hendrix, novelist Haruki Murakami, Woody Allen, and David Lynch. His startling images find new aspects of these famous faces, each easily recognizable as portraits but uncovering features of their complex personalities we have not seen before. Following his success with these portraits Vilcollet moved into painting dogs (Chiens) in order to feel more free and less committed to recreating resemblances. Though he sees the humanity in dogs he was able to move more toward refining his expressionistic techniques when not confined to face.

Moving from portraits, whether of celebrities or of dogs, Vilcollet began his journey toward storytelling by painting a series of painterly erotic female nudes he calls *Filles du Calvaire*. His early paintings in this series *Filles du Calvaire 1* and *3* reveal his growing ability to shape the figure ('I asked for more concentration because mistakes are more obvious on the body') until ultimately he felt comfortable enough to simply let the figure emerge from his erotically charged, brilliantly colored final *Filles du Calvaire 8*. Yet another step in this movement toward the very large and complex canvases on which he now is centering his attention - the teddy box series - is quite evident in *Filles du Calvaire 7* where in addition to the nude figures, faces of men, isolated arms, and suggestions of buildings emerge.

Now Pascal Vilcollet, have demonstrated his gifts of bringing moments of life to his canvases, is creating spacious expansions of complex reflections of memories of moments from his past, fantasies jumbled with realities, shadows of some figures, people in strange costumes, movement, exceptionally detailed faces alongside quickly suggested atmospheres of trees and structures. These masterful paintings are the result of the artist growing into a time of reflection as well as having a huge new studio that can allow the space for his expanding the size of this works to match the magnitude of his imagination. *Teddy box 1* is a massive 400 X 250 cm in size and explains why Pascal Vilcollet is considered such an important rising star in the art world. "I've always been very fast. I used to think 'try not too ask me questions and get to the point'. But now I take more time. It is the desire that guides me, I can wait for hours before the white canvas to reflect on the composition and see where to start. Now let's say I'm in less of a hurry and I do things slowly." His progress has been steady and sure and his passion for painting grows more evident with every new door he opens.



Fille du Calvaire 1 2012 acrylic on canvas 160X200 cm

Painting isn't an aesthetic operation; it's a form of magic designed as a mediator between this strange hostile world and us, a way of seizing the power by giving form to our terrors as well as our desires.

~Pablo Picasso



Jean-Michel Basquiat acrylic/canvas, 220 X 190 cm



*Filles du Calvaire 3 2012
acrylic/canvas,
160 X 200 cm*

*Mick Jagger 2
acrylic on canvas
160 x 160 cm*



THE WIDENING SPELL: Spencer Reece: Clerk, Poet, Priest

Review by Terry Lucas

I really don't know why I haven't written about Spencer Reece before now. His work has been formative for mine, and his faith in faith is an example to all who write in obscurity. Reece quietly practiced his art for nineteen years – submitting his first manuscript to every contest, receiving rejection after rejection. Revising. Then submitting again. Nineteen years. Year one: no. Year two: no. Years three through eighteen: no. Year nineteen: won the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference Bakeless Prize. What if he had quit after five years? Ten? Eighteen? I would never have read the following poem, would never have memorized it and recited it time and time again on my morning walk.

Midnight

"I quite expect to end my life caring most for a place. – E.M. Forester

Pine trees stir in a chorus of darkness.
 The lake taps the shore as if to tell me something.
 A light rain increases the abstractions, all edges blur.
 Dark tilled fields stretch for miles.
 The Midwest settles into my chest.
 Colts bolt across untouched Dakota acres
 alive with the cymbal-smash of affectionate caresses.
 Farms, barns, somnolent cows, empty gravel roads and distant houses
 make up the landscape I walk in, where once, a long time ago,
 Indians slept and walked, dissolving into the shadows with tenderness.
 On Andy Cleland's farm, the one closest to the lake,
 where cattails flourish at the water's edge,
 there is one huge hill, vacant of shrubbery.
 I was told once it was an Indian burial mound
 and that was why no tree or bush would grow on that hill.
 All these years later and the hill is still bald,
 whispering softly as the revolutions of the sea,
 echoing with the mouths of the vanquished.
 Sheep maraud across the hill's back,
 exhilarated by the dirt smells born again by spring,
 the wind haunted with the songs of comrades now gone.
 The rest of this panorama is immense, dark, impenetrable, unstructured.
 But if you look closely in the left-hand corner,
 I can just be distinguished from the blue blue brilliance of all this land,
 a tiny figure, no bigger than a grass blade, a shadow hugged by shadows,
 heading home after a long walk nowhere,
 encircled by a halo of rocks, trees, crops, rivers, clouds –
 by every blessed thing conspiring together to save my life.

Of course, I identify with Reece partly because he spent several years as an assistant manager in a men's clothing store – part of a famous chain. The title poem of his first book, "The Clerk's Tale," is a layered combination bildungsroman and diatribe against the superficiality of capitalism. After poignant description after description of his fellow salesmen, customers, and work day, Reece closes the store and the poem with the following lines:

The lights go off, one by one –
 the dressing room lights, the mirror lights.
 Then it is very late. How late? Eleven?
 We move to the gate. It goes up.
 The gate's grating checkers our cheeks.
 This is the Mall of America.
 The light is bright and artificial,
 yet not dissimilar to that found in a Gothic cathedral.
 You must travel down the long hallways to the exits
 before you encounter natural light.
 One final formality: the manager checks our bags.
 The old homosexual reaches into his over-the-shoulder leather bag –
 the one he bought on his European travels
 with his companion of many years.
 He finds a stick of lip balm and applies it to his lips
 liberally, as if shellacking them.
 Then he inserts one last breath mint
 and offers one to me. The gesture is fraternal
 and occurs between us many times.
 As last, we bid each other good night.
 I watch him fade into the many-tiered parking lot,
 where the thousands of cars have come
 and are now gone. This is how our day ends.
 This is how our day always ends.
 Sometimes snow falls like rice.
 See us take to our dimly lit exits,
 disappearing into the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul;
 Minneapolis is sleek and St Paul,
 named after the man who had to be shown,
 is smaller, older, and somewhat withdrawn.
 Behind us, the moon pauses over the vast egg-like dome of the mall.
 See us loosening our ties among you.
 We are alone.
 There is no longer any need to express ourselves.

THE WIDENING SPELL: Spencer Reece: Clerk, Poet, Priest

Review by Terry Lucas

It is of interest to me that Reece worked several years as a clerk, writing poetry in the middle of the night, forging a direction for a life quite different from that of his fellow salesmen – and then when his poetry gained the attention it deserved ("The Clerk's Tale" is the only poem ever to have been published as the entire back page of *The New Yorker*) he won a fellowship which allowed him to work part time in the store and enter the priesthood. His new book, *The Road to Emmaus* is due out in 2013. Its title poem appears in *The Best American Poetry 2012*, and I heartily recommend it. His first poems, however, will always be favorites of mine. I end with the haunting, "Tonight," whose Everyman ending, for me, ranks among the all-time greats!

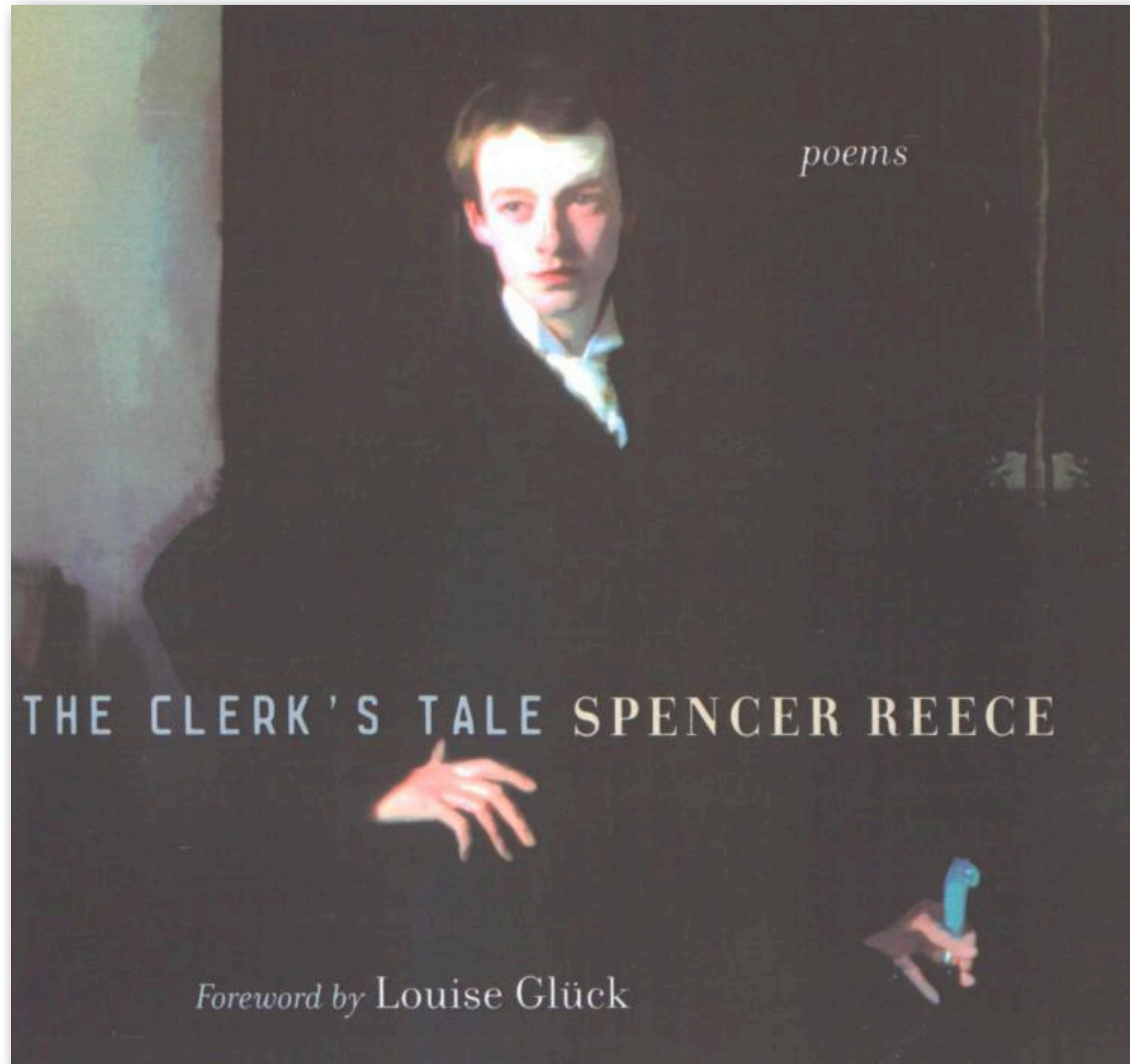
Tonight

You are being born. Feels good.
Something enormous kisses you.
Its eye surveys your revolutions.
Relaxed in your new nudity,

you work your labyrinthine ears,
those perfect disciples,
registering all that hums, ticks.
O you encyclopedia you,

you do not know what I know,
how blank the cold world can grow.
But let the addendums come later.
I listen to the dust from the city

gather on the necks of the saints
at the hospital's exits I exit.
And so I say to you yes you:
everyone's a fugitive. Everyone.





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