



GET REAL NEW AMERICAN PAINTING





GET REAL NEW AMERICAN PAINTING

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART JACKSONVILLE  
A CULTURAL RESOURCE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

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FRANK ORITI *I'D RATHER SINK* (DETAIL), 2013  
Oil and acrylic on canvas (unframed) 48 x 35 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery,  
Sag Harbor, New York

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BRYAN LEBOEUF *MOSH PIT* (DETAIL), 2003  
Oil on linen 60 x 48 inches  
Collection of Peter N. Geisler Jr., Lake Worth, Florida

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JENNY MORGAN *BRAND NEW* (DETAIL), 2014  
Oil on canvas 32 x 28 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries,  
New York, New York



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## Acknowledgments

Marcelle Polednik, PhD

*Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville*

The Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, a cultural resource of the University of North Florida, is honored to present *Get Real: New American Painting*. The exploration of this vital theme and the eight compelling artists whose work propels the exhibition exemplifies the Museum's mission to promote the discovery, knowledge, and advancement of the art, artists, and ideas of our time.

On behalf of the trustees, staff, and members of MOCA Jacksonville, I express our appreciation to Curator Ben Thompson for his tireless efforts on behalf of the exhibition and this publication. I would also like to thank Museum staff for their efforts in making this exhibition possible, particularly Tanya Johnson-Coomes, director of finance and operations; Casie Casula, creative director; Denise M. Reagan, director of communications; and Charlotte Chafin, office manager. For his assistance with research and loan negotiations, I am grateful to our intern Andrew Green.

My sincere thanks extend to all the lenders who parted with their treasured works in order to enrich the exhibition's offerings. For his substantial assistance with the loan process, I am particularly grateful to Richard Demato of Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery. Driscoll Babcock Galleries, Thinkspace Gallery, and our private lenders also generously helped shape the scope of the exhibition and its contents.

I would also like to acknowledge P. Scott Brown, UNF associate professor of art history, who contributed the main essay to this publication. His subtle readings of the works and observations pertaining to the theme and subject of realist painting, present and past, both enliven the exhibition and enrich our understanding of the subject at hand.

For their support of this exhibition, I thank Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, supporting sponsor, as well as our contributing sponsors: Agility Press, Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville, the city of Jacksonville, Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, Peter N. Geisler Jr., and WJCT Public Broadcasting. I also acknowledge UNF, particularly President John Delaney, Vice President of Administration and Finance Shari Shuman, and Department of Art and Design Chair Debra Murphy, for their partnership and support.

My final words of thanks are reserved for the artists themselves—Haley Hasler, Jason John, Andrea Kowch, Bryan LeBoeuf, Jenny Morgan, Kevin Munte, Frank Oriti, and Kevin Peterson. Their talent, zeal, dedication, and tireless curiosity have reshaped the boundaries of contemporary realism. It is our hope that this publication, together with the exhibition, will illuminate this exciting new chapter in contemporary painting as well as highlight the artists who so compellingly chart its resurgence.

JASON JOHN *LIFT*, 2012  
Oil on linen 40 x 40 inches  
Collection of the artist



## Foreword

Ben Thompson

Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville

It is hard to say where inspiration for certain projects comes from. Some are conceived over many years through a slow process of observation and maturation that may not immediately be recognized as planning. This is the case with *Get Real: New American Painting*, which materialized formally as an exhibition somewhere around 2011. The idea for the project derived from a deep-seated desire to acknowledge the great work being produced in contemporary American realism.

A selection of eight artists from across the country—Haley Hasler, Jason John, Andrea Kowch, Bryan LeBoeuf, Jenny Morgan, Kevin Munte, Frank Oriti, and Kevin Peterson—provides a snapshot of contemporary realist painting in the United States. *Get Real's* heavily figurative focus explores themes that have persisted throughout the recent history of American realist painting such as narrative portraiture and social, psychological, and magical realism.

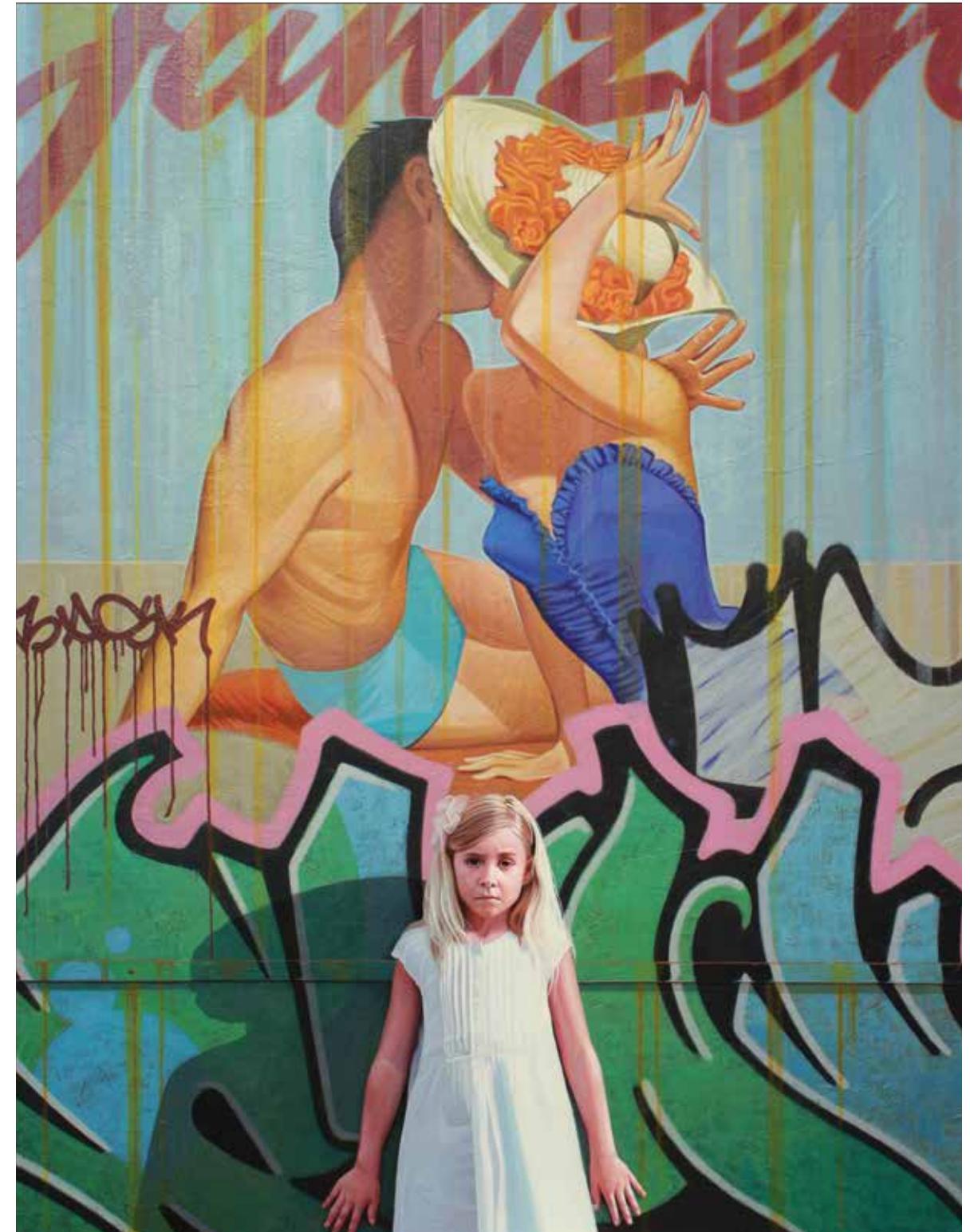
The eight artists present a multifaceted view of the American experience, contrasting the historic and the contemporary, pastoral and urban landscapes, the personal and the universal, the immanent and the transcendent. Through the eyes of these artists, the viewer may travel between the magical depictions of a distant American heartland in the work of Kowch or Munte to the hardscrabble, urban worlds of Oriti or Peterson. Whether their inspiration is drawn from memory or reality, the artists strike a balance between the everyday and the epic as seen in LeBoeuf's tightly controlled theatrical compositions or John's surreal scenes that seem to be in a state of perpetual motion. Aspects of identity and domestic relationships, as well as issues of sexuality and femininity, are best explored through the works of Hasler and Morgan.

The products of diverse educational and geographic roots, these young artists are charting a path for American realist painting in the twenty-first century.

KEVIN PETERSON *JANTZEN*, 2012

Oil on canvas 42 x 32.5 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery,  
Culver City, California



## Get Real: Deception and Revelation in Contemporary Realist Painting

P. Scott Brown, PhD

Associate Professor of Art History, University of North Florida

The pleasures of realistic art are at the heart of *Get Real: New American Painting*. The artists included in the exhibition tell us in both beautiful and very practical ways about the technique and materiality of mimetic representation in painting: the tricks of the trade, light, color, texture, perspective.

These artists are masters of craft and traditional technique, heirs to the grand Western tradition of realistic and narrative painting. They are thoughtful, informed, and witty in the ways they draw from the recent and more distant past, especially from the great painters of the Italian and Flemish Renaissance, the Dutch Golden Age, and American twentieth century realists like Edward Hopper and Andrew Wyeth. Painting has a history; the artists in *Get Real* offer beautiful opportunities to admire and ponder the allusive character of contemporary realistic painting's poetic resonance with its own past.

But at the heart of *Get Real* is an important intellectual, cultural question that must be asked and answered in each generation of painters since the invention of photography: To what end the manual labor of painting? Technology alters fundamental notions about the nature of craft, the aura of artifacts, and the visual talents of a culture in which Google is the "museum" and even our notions of direct experience involve mediation through digital media, mobile phone apps, and the technological extensions of our perceptual faculties.

The colloquial expression "get real" is an exhortation to be realistic, which finds obvious context in the artworks assembled in this exhibition. The eight artists whose works are on display are meticulous and talented painters of figure and nature. They keep alive in their art the paragon of the painter-magician, whose illusions are capable of fooling the eye and mind of the viewer, like Zeuxis, the ancient Greek painter of legend, who painted grapes that tempted birds to peck at them.<sup>1</sup> However, the expression "get real" also implies a rebuke: "Wise up!" It is the kind of thing one says to a person who ought to know better, whose fantastical thinking is perhaps optimistically or perversely unrealistic. "Get real!" involves a critique meant to disabuse one of notional thinking and false assumptions that have lost touch with reality. So here is the question: Is the extraordinarily skill- and labor-intensive craft of realistic painting merely a nostalgic gesture in the digital age?

The echoes of, among others, Jan van Eyck, Titian, Johannes Vermeer, Hopper, and Wyeth in the twenty-first century artworks exhibited in *Get Real* implicitly test the continuing validity of our inherited models for

painting and painter. Is the past still useful? Does the old alchemy still yield marvels from the crude, raw elements of painting, from the simple, mundane ingredients of medium, ground, brush, hand, and eye? What, in other words, do we obtain from the craft and effort of realistic painting that cannot be had from Snapchat and Instagram? The artists featured in *Get Real* pursue their dialogues with the painters and artistic forms of the past in search of affirmations to rebut this nihilist doubt, but at the same time, they do not simply perpetuate traditions of painting. They are deeply engaged with the methods and processes of realism, with the fundamental processes of observation and techniques of description from which we human beings construct knowledge and understanding of the world. From these same raw materials, the artist constructs the illusion of realistic painting, which is both a deception and a revelation.

### *Artifice and Illusion*

The artists in *Get Real* are masters of the techniques of realism, of disguising the presence of paint and canvas, yet collectively the realism of their works is self-critical in a variety of ways, querying the fundamental craft processes and aims of representation. This is evident in many of the works in which the artists disrupt the illusion of the real by producing effects that are unnatural, stylized, disorienting, and surreal. On almost every canvas included in the exhibition, the carefully crafted appearance of reality is localized, perhaps in a face, in a fold of fabric, or a texture of flesh, but as the viewer steps back to take in the whole, the appearance of seamless reality dissolves.

Though these artists often paint tightly, erasing the passage of the brush, rendering invisible the presence of the canvas ground, they also willfully distort space, exaggerate figure, and vary their technique, so that occasionally the paintings themselves break down strategically into the raw elements of pigment, binder,

and canvas ground. They play with and comment on the materials and processes of painting. Frank Oriti's exceptionally photographic portraits, for instance, are set against backdrops of washy white, streaky flat surfaces that emphasize in their unreality the marvels of flesh and expression that stand against them. Kevin Peterson's portrait subjects stand against flat walls covered in colorful, abstract street graffiti that preserves as commentary on the figure the elemental values of ground and pigment that are usually disguised in realist painting. Jason John's illusionistically real figures have walked onto unfinished canvases that seem not yet ready to accommodate them. In many of John's paintings the brushwork loosens to the point that liquid medium streaks, drips, and runs, marring the finished perfection of the figures' painted flesh. In a similar fashion, Jenny Morgan applies the finishing touches to many of her figures by ruining the flawless illusion, dry brushing tacky pigment as in the pupils of the figures in *Syrie and the Cat* (Plate 31) or *Opening Ceremony* (Fig. 21) to create distortions that wetly smudge and stain the face in a process of dissolution that recalls Francis Bacon's portraits.

This formal tension between the mimetically real and purely formal extends to the artists' subject matters, as well, which almost exclusively concern the human figure. Each of the featured artists is capable of an exquisite technical perfection in the rendering of human form that can seem to bring a subject to life. Yet the artists in *Get Real* are also united by an apparent determination to frame their subjects in ways that mannerize, dramatize, or allegorize. The formal realism of figure enters into competition with the artists' narrative tendencies to produce resonant views of human subjects who often obtain the vivid but super- or sub-natural presence of figures in dreams, visions, or memories, modes of cognition that are subconscious, emotion-laden reflections on the real.

<sup>1</sup> On legends and myths of the artist, including Zeuxis, see the classic study by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (Yale University Press, 1981).

The artists in *Get Real* often remind the viewer of painting's artifice. In many of the artists' works, for instance, saturated colors produce effects that emphasize the instrumentality of pigment in painting. One does not notice color as such when it blends into and supports the illusion of nature, but when it pops and screams, as in Haley Hasler's Technicolor allegories or in Peterson's street art homages, the viewer is forcibly reminded of the agency of color in painting.



Fig. 2  
 In Hasler's *Portrait as Tooth Fairy* (Plate 6), one feels the wavelengths of color vibrating almost physically as saturated, complementary reds and blues do battle in the sleeping child's pajamas and the walls of the background. The melancholy, autumnal palette of Andrea Kowch's paintings is dominated by earthy colors that obtain much of their atmospheric intensity from the suffused glow of the red pigment the artist employs to counterpoint the wheaten browns and leaden greys that compose her fields and skies. Red-orange burns like an ember in the flame-like hair of her models or in the wind-whipped skirts of their dresses. The raw meat-red of the of the old barn in *Dream Chaser* (Fig. 2, Plate 18), the glistening orange-fleshed salmon in *The Feast* (Fig. 5, Plate 19) and the bloody triangles of pie in *An Invitation* (Plate 20) contribute a feeling of carnal intensity otherwise missing in these images of expressionless women with pale, luminous faces. In Kevin Muenté's, *Another New Year's Day* (Plate 40), the entire painting is driven by the dramatic tension that results from the alarmingly vivid, incongruous pink of balloons and a party hat, which

disturb the deathly dull, joyless winter of a house and landscape that appear perhaps to be haunted by a particularly morose ghost of Hopper. This is color like laughter at a funeral and has the effect of reminding the viewer suddenly and intensely of her place in the presence of a painting and of the decorum and conventions that govern the relation of artwork and viewer. In Morgan's medieval icon-like portraits, the radiation of yellow and red tones from parts of the depicted bodies disrupts the overall reality of the figure and magnifies our focus on certain features—hands, eyes, face, belly. These take on suggestive



Fig. 3

new meaning and significance, as in *Arcadia* (Fig. 1, Plate 33), where the sanguineous hands holding the excarnated skull adjacent the red aureole of the breast surrounded by its milk-pale corona of flesh transforms body parts into poetically interrelated attributes: bosom, bone, blood, milk. In Peterson's *Untitled* (Fig. 3, Plate 54), the electric blue and yellow of the graffitied wall reappear in the sleeves of the painting's young subject. The wall itself, as a painting of a painting, is a masterpiece of artistic self-reference that draws attention to the elements of painting iconographically through their depiction



Fig. 1

in the composition. The artist's meticulous description of the wall's uneven plaster surface replaces the canvas ground of the actual painting with a simulated wall on which layers of gesso and paint physically and fictively build up the plaster ground of pictorialized graffiti. This is as much a portrait of a painting as of the little girl, whose patterned black and white jumper and colorful blouse hint at the graffitied wall anthropomorphized. Even her body language—angular, contracted, the joints locked and popping in her hands and fingers—echoes the hip-hop energy of the wall painting. The figure of the girl responds environmentally to the painted backdrop with involuntary movements that are precursors of street dances like krumping, clowning, popping, or jerking. The artist reminds the viewer of the power of form, color, space, and setting over figure in the resultant portrait.

Like Peterson, most of the artists in *Get Real* indulge in representations of representations, which seem to reflect the artists' collective fascination with the history of painting, their mastery of medium, and their interests in a form of artistic self-reference that reveals the artifice of painting, the tricks and deceptions that produce the illusion of reality. Painting pictures within pictures is a virtuoso technique that places the artists in *Get Real* in a line descending from the Old Masters. It also offers the pleasure of discovering and deciphering microcompositions that convey the painters' awareness of art form to the viewer. Such motifs are a means of making ordinary viewers feel that they too share in the secret knowledge of Zeuxis. In John's works, it appears that ordinary people have suddenly materialized on the half-finished canvases of Old Master still life paintings. John adapts motifs from such greats as the Dutch Golden Age painter Jan Davidsz. de Heem—bouquets of fruit, flowers, and peaches broken open to reveal their pits. He works these up in a manner that reveals the laborious, time-consuming atelier method of Renaissance and Baroque painting. His festoons of fruit as in *Fissure*

or *Lift* (Plates 7 and 8) reveal preliminary stages of completion. The monochromatically red tones of the fruit recall the color of *sinopia*, the ferrous pigment and the Renaissance technique of underpainting in red.

In Oriti's works *Steadfast* (Plate 43) and *I'd Rather Sink* (Fig. 4, Plate 51), the artist makes a tour de force display of painting tattoos. The canvas of the skin supplies virtually the only source of color in these largely monochromatic works. By giving prominence to the figures' vibrantly pictorial tattoos, Oriti's restrained palette emphasizes the act of representation itself as a means of self-reference, while the whitewashed backgrounds of his paintings are like un-inked skins. In the white void of the canvas, more than in any other works included in the exhibition, Oriti's figures must speak for themselves. In *I'd Rather Sink*, whose title refers to the Roy Lichtenstein painting *Drowning Girl* (1963), visual quotation from Lichtenstein offers the rather mind-bending spectacle of a painter depicting a tattoo that reproduces a painting that imitates a comic book published from an illustration.



Fig. 4

### History/Histoires

In their playful and diverting acknowledgments of painting's artifice, the artists in *Get Real* seem to argue that practicing realism in American painting in the twenty-first century is an enterprise that requires an authoritative command of technique and tradition tempered by self-awareness and historical circumspection. There are only so many ways to lay paint down on a canvas to make a portrait, to tell a story, or to paint a flower or a field of grass, and most of them have been done before in some form. The subject matters of realistic painting—portraiture, landscape, still life, narrative—likewise have long histories in which the influence of the past is inescapable. Most obviously, realistic painting is constrained in various ways by the

artist's objective obligation to nature, and notions of objectivity and the real have their own complicated histories in art. The artists in *Get Real* approach the historical freight that comes with realism in a variety of mischievous and serious ways that reflect their sources of influence and inspiration and, as I take it, their love for the richness of the tradition of painting itself. The viewer is invited to share the love.

Most of the artists included in *Get Real* draw more or less directly on influential styles, subject matters, and conventions of painting both from painting's recent and more distant past. American Regionalists, Magic Realists, and figure painters like Hopper, Wyeth, Bo Bartlett, and Phillip Pearlstein sustained the tradition of figurative painting in America during the decades of its cultural and critical exile under the rule of the "Newer Laocoön" of abstraction.<sup>2</sup> Necessarily, the influence of these and other twentieth century realists is evident in the style and iconography of most of the works in *Get Real*.

Kowch reflects in particular on Hopper and Wyeth in her landscape and architectural settings, though her artistic DNA is considerably older and can be traced back to masters of the Northern Renaissance. The exceptional, microscopically detailed and precise description of the materiality of things in Kowch's paintings links her to a lineage of painters descending from van Eyck, artists for whom the fixed, optical perfection of the mirror served both as the metaphor and paradigm for painting. Kowch displays



Fig. 6

an analogous attention to the external exactness of things such as lace, feathers, kernels of corn on a cob, the luster of metal, and the texture and patterns of fabric. Her psychologically suggestive paintings depict women in fields and kitchens organized around still life compositions that include iconographic elements with long histories. Birds and dogs are found in Wyeth, for instance, but these are symbolic concepts with ancient origins and long histories of use. In *The Feast* (Fig. 5, Plate 19), a pair of dogs fights over a joint of meat outside of the open door of the house, recalling the dog's negative moral association with envy or jealousy that traces back through popular culture at least to Aesop's fables. The dogs' squabble distracts them from their other traditional associations



Fig. 5

with fidelity as guardians of the home, leaving it vulnerable to cocks who invade the open windows and mount the kitchen table laden with the glistening, orange-fleshed salmon, long, phallic parsnips, carrots, and corn arranged in a composition that recalls the early market-scene still lifes of Northern

Renaissance masters Pieter Aertsen or Joachim Beuckelaer (Fig. 6). As in those much earlier paintings, the objects in this piece expose gendered and other social implications in a symbolic, poetic, visual interplay that produces meanings and interpretations

that the viewer discovers hanging just on the tip of her tongue: dog, threshold, home, inside, outside, the orifice of the window, the cock in the kitchen, etc. In *An Invitation* (Plate 20), birds, bird cages, red apples, cut peaches, cherry pie, and the snarling dog who bares his teeth at the viewer's approach evoke sexual metaphors dating to the seventeenth century or earlier—the birdcage as the symbol of maidenhood, the bird and fruit as metaphors for human sexuality. In *Queen's Court* (Fig. 7, Plate 22), the orgy of bees pollinating, drowning, and dying amid the cut flowers of Kowch's small still life composition recalls the euphemism of "the birds and the bees" in a manner that points to the brevity of spring's



Fig. 7

sexual vibrancy. It is interesting to consider the ancient meaning of bees, now broadly forgotten, in relation to this picture, which like Kowch's other paintings places great emphasis on women in suggestively



Fig. 8

gendered spaces from which signs of men are largely absent. Until their modern euphemistic meaning came into being, bees, for all their work in pollination, were symbols of chastity and asexuality, as the scholar

Bartholomaeus Anglicus wrote in the thirteenth century: "For they are not medled with service of Venus, nother resolved with lechery, nother bruised with sorrow of birth of children. And yet they bring forth most swarms of children."<sup>3</sup>

Muente's exceptionally detailed landscape paintings reflect aspects of the American landscape tradition from Winslow Homer to the Hudson River School to Wyeth. Muente devotes obsessive attention to the rendering of small details of turf and branch, as in *Another New Year's Day* (Plate 40) and *Potential of Loss* (Fig. 8, Plate 38), pictures that recall distantly the precedent of Albrecht Dürer's *The Great Piece of Turf* (Fig. 9). The immersively complex silhouette screen of nude branches set respectively in these two paintings against the winter and the dawn or dusk sky counterpoints the smaller-scale forest of grasses set against the old white house and the snowy ground. The world rendered by Muente is one of infinite and infinitely minute detail that few people have the capacity or the desire to notice in the ordinary course of human experience. Muente's crystallization of these individual forms from which the composite of our perception is fashioned has the effect of producing a deep gravity of place and moment for the mysterious figures who occupy his settings.



Fig. 9

Bryan Leboeuf's style is distinct among the eight artists represented in *Get Real* in its soft, tonal quality, which emphasizes light over line in a manner that recalls most recently Sidney Goodman, as well as the Impressionist style of Edgar Degas and earlier painters of light from

<sup>2</sup> Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoön," *Partisan Review* VII:4 (July-August 1940): 296-310.

<sup>3</sup> Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *Medieval Lore: An Epitome of the Science, Geography, Animal and Plant Folk-Lore and Myth of the Middle Age: Being Classified Gleanings from the Encyclopedia of Bartholomew Anglicus on the Properties of Things*, ed. Robert Steele (London, Elliot Stock, 1893), 103.



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

LeBoeuf's interest in dramatic tenebrist or chiaroscuro effects of light, as well as his Mannerist tendencies of composition. These are also strongly on display in the arresting central figure of *Trois Bateaux* (Fig. 10, Plate 28), whose twisting, muscled, angular form seen in shadow at the very front of the picture plane recalls the striking, exaggerated poses of figures in sixteenth century Mannerism as in Rosso Fiorentino's painting of *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro* (Fig. 11).

John's work also samples broadly from the past in composing environments for his close studies of bust- or half-length figures. John's adept handling of color and light across the complex volumes of the faces and hands of his vividly lifelike figures stands



Fig. 12

in stark contrast to the fluid, atmospheric, and dimensionless milieu of the larger canvas, which is often full of washy fields of color crowded with spatially discontinuous quotations from Old Master paintings of fruits and flowers in varying stages of painted execution.

The eccentric poses, glances, costumes, and appearances of his figures suggest their function as portraits of people not as timeless abstractions of character but filtered through physical impressions and memories. John's subjects appear at once posed and candid, if that is possible, as figures whose gestures and glances have lost their original referents in space, as if the artist has abstracted them from a photograph or memory of a place in time. In *Birdboy* (Fig. 12, Plate 11), John depicts the brow-furrowed perplexity of a young man whose mannered, deeply expressive gestures find their source in Anthony van Dyck's famed *Self Portrait with a Sunflower* (Fig. 13). In combination with John's still life iconography of



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

flowers, fruit, and dead birds, *Birdboy* (Fig. 12, Plate 11) and many of his other works convey the dreamy, wistful, elegiac feeling of fading memories.

Morgan's paintings of bust- and half-length figures convey an entirely different intention. The almost uniformly frontal poses of her subjects, the halos and auras of light that surround their heads, hands, and bodies, and the paintings' flat, boldly colored backgrounds evoke the format of the medieval icon. Her paintings seem to move between the space of true portraiture (*Syrie and the Cat*) (Plate 31), and of mystical celebration of the relic of the body (*Arcadia, Opening Ceremony*) (Fig. 1 and 21, Plates 33 and 36). Her subjects project the expressionless *apatheia* associated with images of the saints in medieval and Byzantine painting.<sup>4</sup> They present their bodies, breasts, bellies, and pudenda in the manner of symbolic or mystical attributes. Their gestures evoke those of saints in religious icons. *Power Play* (Fig. 14, Plate 32) channels the spirit of Byzantine icons of Christ Pantocrator, for instance, the famous encaustic icon from the monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai (Fig. 15),

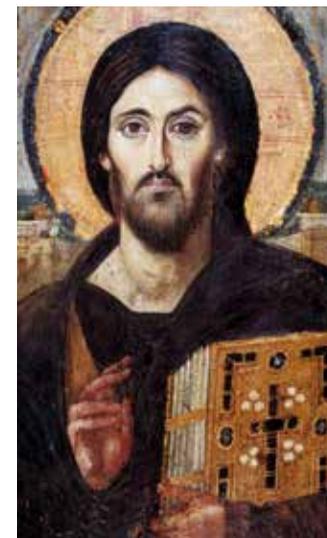


Fig. 15

<sup>4</sup> See Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), 210 and Henry Maguire, *The Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton University Press, 2000). Stock, 1893), 103.

<sup>5</sup> The classic study on this theme is that of Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Anchor, 1955), 295-320.

dating from the sixth century. *A Baby Named Love Psychedelic* (Plate 34) recalls the iconography of the *Madonna del Parto*, the pregnant virgin. *Arcadia* (Fig. 1, Plate 33) is especially symbolically dense. In Renaissance literature, Arcadia is the utopic land of youthful shepherds, of peaceful, pastoral bliss. Morgan's painting refers by way of the skull, a *memento mori*, to humanist, Renaissance paintings, especially those by Nicolas Poussin, that depict Arcadian shepherds wondering at the inscription on a tomb presided over by a nubile young woman. The conventional inscription, ET IN ARCADIA EGO—"Even in Arcadia, there am I"—signifies that death, too, comes to Arcady.<sup>5</sup> Morgan's painting puts in a succinct, iconic modern idiom the themes of life, youth, sex, and the perishing body that govern every person's progress from naïve, young, vital Arcadian to dead Arcadian.

Hasler's playfully serious paintings, which announce their intentions to delight in their bright palette and busy compositions, are among the most overtly historicizing works included in *Get Real*. Hasler's preferred mode is allegory, which adapts the Magic Realism of the twentieth century to the symbolizing, moralizing purposes of the tradition of allegorical painting stretching back to the Renaissance. Women are the usual vessels of meaning in allegory, which serves primarily to explore concepts or notions of the ideal. Fittingly, Hasler's paintings, in which she serves as her own model, deal extensively with idealizations of women, motherhood, and domesticity. In *Tea Party* (Fig. 16, Plate 4), as an apron-clad, stay-at-home mom, Hasler appears enthroned on the table top holding her infant in a composition that directly adapts Renaissance iconography as often seen in paintings of the enthroned Virgin and Child or the *sacra conversazione* type (Fig. 17). The self-image of feminine, maternal, and domestic perfection that Hasler projects in her images is delivered



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

in terms of such surreal visual hyperbole and with such a wink and a smile that it is difficult not to be drawn in to the wry humor of her paintings. In *Portrait as a Sunday Brunch* (Plate 5), the sexual and domestic ideals of woman collide in a vibrant clash of colors, dresses, and brunch fare. Hasler, holding sugar doughnuts and hard-boiled eggs on a porcelain creamer and saucer and wearing a still life of fruit and cakes offers herself to the viewer, commenting on the male confusion of the carnal appetites for sex and food, which women are often expected satisfy (perhaps at times simultaneously?). In the background, Hasler depicts multiple recessions into the domestic interior—doorways opening onto doorways



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

opening onto further spaces. This is a common feature of her compositions and a hallmark of Golden Age Dutch genre painting of domestic scenes, as in the works of Vermeer, Pieter de Hooch, Samuel van Hoogstraten, and others. Hasler's exceptionally realistic treatment of the sheen and texture of fabrics—silk, satin, velvet, damask—betrays another clear homage to seventeenth century Dutch realists, including Vermeer and Gerhard ter Borch.

In one of her most allusive paintings, *Portrait as an Allegory of Fidelity* (Fig. 18, Plate 3), Hasler acknowledges her influences through a rather wonderful, sly appropriation. In the upper right corner of the picture, in the extreme background, she reproduces in miniature one of Titian's paintings of *Venus and Adonis*, most likely the



Fig. 20

circa 1560 version at The J. Paul Getty Museum (Fig. 19). In the foreground, a rather strained-looking Hasler, carrying a toddler in one arm and bearing aloft a chicken on a plate, surmounts the family dog, symbol of fidelity, like Liberty leading the people as she scales the barricades in Eugène Delacroix's painting of the French July Revolution (Fig. 20). Hasler, barefoot in a short cocktail dress of blue taffeta and black lace and wearing a tiara, stands in front of a curtain that recalls the honorific tapestry baldachin that serves as the backdrop in Renaissance paintings of the Virgin enthroned. Here the curtain covers up little girl dresses on plastic hangars, boxes, and a party balloon. In the bottom left corner, children's clutter—a tangle of dolls, costume jewelry, and toys—replaces the bodies of fallen soldiers in Delacroix's painting as the proper battlefield of the wife and mother. Peering out expectantly from the shadows behind the curtain on the right one sees, at last, the husband, adjacent to him a bottle of wine, grapes, and fruit. These are old totems of romantic love that call to mind the humanist Renaissance epigram, often treated in art, that

without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus would freeze. That is to say, without food and wine, love grows cold. Here, the Titian comes back into view. Venus and Adonis, the goddess of love and beauty and her perfect lover, hang immediately above the marital bed in the clean, orderly bedroom, the quilt turned down and the crisp linens and plumped pillows virginally unspoiled and prepared for the pleasures of the embracing lovers. Hasler draws neatly on traditions of reception in Renaissance art. Venus and Adonis generally would have been considered the appropriate subject of a boudoir picture in the Renaissance, during which theorists advised placing erotically themed pictures in the intimacy of the bedroom where they could be viewed to advantage by their appropriate audience of husband and wife or, at least, by a man and his lover.<sup>6</sup> Faithful to her many roles—wife, mother, lover, domestic goddess, and housekeeper—Hasler seems nevertheless to be fraying a bit around the edges.

### *The Past and the Future of Realism*

The vividly painted descriptions of people and things featured in *Get Real* are by turns marvelous, sly, thoughtful, evocative, and engaging. They contain deep reflections on the methods and traditions of realistic painting just as they are attentive and probing in their scrutiny of contemporary subjects and themes. Again, though, one may ask, what justifies the investment of time and talent that this form of painting requires? Michelangelo, who might as well have been speaking to the present day, suggested in his critique of the masters of Flemish realism in fifteenth century painting that realistic painting in itself was perhaps not worth it:

It will appeal to women, especially to the very old and very young, and also to monks and nuns and to certain noblemen who have no sense of true

harmony. In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness ... They paint stuffs and masonry, the green grass of the fields, the shadow of trees, and rivers and bridges, which they call landscapes.<sup>7</sup>

Here Michelangelo presciently described a version of the existential crisis of painting in the twenty-first century. Is realism appealing only to the simple and those who lack the patience or understanding to appreciate art that poses a deeper challenge but offers greater reward? Is art more than illusion? Is realism gratuitous and redundant, supplying at great cost and in diminished measure that which nature gives freely and in infinite richness of detail?

Michelangelo lamented the lack of harmony in the Flemish realists' paintings, by which he meant the imaginative contribution that an artist ought to make to a painting, even one based on observations of nature. To speak anachronistically, Michelangelo saw his Flemish counterparts as too much like cameras recording the external characteristics of things with exactness yet, by their failure of invention, imparting no meaning to these objects. But a painter, even a Flemish realist, is not merely a mirror or camera recording the photons bouncing around in its field of view. A camera may record but not observe, it may capture but not scrutinize or describe. It lacks the critical faculty of conscious reflection that distinguishes the human painter from a machine. Oriti's portraits, for instance, are perhaps the most photo-real paintings featured in *Get Real*. In the empty void of their backdrops and the casual, honest directness of their subjects, they recall the portrait photography of Richard Avedon, for example. But to compare Oriti's superb realist paintings to superb photographs is a misleading analogy that mistakes the value of art for its finished product. No doubt, Oriti could more easily produce more deeply realistic pictures if he

<sup>6</sup> See David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> See James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, The Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575* (Prentice Hall, 2005), 87.

simply borrowed Avedon's camera, but the point is that no camera or photographer can do what Oriti can do. The reservoir of painting's value and the justification for its continued practice is not simply its result but its process, the application of technique to observation yielding description that painstakingly constructs our understanding of the subject from the 10,000 purposeful touches of the artist's brush.

Observation and description are at the root of knowing, of our empirical cognitive interface with the universe. The realist painter, like her cousin the scientist from whom she diverged in evolution only recently, is first and foremost a practitioner of observation, which is the act of paying attention to something for the purpose of understanding, the single most fundamental critical operation of the rational mind, and one that cannot be, and one hopes never will be, automated or mechanized.

The seventeenth century Dutch artist and theorist Hoogstraten articulated the purpose of painting, again in words that are presciently applicable to the contemporary moment: "The Art of Painting is a science for representing all the ideas or notions which the whole of visible nature is able to produce and for deceiving the eye with drawing and color."<sup>8</sup> Hoogstraten claims the purpose of realist painting is not the representation of things but of ideas or notions resident in nature, and deception or illusion appears in a secondary position in this mission statement,

though without denying the extraordinary pleasures involved in the various forms of creative deception that human beings have devised in the art of painting, not to mention literature, theatre, music, and the other arts. Understanding of nature and self is at stake in painting as it is in the causal observations at the root of our contemporary cultural notions of scientific investigation. As Hoogstraten's near contemporary, the philosopher Bacon, wrote, "The human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds."<sup>9</sup> In other words, if we may apply this idea to art, the realist painter's obligations and commitments to specificizing, to direct observation and to the process of description, are checks and balances on the human tendency toward generalizing and astigmatic thinking that tramples on the complexity of the real world.

From this point of view, realist painting is an enterprise that never reaches its end or achieves an ultimate goal. As the artists in *Get Real* remind us through their self-critical reflections on the traditions, processes, artifice, and subjects of realist painting, this is an art form whose value and significance are perpetually renewed in its doing. As in any going pursuit, and in human culture broadly speaking, we construct our futures from the present meaning the mind attaches to the things the eye observes in the now. Scrutiny of nature, each other, and ourselves is an ancient habit of mind, yet may it never be called archaic thinking.

<sup>8</sup> See relevant discussion in Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 77.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.



Fig. 21

HALEY HASLER

1 *PORTRAIT AS TRICK ROPER*, 2006

Oil on linen 48 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York





Part biography and part theater, Haley Hasler's paintings depict ordinary life in extraordinary, exaggerated circumstances. She uses the self-portrait as a way to access the personal within the archetypal heroine. Through these iconic forms, she investigates artifice versus reality, interior versus exterior, and creator versus creation. The faces of her portraits convey the bewilderment and fatigue of young motherhood in turbulent surroundings elaborately and fastidiously executed.

Her work, which often includes depictions of her husband and children, explores the challenges facing a twenty-first century woman as she seeks to balance her roles as mother, wife, and individual. Although she portrays modern scenarios of juggling multiple tasks and children simultaneously, her paintings allude to Renaissance compositions updated for contemporary allegories. Festooned in traditional ornamental attire, she contorts herself into precarious poses to dress, feed, and entertain her loved ones, sometimes adopting mythical roles as tooth fairy and adventurer.

Realistic still lifes of domestic artifacts—glasses, plates, food, toys, furniture, and flowers—are set against magical and surrealist backdrops. Hasler depicts the joy and humor of family life through carnival colors, extravagant costumes, and elaborate surroundings.

## 2 *PORTRAIT AS PALOMINO*, 2011

Oil on linen 52 x 42 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

"I conceive of a painting as a kind of theater," she wrote in her artist statement, "a stage set for my characters and protagonists."

Born in 1971, the Colorado native studied painting at Indiana University and earned an MFA from Boston University. Hasler has received numerous grants and awards, including a Fulbright Grant, and is a three-time winner of the Elizabeth Greenshields Award.

Her work has appeared in the Nicolaysen Art Museum in Casper, Wyoming; Robert Lange Studios in Charleston, South Carolina; EVOKE Contemporary in Sante Fe, New Mexico; and Andrews Gallery at The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Represented by Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery in Sag Harbor, New York, and Alpha Gallery in Boston, Hasler's art was included in the juried exhibition-in-print *New American Paintings West*.

3 *PORTRAIT AS AN ALLEGORY OF FIDELITY*, 2010

Oil on linen 52 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

4 *TEA PARTY*, 2008

Oil on linen 66 x 42 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York





5 *PORTRAIT AS A SUNDAY BRUNCH*, 2012

Oil on canvas 56 x 46 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

6 *PORTRAIT AS TOOTH FAIRY*, 2012

Oil on linen (unframed) 56 x 38 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York



JASON JOHN

7 *FISSURE*, 2013  
Oil on linen 28 x 32 inches  
Collection of the artist





Figures with inscrutable expressions balance precarious cardboard headpieces and hold awkward poses as fruit, flowers, and abstract objects swirl around them. The paintings reveal Jason John's masterful realist technique broken by abstract fissures of dripping paint.

The situations are illogical. But don't look for meaning or stories behind them. "As an artist, it took me a long time to realize that it's OK to be a realist painter that doesn't tell a story," John told MOCA Jacksonville.

John, an assistant professor of painting at the University of North Florida, describes his work as portraits of people in transition, with no relationship to allegory or narrative. Where his subjects have been or where they are going, he doesn't know.

When discussing his work, John often focuses on three central themes—identity, space and composition. All three are wrapped into the helmets his subjects wear, which he calls veils. Inspired by his passion for history, the headpieces are fashioned after Viking or Roman helmets. In his research, he learned that Vikings would appropriate visual elements from the villages they conquered into their armor, essentially destroying one thing to create another. He constructs them from cardboard and packaging, which often contain telltale symbols of their origins from Amazon or other shippers, adding an element of found art. These veils obscure the original identity of his models, allowing them to take on new roles.

Objects that could be real or projections of the subjects' thoughts drift through the paintings, hinting at the figures' identities and creating depictions of space. The fleshy exploding fruit could be mirrors of their bodies.

Born in 1980 in Detroit, Michigan, John grew up in Northeastern Pennsylvania. He received a BFA in painting from Kutztown University and an MFA in painting and drawing from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He also studied at The Waichulis Studio (now called Ani Art Academies) in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania.

John's work has appeared around the country including solo exhibitions at Manifest Gallery in Cincinnati, Ohio; Texas Tech University in Lubbock; and the Sylvia White Gallery in Ventura, California. In 2012, John was inducted into the Museum of Realist Art in Boston, Massachusetts. His work has been on the covers of *Bluecanvas*, *Art Calendar*, *Poets and Artists*, and *Visual Overture Magazine*. His work has also been featured in *American Arts Quarterly*, *American Art Collector*, Manifest Gallery's *International Painting Annual*, *Studio Visit*, *Creative Quarterly*, and *Aesthetica*.

8 *LIFT*, 2012

Oil on linen 40 x 40 inches

Collection of the artist

9 **GOLDEN HEART**, 2012

Oil on linen 34 x 24 inches  
Collection of the artist

10 **OUR BEST KEPT SECRET**, 2012

Oil on board 30 x 30 inches  
Collection of the artist





11 *BIRDBOY*, 2013  
Oil on linen 24 x 34 inches  
Collection of the artist



12 *SNIFFER*, 2013  
Oil on canvas 15 x 20 inches  
Collection of the artist



13 *FIERCE*, 2013  
Oil on canvas 30 x 40 inches  
Collection of the artist



14 *CARRIER*, 2014  
Oil on canvas 42 x 32 inches  
Collection of the artist

15 *BLISS POINT*, 2013  
Oil on canvas 18 x 20 inches  
Collection of the artist



ANDREA KOWCH

16 *ON THE POINT*, 2010

Acrylic on canvas 48 x 36 inches

Collection of John and Suzanne Hooker, Sag Harbor, New York





Andrea Kowch's work could be described as the creative legacy of Andrew Wyeth and Alfred Hitchcock. Her haunting rural settings mask mysterious backstories. But Kowch has invented her own brand of powerful, moody symbolism with enigmatic, unfathomable characters, a rich autumnal color palette, and tense, mysterious scenes. "It's almost like characters on a stage," she said. "So each image is a story that I just want people to delve into and explore."

Inspired by the sweeping Midwestern American landscapes and architecture of her home state of Michigan, Kowch's work reflects Northern Renaissance and American art influences. The carefully composed paintings achieve a three-dimensional quality that draws viewers into the action.

Kowch's paintings feature up to four friends who model for her allegorical scenes using the palette and metaphors of the seasons and weather of her beloved Michigan. The women's inscrutable expressions hide their true emotions, while their windswept hair hints at feelings that might be surging underneath a controlled exterior.

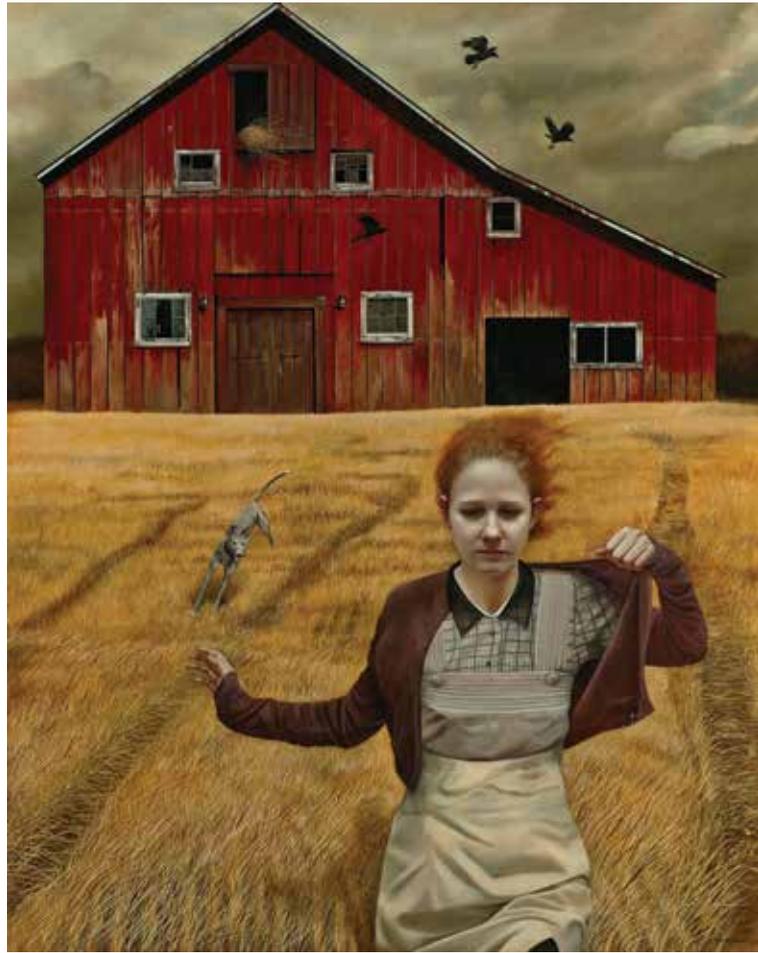
Domestic and wild inhabitants vie for attention: Dogs, chickens, rabbits, quails, moths, water fowl, and other animals—many with historical allegorical meanings—coexist with the women. The haunting, dreamlike scenarios evoke both melancholy and nostalgia, giving the work an ambiguous and suspenseful edge.

"The lonely, desolate American landscape encompassing the paintings' subjects serves as an exploration of nature's sacredness and a reflection of the human soul, symbolizing all things powerful, fragile and eternal," Kowch wrote in her artist statement.

17 *THE SENTINEL*, 2013

Acrylic on canvas 36 x 24 inches  
Collection of Donna A. Smith, Greensboro, North Carolina

Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1986, Kowch graduated summa cum laude from the College for Creative Studies in 2009 with a BFA in illustration. Beginning with the prestigious Scholastic Art Awards and the National Young Arts Foundation (formerly the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts) in her early adulthood, her work has been honored and recognized at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., New York City's Diane von Furstenberg Gallery, and the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse in Miami, Florida. Kowch has since gone on to receive best of show awards in various juried exhibitions of regional, national, and international caliber, and has exhibited at museums and galleries, including solo exhibitions at the Muskegon Museum of Art, the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery in Sag Harbor, New York (which exclusively represents her work), Grand Rapids Art Museum in Michigan, ArtPrize, Art Basel Miami, the Los Angeles Art Show, ArtHamptons, and SCOPE New Yorkemove, which selected Kowch as one of the top one hundred emerging artists in the world in 2012. She has also been featured in and graced the front covers of several publications, including Spectrum, Direct Art, American Art Collector, Revue, and Southwest Art. Kowch's work can be found in many significant private collections worldwide and in public collections, including the Muskegon Museum of Art in Michigan, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Northbrook Library in Illinois, and the Brooklyn Art Library in New York. Kowch resides and works in Michigan as a full-time painter and adjunct instructor at the College for Creative Studies.



18 *DREAM CHASER*, 2013

Acrylic on canvas 60 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the Bennett Collection of Women Realists, San Antonio, Texas

19 *THE FEAST*, 2010-11

Acrylic on canvas 60 x 84 inches

Collection of John and Suzanne Hooker, Sag Harbor, New York



20 *AN INVITATION*, 2013  
Acrylic on canvas 60 x 48 inches  
Collection of Ron and Elin Delsener,  
New York, New York

21 *THE CAPE*, 2012  
Acrylic on canvas 60 x 84 inches  
Courtesy of the Richard J. Demato Fine  
Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York





22 **QUEEN'S COURT**, 2013  
Acrylic on canvas 30 x 30 inches  
Collection of Denise Adams, New York, New York



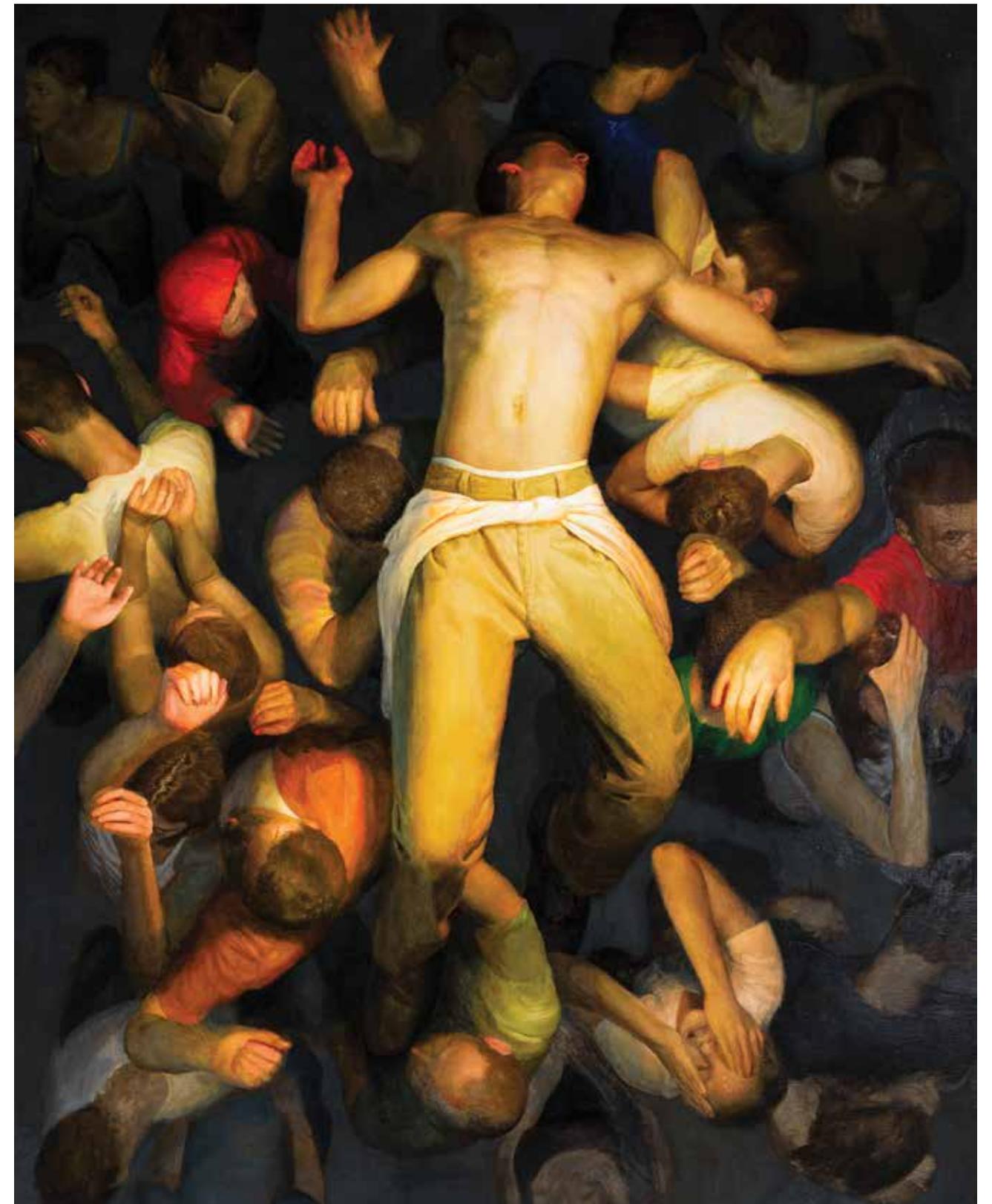
23 **MERRY WANDERERS**, 2013  
Acrylic on canvas 24 x 36 inches  
Collection of Les and Barbara Norman, Fairview, North Carolina

BRYAN LEBOEUF

24 *MOSH PIT*, 2003

Oil on linen 60 x 48 inches

Collection of Peter N. Geisler Jr., Lake Worth, Florida





Although shaped by memory, Bryan LeBoeuf's work springs from his imagination. He then borrows from the visual world to give it authenticity.

Traditional compositions incorporate meticulously painted surfaces and lighting effects informed by European masters. His tightly controlled technique, representational subject matter, and subtly manipulated compositions create a through-the-looking-glass illusion, removing barriers between viewers and the images. He models, positions, and crops his figures to construct the impression of unseen space; viewers must imagine why a figure gazes beyond the edges of the canvas.

Although his technique and subject matter may appear traditional, his art implies modern psychological and social themes. Memories of relationships from his Southern childhood imbue his narrative paintings with familiar motifs. Parents, children, siblings, partners, and other family members engage in unresolved interactions that play out in moody environments. Some scenes elicit tension and fear, while others compel curiosity.

His work contains strong visual references to art history, mythology, and allegory. LeBoeuf's deft manipulation of paint, light, and space demand a reexamination of the power of painting. He is charting his own path by increasing the level of technical difficulty while exploring the fertile ground of storytelling. His impressive mastery of iconography and articulation is matched by the element of mystery he incorporates into his work.

Born in Houma, Louisiana in 1975, LeBoeuf was raised in the Southeast. He earned a BFA at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, in 1998 and an MFA from the New York Academy of Art in 2000. Several of his paintings have been acquired by public collections, including the Forbes Permanent Collection and the Flint Institute of Arts in Michigan. His work has appeared in San Francisco, California; New York City; Thibodaux, Louisiana; Houston, Texas; the Beirut Art Fair in Lebanon; and the U.S. embassy in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. He held his first solo museum exhibition in 2008 at the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia, where one of his paintings is in the permanent collection.

25 *AGE OF MAN*, 2003

Oil on linen 48 x 50 inches

Collection of Peter N. Geisler Jr., Lake Worth, Florida



26 *PHONE CALL*, 2006  
Oil on linen 54 x 56 inches  
Collection of Thomas E. Moore III, New York, New York

27 *DAEDALUS*, 2000  
Oil on linen 54 x 102 inches  
Collection of the artist



28 **TROIS BATEAUX**, 2004

Oil on linen 66 x 96 inches

Collection of Christopher Forbes, New York, New York

*next page*

29 **LION'S DEN**, 2011

Oil on canvas 90 x 114 inches

Collection of Thomas E. Moore III, New York, New York

30 **DRAWING IS LOVE**, 2008-11

Oil on canvas 49 x 57 inches

Collection of the artist



JENNY MORGAN

31 *SYRIE AND THE CAT*, 2013

Oil on canvas 76 x 54 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York





Although classically trained as a figure painter, Jenny Morgan is breaking with the labor-intensive preciousness associated with the realist approach. Technically intricate with a haunting quality, Morgan's paintings experiment with psychological visual realism, obscuring the physical to expose the spiritual. She obfuscates the portraits' meticulous details by annihilating their likeness, stripping away layers like physical and spiritual wounds, while retaining a striking intimacy. Like an archeologist, she digs to discover the subject's identity.

"I have reached the point where I need to play around with the paint on the canvas surface just to keep myself interested and engaged in the process," she wrote in her artist statement. "I am exploring and 'messing up' my realist hand by employing different methods of disturbing the surface through sanding and glazing."

Morgan depicts people she knows well, creating renderings that are sensitive and compassionate, and sometimes brutally perceptive. Lately, she has turned her focus to people she knows personally, but not intimately. "If there is a spark of mystery to our relationship," she wrote, "it leaves room for me to explore them on canvas."

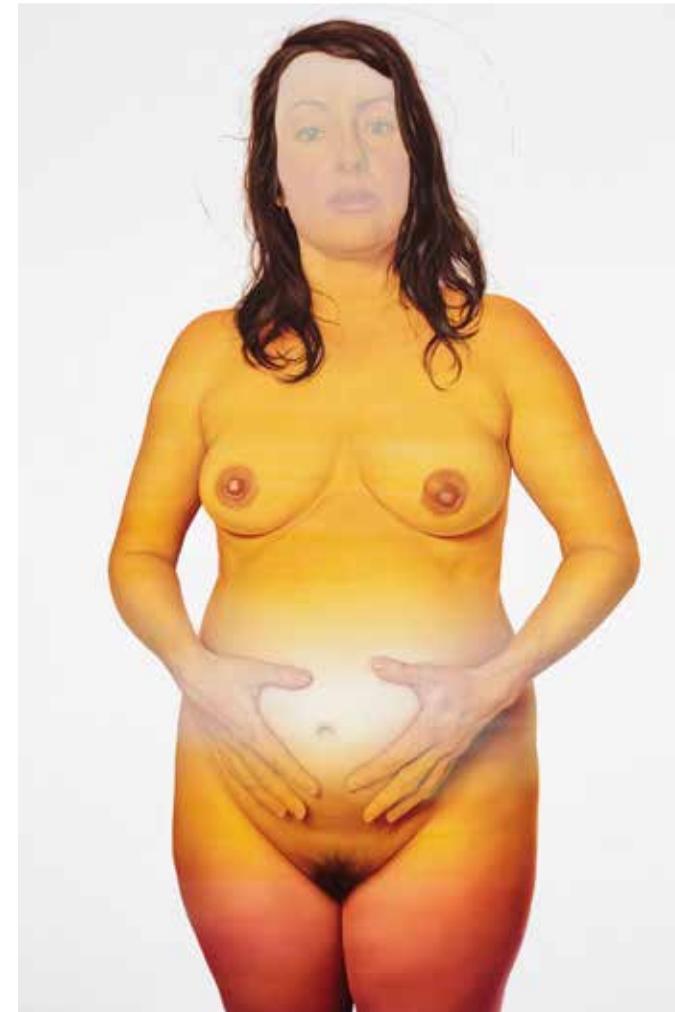
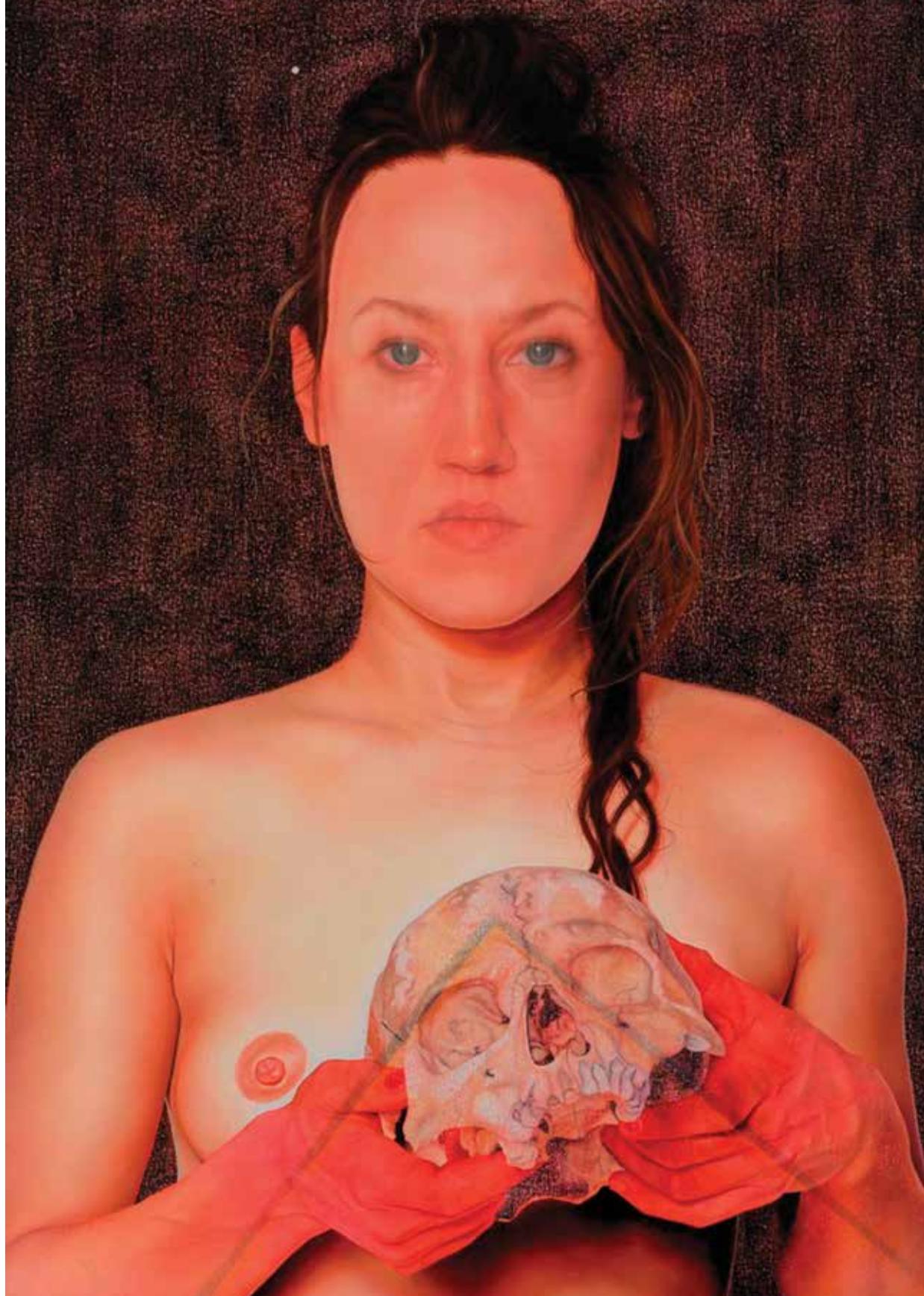
Her corporeal but also ethereal portraits become almost supernatural portrayals, hovering between the spheres of the known and the unknown. Her intensely personal work examines the complexity of human relationships and the multiplicities of self-awareness. Her subjects sometimes hold objects as metaphors for their personalities. "The figure is simply the most compelling subject matter for me," she wrote, it feels natural, and with the ebb and flow of my style and maturity, I find new ways to approach the portrait."

Born in 1982 in Salt Lake City, Utah, Morgan now lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She holds a BA from the Rocky Mountain College School of Design in Lakewood, Colorado, and an MFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York. She is represented by New York City's Driscoll Babcock Galleries, which presented a solo exhibition of her work in 2013. Her work has been exhibited in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.; 92Y Tribeca and the Le Roy Neiman Gallery at Columbia University, both in New York; and at galleries in Orlando, Florida; London, England; and Falun, Sweden. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* and *New York magazine*.

32 *POWER PLAY*, 2011

Oil on canvas 42 x 31 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York



33 **ARCADIA**, 2011

Oil on canvas 46 x 32 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

34 **A BABY NAMED LOVE PSYCHEDELIC**, 2014

Oil on canvas 90 x 60 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

35 **OBLIVION**, 2012

Oil on canvas 37 x 29 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York



36 *OPENING CEREMONY*, 2014

Oil on canvas 56 x 42 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries,  
New York, New York

37 *BRAND NEW*, 2014

Oil on canvas 32 x 28 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries,  
New York, New York



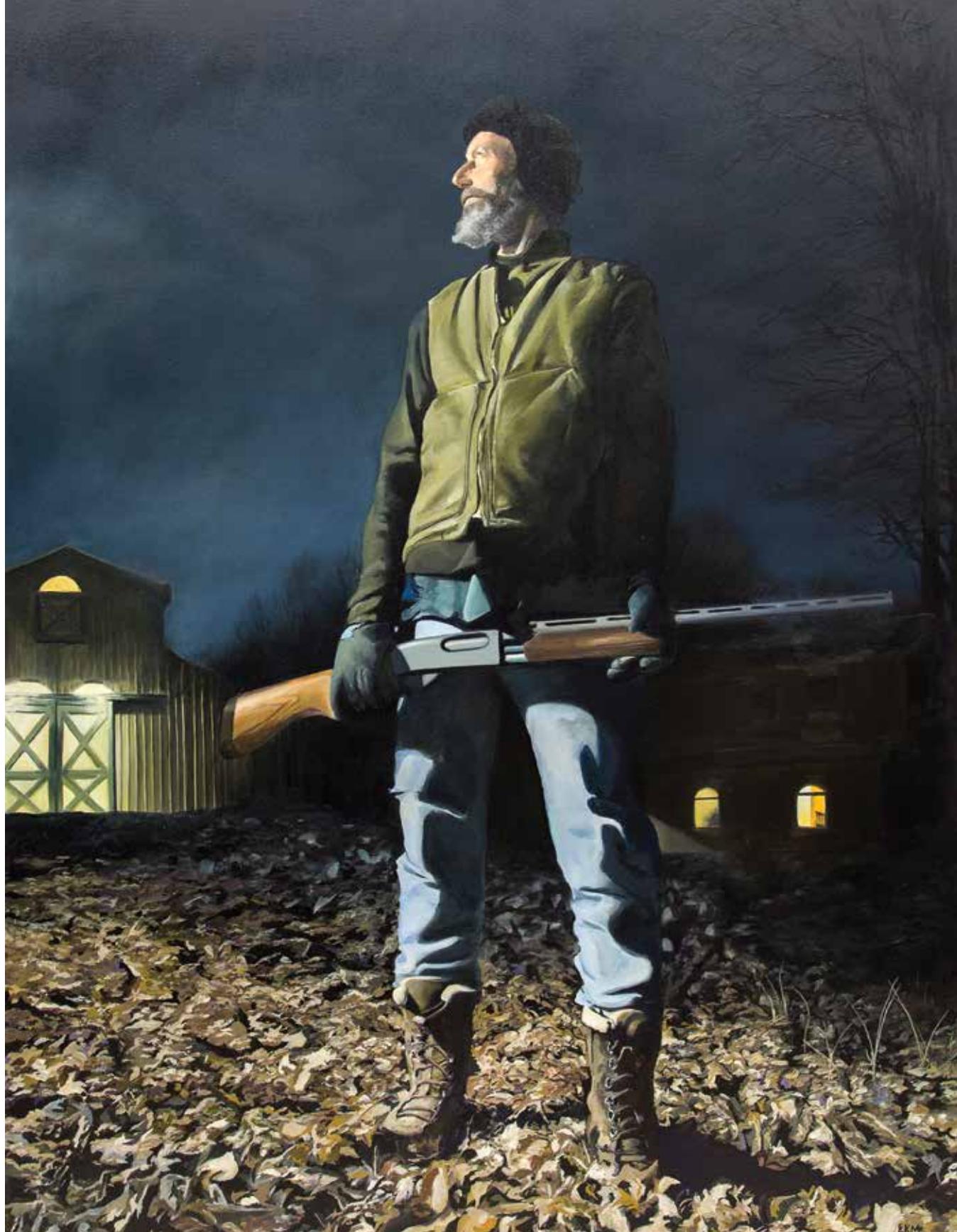
KEVIN MUENTE

38 *POTENTIAL OF LOSS*, 2011

Oil on canvas 36 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York





In a world with a constant barrage of moving images, Kevin Munte's paintings beckon viewers to slow down and contemplate a frozen, motionless moment in time. Many of Munte's surreal images deliberately cause viewers to stop and ask, "What is about to happen?" Each painting's slightly ambiguous content pulls the narrative in multiple directions, keeping viewers guessing and returning for repeated examinations.

Although he began painting pure landscapes, Munte later added subjects to his staged, pictorial scenes. His work explores the human experience through the metaphor of landscape by featuring archetypal figures within idealized rural surroundings. The emotions portrayed in these small moments of human action tap into universal themes: loss, heroism, and fear.

"On reflection, I realize that these cinematic paintings depict people facing the most elemental conflict in nature—life and death—and they ask more questions than they answer," Munte wrote in his artist statement.

His job as an associate professor of painting at Northern Kentucky University allows him to produce paintings he wants to make, not necessarily those he knows he can sell. That freedom has helped him develop a distinctive style that he calls "narrative, figurative landscapes." The dramatic interaction between figures and landscapes taps into the conflict in people's lives.

Munte draws some inspiration from films, observing how cinematographers portend the mood and the upcoming action by panning over a landscape. When he scouts a location for future work, he shoots 200 to 400 photographs, editing them down to one or two that will become the basis for his next painting. He might also use historical paintings or films as references in a storyboard. He casts models as archetypes, but says that in some way they have lived those roles.

Born in 1971 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Munte received his BFA in drawing and painting from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1994 and his MFA in painting from the University of Cincinnati in 1999. Represented by the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery in Sag Harbor, New York, he has exhibited his paintings in various national juried competitions and received several honors including The Kentucky Arts Council's Al Smith Individual Artist Fellowship, a Cincinnati Summerfair Aid to Individual Artist Grant, and artist residencies at both Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska and at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. He previously taught at the Milwaukee Art Museum and Missouri Western State College.

39 *AMERICAN GOTHIC*, 2013

Oil on canvas 48 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

40 *ANOTHER NEW YEAR'S DAY*, 2012

Oil on canvas 30 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery,  
Sag Harbor, New York





41 **THE RAFT (ALL THAT YOU CAN'T LEAVE BEHIND)**, 2013

Oil on canvas 41 x 50 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

42 **SMOKE SIGNALS**, 2013

Oil on canvas 48 x 60 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

FRANK ORITI

43 *STEADFAST*, 2012

Oil and acrylic on canvas 36 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York





Frank Oriti's paintings are studies in contrast. Every detail of the figures in his portraits is intricately, lovingly portrayed. But the loosely rendered, experimental backgrounds are bleak and ghostly abstract landscapes.

Oriti depicts the people he's known since childhood as blue-collar protagonists, gazing stoically or perhaps with a hint of aggression. Many are former Marines and friends, some from a Cleveland steel mill where he worked between undergraduate and graduate school. Their lives, experiences, and state of mind are the backstory behind these portraits. Resignation and disappointment are etched into their faces.

Suburban houses appear faintly in the background—often the subjects' childhood homes—a visualization of the attempt to “whiteout” their longing to achieve the American Dream after failing to escape their hometown. By erasing the history of these characters, Oriti discovers they no longer really belong in that space where the ghosts of those memories remain. But they have accepted their situation and must start anew, with an understanding that they might never leave.

He paints the protagonists and backgrounds in distinctly different ways to accentuate their connection and disconnection to the past. Oriti documents the changes facing middle class America, particularly those in their mid-to-late twenties, through these tales of hope deferred. Their faded memories and ideals are common with this cyclical experience.

Before his career breakthrough, Oriti often felt the same smoldering desperation as he maintained a day job while struggling with his art. In one sense, these paintings are a form of self-portraiture with the universal theme of homecoming found in Homer's *Odyssey* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. His paintings create another world, a second chance for each character to discover a new sense of self among the relics of the past.

Born in 1983 and raised in Parma, Ohio, outside of Cleveland, Frank Oriti earned his BFA in two-dimensional studies from Bowling Green State University in 2006. He returned to his hometown and worked at a Cleveland steel mill while painting in his spare time. He earned an MFA in painting from Ohio University in 2011 and won the Cleveland Arts Prize Emerging Artist Award in 2013. Oriti's work is represented by The Bonfoey Gallery in Cleveland and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery in Sag Harbor, New York.

44 30, 2013

Oil and acrylic on panel 24 x 24 inches

Collection of Richard H. Shoemaker and James E. Ruud, Chicago, Illinois



45 *VIRO*, 2011

Oil and acrylic on canvas 48 x 72 inches

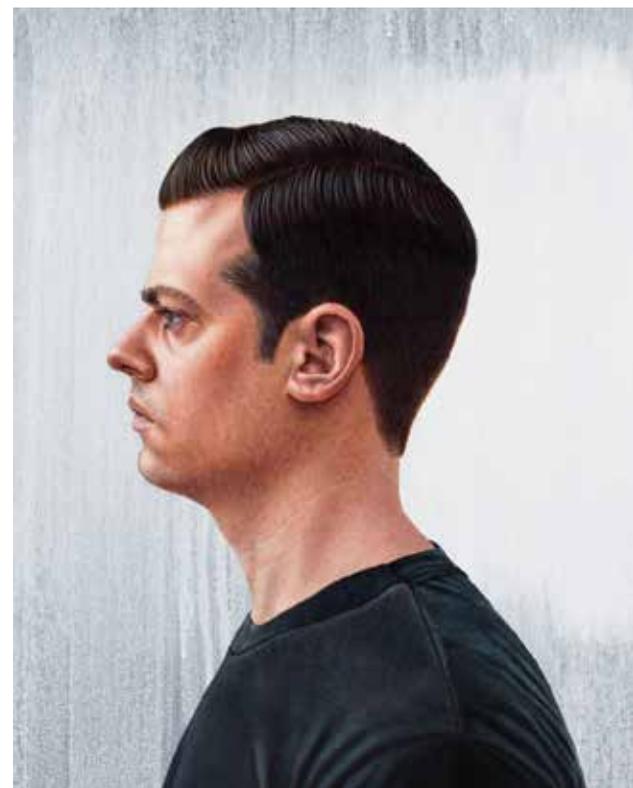
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York



46 *JIMMY*, 2011

Oil and acrylic on canvas 36 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York



47 *NO IN BETWEEN*, 2013

Oil and acrylic canvas covered panel 20 x 16 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery,  
Sag Harbor, New York

48 *UNIFORM*, 2013

Oil and acrylic canvas covered panel 20 x 16 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery,  
Sag Harbor, New York

49 *THE OTHER SIDE*, 2013

Oil and acrylic on canvas 48 x 60 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery,  
Sag Harbor, New York





50 *WITH OR WITHOUT*, 2011

Oil & acrylic on canvas 43 x 49 inches

Collection of Kathryn and Jack DiMaio, Huntington, New York

51 *I'D RATHER SINK*, 2013

Oil and acrylic on canvas (unframed) 48 x 35 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery,  
Sag Harbor, New York

52 *SECONDHAND PLAN*, 2014

Oil and acrylic on canvas 48 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery,  
Sag Harbor, New York

KEVIN PETERSON

53 *BRICKS*, 2014  
Oil on panel 26 x 37 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery, Culver City, California





Although Kevin Peterson is a figurative painter, his gritty, graffiti-covered backgrounds share the stage with his irresistible human subjects. The walls bear the scars of a ragged and dangerous world. The children are pure, young, and innocent. The two appear to be polar opposites, but the girls seem empowered by their surroundings, not afraid of them. Peterson's hyper-realistic style contrasts angelic youth against desolate, urban backgrounds, yet evidence of the painter's brush adds warmth and hope.

One can imagine a time when these walls were pristine and untouched, like newborns. As people, the elements, and time mar, tarnish, and decay these structures, others strive to repair, rebuild, and renew them. It's the same cycle that people undergo throughout their lives. "My work is about the varied journeys we take through life," Peterson wrote in his artist statement. "It's about growing up and living in a world that is broken."

Peterson knows about this trauma firsthand. While working as a probation officer in Austin, difficulties with drugs and alcohol led to an arrest and the loss of his job. During treatment, he rediscovered his passion for creating art. Peterson has pursued an art career since becoming sober in 2005.

His paintings depict the strength required to survive and thrive in a world of isolation, fear, and loneliness. His recent work portrays issues of race and the division of wealth. "This work deals with the idea of rigid boundaries, the hopeful breakdown of such restrictions, as well as questions about the forces that orchestrate our behavior," he wrote.

He seamlessly blends realistic portraiture and natural graffiti linework with a fresh approach and an impressive command of styles. The design and color of the spray-painted walls enhance the girls' personalities, showing how this form of public art has become a constant presence in today's metropolitan world.

Born in 1979 in Elko, Nevada, Peterson's childhood included stints in Michigan and Washington before arriving in Texas in 1996. He attended Austin College in Sherman, Texas, where he received degrees in fine art and psychology in 2001. He now makes his home in Houston, where he works out of Winter Street Studios. His work has been featured at the Honolulu Museum of Art in Hawaii, SCOPE Art Show in New York, Shooting Gallery in San Francisco, Thinkspace Gallery in Culver City, California, and SCOPE Basel in New York and Miami.

54 *UNTITLED*, 2011

Oil, acrylic, and metallic paint on panel 36 x 36 inches  
Collection of Laurie Lonergan, Houston, Texas



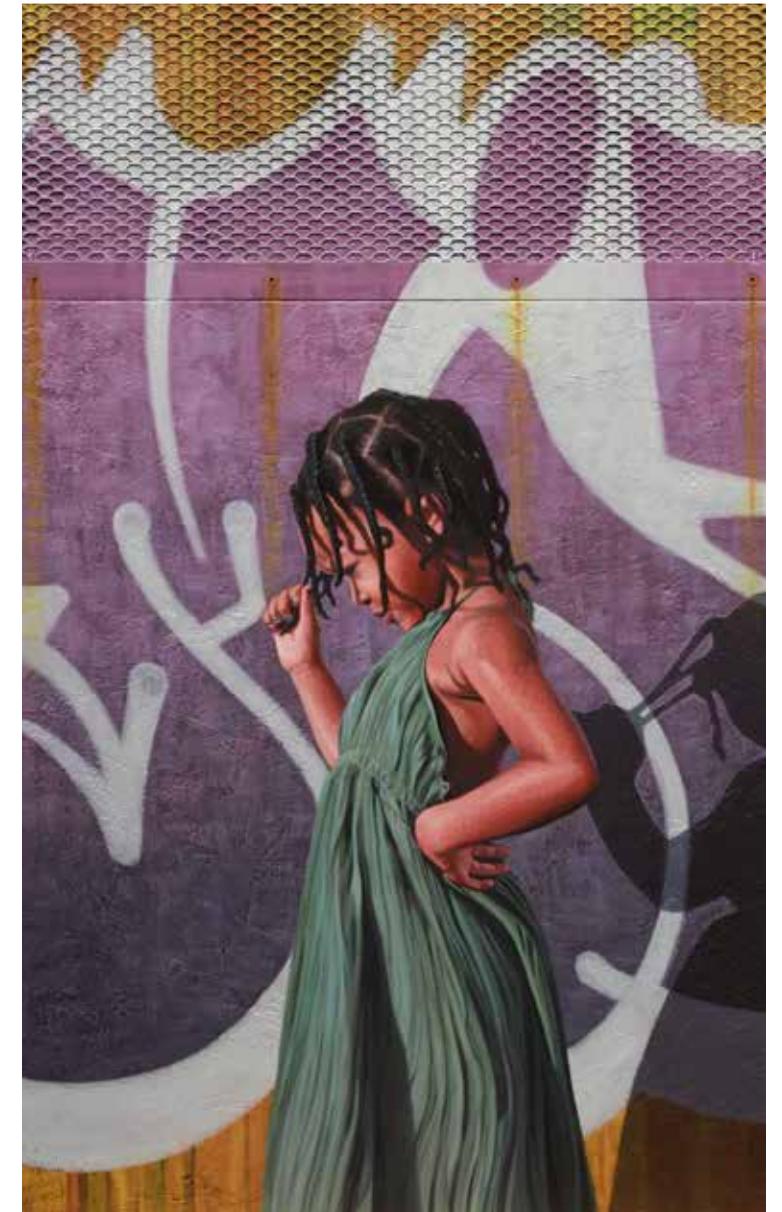
55 *JANTZEN*, 2012  
Oil on panel 42 x 32.5 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery,  
Culver City, California

56 *PONYTAIL*, 2014  
Oil on panel 18 x 18 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery,  
Culver City, California





57 *ORANGE/BLUE*, 2010  
Oil on panel 40 x 30 inches  
Collection of Ryan Walter, Houston, Texas



58 *BRAIDS*, 2013  
Oil on panel with metal mesh 24.5 x 15.5 inches  
Collection of Ryan Walter, Houston, Texas

59 **STREET LIGHT**, 2012

Oil on panel with metal 46.5 x 71 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery, Culver City, California

*next page*

60 **ANGEL**, 2012

Oil on wood panel 36 x 30 inches

Collection of Michael and Michele Cavendish, Jacksonville, Florida

61 **BRIGHT II**, 2013

Oil on panel with metal mesh 24 x 24 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery, Culver City, California





## Exhibition Checklist

### HALEY HASLER

*Portrait as Trick Roper*, 2006

Oil on linen

48 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Tea Party*, 2008

Oil on linen

66 x 42 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Portrait as an Allegory of Fidelity*, 2010

Oil on linen

52 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Portrait as Palomino*, 2011

Oil on linen

52 x 42 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Portrait as a Sunday Brunch*, 2012

Oil on canvas

56 x 46 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Portrait as Tooth Fairy*, 2012

Oil on linen

56 x 38 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York,

### JASON JOHN

*Fissure*, 2013

Oil on linen

28 x 32 inches

Collection of the artist

*Golden Heart*, 2012

Oil on linen

34 x 24 inches

Collection of the artist

*Our Best Kept Secret*, 2012

Oil on board

30 x 30 inches

Collection of the artist

*Birdboy*, 2013

Oil on linen

24 x 34 inches

Collection of the artist

*Lift*, 2012

Oil on linen

40 x 40 inches

Collection of the artist

*Fierce*, 2013

Oil on canvas

30 x 40 inches

Collection of the artist

*Sniffer*, 2013

Oil on canvas

15 x 20 inches

Collection of the artist

*Bliss Point*, 2013

Oil on canvas

18 x 20 inches

Collection of the artist

*Carrier*, 2014

Oil on canvas

42 x 32 inches

Collection of the artist

### ANDREA KOWCH

*On the Point*, 2010

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 36 inches

Collection of John and Suzanne Hooker, Sag Harbor, New York

*The Feast*, 2010-11

Acrylic on canvas

60 x 84 inches

Collection of John and Suzanne Hooker, Sag Harbor, New York

*The Cape*, 2012

Acrylic on canvas

60 x 84 inches

Courtesy of the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Merry Wanderers*, 2013

Acrylic on canvas

24 x 36 inches

Collection of Les and Barbara Norman, Fairview, North Carolina

*The Sentinel*, 2013

Acrylic on canvas

36 x 24 inches

Collection of Donna A. Smith, Greensboro, North Carolina

*An Invitation*, 2013

Acrylic on canvas

60 x 48 inches

Collection of Ron and Elin Delsener, New York, New York

*Dream Chaser*, 2013

Acrylic on canvas

60 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the Bennett Collection of Women Realists, San Antonio, Texas

*Queen's Court*, 2013

Acrylic on canvas

30 x 30 inches

Collection of Denise Adams, New York, New York

### BRYAN LEBOEUF

*Daedalus*, 2000

Oil on linen

54 x 102 inches

Collection of the artist

*Age of Man*, 2003

Oil on linen

48 x 50 inches

Collection of Peter N. Geisler Jr., Lake Worth, Florida

*Mosh Pit*, 2003

Oil on linen

60 x 48 inches

Collection of Peter N. Geisler Jr., Lake Worth, Florida

*Trois Bateaux*, 2004

Oil on linen

66 x 96 inches

Collection of Christopher Forbes, New York, New York

*Phone Call*, 2006

Oil on linen

54 x 56 inches

Collection of Thomas E. Moore III, New York, New York

*Drawing is Love*, 2008-11

Oil on canvas

49 x 57 inches

Collection of the artist

*Lion's Den*, 2011

Oil on canvas

90 x 114 inches

Collection of Thomas E. Moore III, New York, New York

### JENNY MORGAN

*Arcadia*, 2011

Oil on canvas

46 x 32 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

*Power Play*, 2011

Oil on canvas

42 x 31 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

*Oblivion*, 2012

Oil on canvas

37 x 29 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

*Syrie and the Cat*, 2013

Oil on canvas

76 x 54 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

*Opening Ceremony*, 2014

Oil on canvas

56 x 42 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

*Brand New*, 2014

Oil on canvas

32 x 28 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

*A Baby Named Love Psychedelic*, 2014

Oil on canvas

90 x 60 inches

Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock Galleries, New York, New York

### KEVIN MUENTE

*Potential of Loss*, 2011

Oil on canvas

36 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*The Raft (All That You Can't Leave Behind)*, 2013

Oil on canvas

41 x 50 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Another New Year's Day*, 2012

Oil on canvas

30 x 48 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*American Gothic*, 2013

Oil on canvas

48 x 36 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Smoke Signals*, 2013

Oil on canvas

48 x 60 inches

Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

## Exhibition Checklist and Essay Illustrations

### FRANK ORITI

*Viro*, 2011  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
48 x 72 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato  
Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Jimmy*, 2011  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
36 x 48 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato  
Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*With or Without*, 2011  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
43 x 49 inches  
Collection of Kathryn and Jack DiMaio,  
Huntington, New York

*Steadfast*, 2012  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
36 x 48 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato  
Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*The Other Side*, 2013  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
48 x 60 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato  
Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*No in Between*, 2013  
Oil and acrylic on canvas-covered panel  
20 x 16 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato  
Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Uniform*, 2013  
Oil and acrylic on canvas-covered panel  
20 x 16 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato  
Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

30, 2013  
Oil and acrylic on panel  
24 x 24 inches  
Collection of Richard H. Shoemaker and James E.  
Ruud, Chicago, Illinois

*I'd Rather Sink*, 2013  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
48 x 35 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato  
Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

*Secondhand Plan*, 2014  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
48 x 36 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and the Richard J. Demato  
Fine Arts Gallery, Sag Harbor, New York

### KEVIN PETERSON

*Bricks*, 2014  
Oil on panel  
26 x 37 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery,  
Culver City, California

*Ponytail*, 2014  
Oil on panel  
18 x 18 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery,  
Culver City, California

*Bright II*, 2013  
Oil on panel with metal mesh  
24 x 24 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery,  
Culver City, California

*Street Light*, 2012  
Oil on panel with metal  
46.5 x 71 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery,  
Culver City, California

*Jantzen*, 2012  
Oil on panel  
42 x 32.5 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Thinkspace Gallery,  
Culver City, California

*Braids*, 2013  
Oil on panel with metal mesh  
24.5 x 15.5 inches  
Collection of Ryan Walter, Houston, Texas

*Orange/Blue*, 2010  
Oil on panel  
40 x 30 inches  
Collection of Ryan Walter, Houston, Texas

*Untitled*, 2011  
Oil, acrylic, and metallic paint on panel  
36 x 36 inches  
Collection of Laurie Lonergan, Houston, Texas

*Angel*, 2012  
Oil on wood panel  
36 x 30 inches  
Collection of Michael and Michele Cavendish,  
Jacksonville, Florida

### ESSAY ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1  
Jenny Morgan  
*Arcadia*, 2011  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock  
Galleries, New York, New York

Fig. 2  
Andrea Kowch  
*Dream Chaser*, 2013  
Acrylic on canvas  
Courtesy of the Bennett Collection of Women  
Realists, San Antonio, Texas

Fig. 3  
Kevin Peterson  
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Collection of Laurie Lonergan, Houston, Texas

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(artwork in the public domain)

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Jenny Morgan  
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Oil on canvas  
56 x 42 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Driscoll Babcock  
Galleries, New York, New York

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