Gallery&Studio

arts journal

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Gallery&Studio arts journal

In This Issue:

More than one billion people around the world celebrate Earth Day which was first launched in the United States in 1970. The aim of the day is to help educate the world population about the damage done to the earth by pollution and deforestation. Earth Day is also intended to encourage us to clear up garbage, use less water, turn off unnecessary lights and power, reduce waste and spread the message.

The powerful image on the front cover, created by Tomás Sánchez, presents us with the chilling results of a polluted world. Inside, he encourages us to see how the world could be with his serene and magical forest paintings. He fulfills the artist's mission to record the times and reimagine the future for us.

In addition, we have essays on history through the ages, from the Ancient Egyptians to 19th Century artists and illustrators, to several imaginative current painters, sculptors, dancers, and poets. We also have two essays which highlight the importance of teachers and what they say to their students.

Finally, we are requesting small art donations for our June Auction. The money raised will help us to continue to cover lesser-known artists and bring them to you in our magazine (see page 11).

—The Editors

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Front Cover Art by Tomás Sánchez, *Con la puerta abierta*, 2015, acrylic and oil on canvas

Gallery&Studio
arts journal

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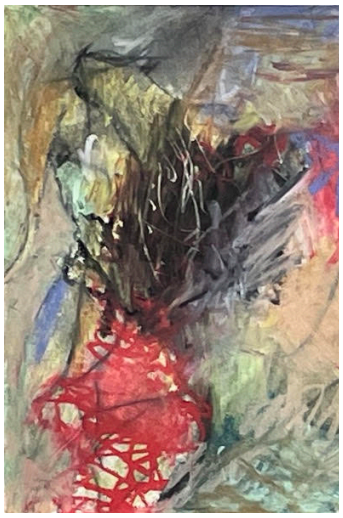

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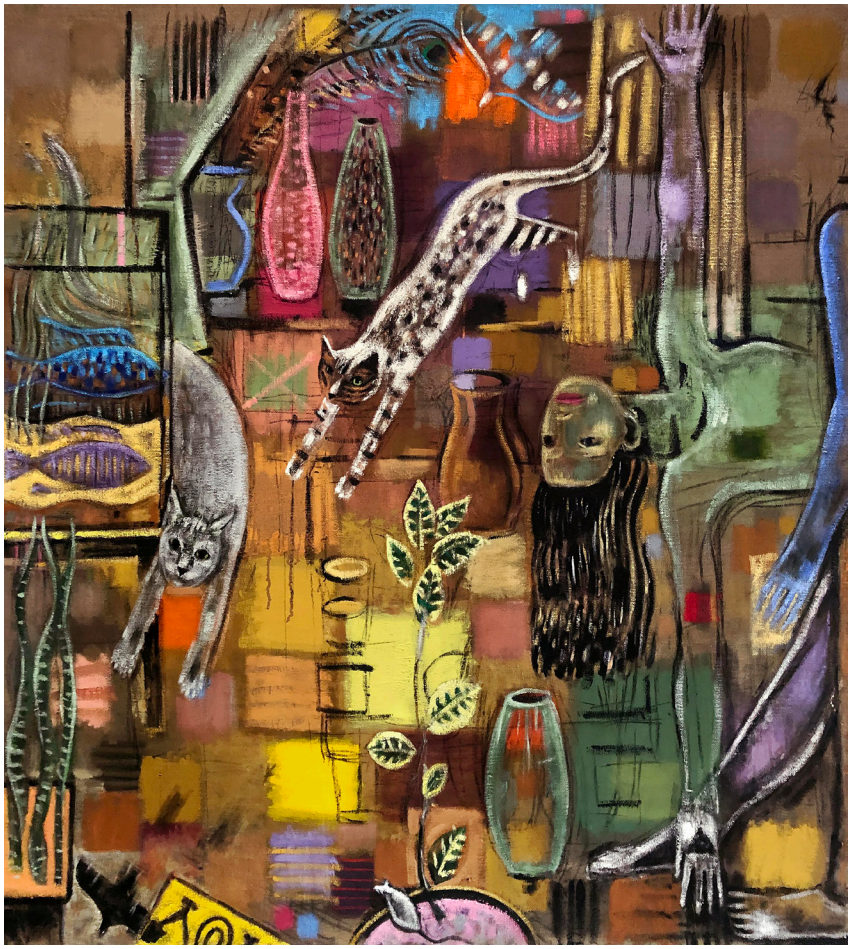
Mark Kurdziel
An Artist Described by Renoir

by Marina Hadley



"The Artist Studio," 2021, oil and distemper on linen, 54" x 60"

When the famous French Impressionist Auguste Pierre Renoir called artists "pleasure givers," he must have been looking into the future to describe **Mark Kurdziel** and his paintings.

Kurdziel's colors grab your attention initially, followed by familiar motifs and forms, and then you are ensnared by his perspectives and depth of emotion. His style is very much his own, easily recognizable as his and cannot be shoe-horned into any particular artistic category. However, if pressed he may suggest Symbolism. The subject matter of his paintings is his life.

He is first and foremost a master of color, understanding the technicalities of hue, brightness and saturation, the power of color combinations and the psychology they imbue. He understands color academically as well as practically, able to make the colors sing from his paintings and drawings. It is something that he diligently teaches his students at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), where he is an adjunct professor of Fine Art.

A former student of FIT himself, he benefited from many great teachers who "vomited great quantities" of information about art and painting. During and after college he was fortunate to meet many talented painters and teachers who would happily spend time with younger artists such as himself, to talk, critique and encourage them. Peter Heineman, a teacher at SVA —the School of Visual Arts— who studied under Joseph Albers, was one such artist who spent time with Kurdziel allowing him to "absorb the knowledge of Albers osmotically." Another was Paul Georges who studied with Hoffman and Ferdinand Leger who was extremely generous with information and great at dissecting paintings when he came for an enlightening studio visit. He met Leon Polk Smith who created geometrical abstract work, Larry Rivers, sometimes called the godfather of Pop Art, Richard Pitts who was painting figurative work at the time, Don Perlis the "old master at 28," and many others, kicking around ideas and learning all the time while they shared a drink or two.

Mark Kurdziel in his studio

"Hiromi, Layla, Blu and Queen of Hearts," 2017, oil on linen, 46" x 36"

The concept of Forms is also something that Kurdziel focuses on, perhaps giving it more importance than Subject. His imagery includes himself, his friends and family, animals and items in his surroundings such as furniture and furnishings. His girlfriend and cats often make an appearance.

To these forms he layers perspective. There is sometimes a hint of ancient Egyptian two dimensionality, but this is contrasted with depth perception and fullness. He creates a snapshot in motion, which provides movement and feelings of continuation. These juxtapositions offer richness and significant intrigue to the viewer. There is also an unmistakable seriousness and perhaps some sadness that tethers his work. As Renoir once said, "the pain passes, but the beauty remains."

"Little Wing Slight Return," 2022, oil and distemper on linen, 40" x 72"

He starts with a textural foundation and background using pigment powder and rabbit skin glue. He often has a concept, a germ of an idea or imagery, or a poetic sense of a moment. However, in the end the painting is usually radically different from his original thoughts. He uses oils and glaze to achieve a depth of color, varying how they sit on the canvas to provide differing textures. He allows the colors to sing, to create active tension and resonance, to "be a notch short of animation." He conducts the different elements of his paintings to work in concert to create and capture the magic of the moment, which would ordinarily move on and disappear. The world within his paintings should continue and move.

Renoir said "Art is about emotion; if art needs to be explained, then it is no longer art." Kurdziel agrees and says that he "doesn't want to be a describer of things." Instead, he wants to "pretty up the world and give them something to think about."

Kurdziel and his sister grew up on Long Island with a Polish father and an Italian mother, who met in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. It was a grand mix of cultures that must have impacted him. He was allowed to independently enjoy the arts in New York City from a very early age and he started painting and drawing seriously during high school. That youthfulness remains in his work 50 years on from his first foray into art. His artwork has continued to evolve into the rich, emotion driven, metaphor of his life. Painting is not work but pleasure for him. It is who he is. It is a relationship between himself and his life. As an artist "it has to mean something to me, it has to touch something in me, otherwise it can't mean something to someone else." *G&S*

markkurdziel.com

Gales of Merriment: Palmer Cox's Brownies and Rose O'Neill's Kewpies

by Mary F. Holahan, Ph.D.

"Brownies at Waterloo" for The Brownies Abroad, by Palmer Cox (The Century Co. New York, 1899), 1898 Palmer Cox (1840–1924 Ink on paper sheet: 5 9/16 × 7 ½ inches Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan, 1978

Until the late 18th century, youngsters reading on their own or being read to encountered much sermonizing and few if any engaging pictures. Gradually, society recognized that children deserved playful and gentle guidance. Imaginative stories, amusing poems, and captivating illustrations began to eclipse moral lessons.

In the mid-1860s, Edward Lear's *A Book of Nonsense* featured outlandish animals and people in silly situations with whimsical limericks, and John Tenniel's fantastical drawings enhanced Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Mary Mapes Dodge, founding editor of the children's magazine *St. Nicholas* in 1873, declared her goal as "clean, genuine fun" that instilled "a love of country, home, nature, truth, beauty, and sincerity." Such fare would also encourage "good, pleasant, helpful ways." Palmer Cox's Brownies and Rose O'Neill's Kewpies crystallized this blend of joyfulness and selflessness in charming imaginary beings and rhymes about their escapades.

Born in 1840 in Granby, Québec, 22-year-old Palmer Cox moved to San Francisco and —with a minimum of art training— wrote articles and drew newspaper cartoons until he moved to New York City, where his Brownies debuted in *St. Nicholas* in 1883. His drawings in the *Ladies' Home Journal* and similar magazines soon won adult affection for the Brownies. Over the next 35 years, Cox published 16 Brownie books and numerous magazine pieces and comic strips. He directed two Brownie musical plays and the sheet music for Effie F. Kamman's Ragtime piano piece *The Dance of the Brownies* sold a half-million copies.

Cox derived the elfin characters from his Scottish grandmother's folktales. In Scotland, the Brownie is an invisible solitary male with weathered brown skin who performs household tasks during the night. Shaggy and dressed in rags, he is generally benevolent but may become malicious if not left bits of food for his labors. Cox's Brownies, however, are a fun-loving, sociable troop of "little sprites who... delight in harmless pranks and helpful deeds (and who) work and sport while weary households sleep and never allow themselves to be seen by mortal eyes." With rotund figures, spindly legs, goggle eyes, and long pointed shoes, they are nonetheless irrepressibly agile. They have personalities, occupations, and nationalities indicated by the prevailing ethnic stereotypes of the period. Cox excluded Africans and African-Americans, an omission typical of publications aimed at White audiences. His lilting iambic tetrameters recount their exploits.

In *The Brownies Abroad* (1899), they romp through several countries and explore architecture, history, geography, and nature. They gamely rescue each other from mishaps like a pratfall into a volcanic crater. In the *Brownies at Waterloo*, they visit the Lion's Mound, a Belgian site of the 1815 British and Prussian victory over Napoleon. An English Brownie, identified by the tattersall suit associated with British gentleman, confronts a disgruntled French Brownie wearing a Napoleonic bicorne hat as if celebrating the British triumph. A Dutch Brownie in wooden clogs watches his companions scale the monument. The Brownies wander around the battlefield, discuss military strategy, and try on army gear at the local museum. Such tales gave children a vicarious experience of self-reliant, adult-free adventures. While it is easy to dismiss Cox's verses as juvenile doggerel, he does not spare young readers from the violence of war:

> "'T was here Napoleon sat like stone,"
> Said one, "unmoved by shriek or groan...
> And saw his squadrons sink from sight,
> Still rank on rank in ghastly plight,
> When like a living stream they flowed,
> To burial in the sunken road."

In about 1904, Cox built the 17-room Brownie Castle in Granby that later became his retirement home. A Brownie flag flew from its turret until his death in 1924. In Cox's obituary, *The (New York) Sun* noted that the artist's 70th birthday celebration had brought "gales of merriment" to all in attendance.

More whimsical characters were introduced by Rose O'Neill when her Kewpies came to the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1909. She described them as "a sort of little round fairy whose one idea is to teach people to be merry and kind at the same time." They evolved from Cupid-like figures that O'Neill used to decorate her romantic fiction. She spelled their baby-talk name with a K "because it seemed

funnier." Floating or earthbound, Kewpies "do good deeds in a funny way." They were white top-knotted boys with tiny wings, though O'Neill renders them angelically sexless. Cox's Brownies may express displeasure, but gleeful Kewpie sidelong glances invite us into never-ending revelry. O'Neill's poems accompanied each drawing. Over time, she gave the Kewpies names, costumes, and occupations. O'Neill recognized her debt to Cox in a 1914 drawing of a Kewpie looking shyly at a Brownie with the inscription:

"The Brownie was reverently copied from my dear old Brownie Book of 1887. (Apologies to Mr. Cox). A Kewpie meeting a Brownie, I'm sure, would be almost overcome with respect."

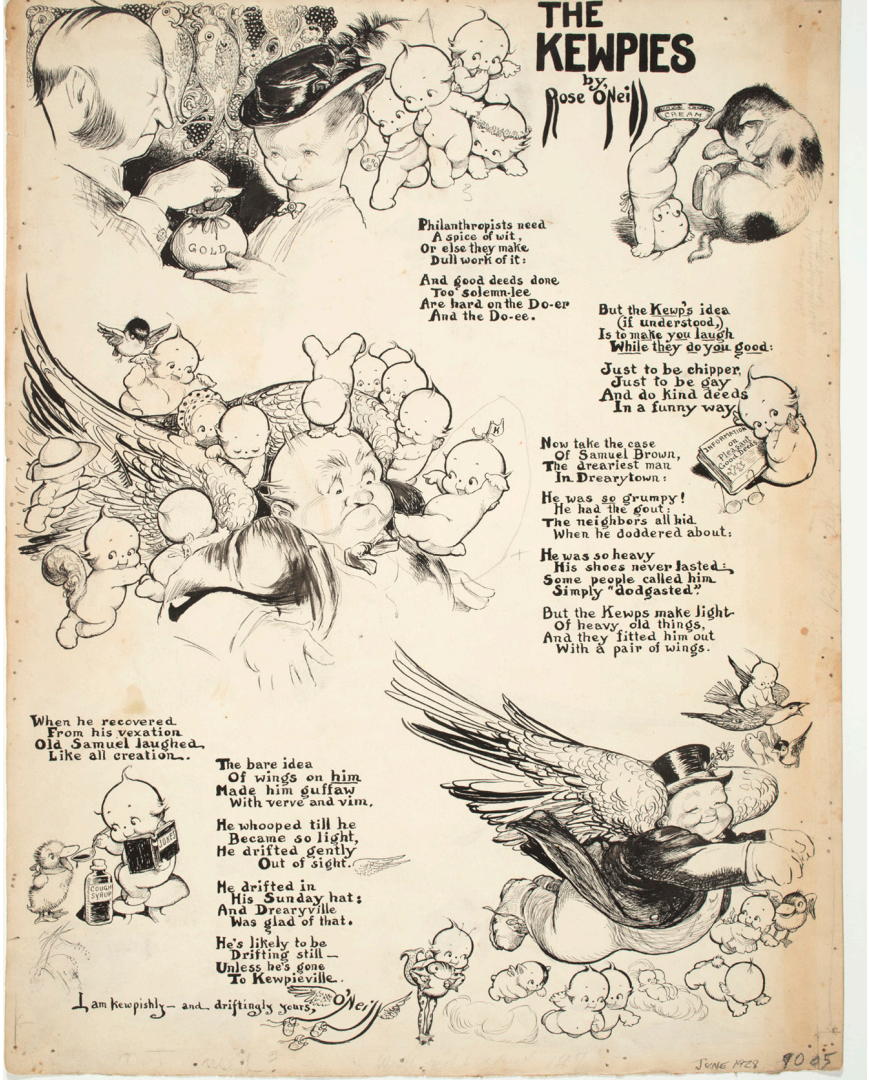
The public embraced the Kewpies, and *The Washington Times* noted that "Not since the days of the Palmer Cox Brownies has there been an army as popular."

When O'Neill was 13, she won a drawing contest sponsored by her hometown newspaper, the *Omaha World-Herald*. Self-taught, she soon sold illustrations to other publications, and by 1893 moved to New York City, where in 1896 she became the first American woman to publish a comic strip. She joined the staff of *Puck*, the nation's premier humor magazine, where she was the only woman working from 1897 to 1903. Initially in black and white and then in color, Kewpies appeared in magazines such as *Life*, *Harper's Bazaar, Cosmopolitan*, and *Good Housekeeping*, as well as books and comics, for the next three decades.

In O'Neill's Kewpie page for the June 1928 *Delineator*, the Kewpies' humor and magic transform a begrudging philanthropist into a beguiled, airborne one. They enliven their good deeds by entertaining a cat and tending to a sick duckling. Even O'Neill's distinctive, long-tailed signature takes on wings.

O'Neill's accomplishments surpassed her moniker "the Kewpie Lady." She wrote and illustrated magazine fiction and novels, including *The Loves of Edwy*, and several children's books. Critics praised her exhibitions of graphic art and sculpture in Paris and New York. An indefatigable supporter of women's rights, especially suffrage, she designed posters and political cartoons for the cause. In rejection of women's prescribed clothing, especially corsets, she dressed in voluminous caftans. She divorced two husbands who abused her income and good nature.

O'Neill's generosity to friends and family helped deplete the fortune earned during her career. In 1937, she left New York and returned to Bonniebrook, the home she had purchased



"The Kewpies" for The Delineator (June 1928), June 1928 Rose O'Neill (1874–1944) Ink on paper sheet: 22½ × 17¼ inches Delaware Art Museum, Gift of the Rose O'Neill Foundation, 2018. © Estate of the artist

for her family in the Ozarks, where she died in 1944.

The Brownies and the Kewpies were irresistible to advertisers and merchandisers. Before the 1891 U. S. Copyright law passed, artists had little control over the use of their images. Cox was one of the first to exercise his copyright. He profited from the Brownies' adaptation in a range of products, including games, toys, and dolls. Although Eastman Kodak violated his rights by appropriating his imagery to promote the Brownie camera, companies such as Procter & Gamble hired him to illustrate their ads, capitalizing on the Brownies' aura of sincerity and optimism. O'Neill followed his example to even greater effect. Beginning in 1912, she oversaw the production of Kewpie dolls, which quickly became an international craze. Spin-offs included a wide array of Kewpie merchandise, from housewares to greeting cards to car-hood ornaments. Kewpies frolicked through ads for Jell-O and Kellogg's Corn Flakes.

Today the Brownies still delight collectors, and the International Rose O'Neill Club Foundation will again gather in Branson, Missouri, for their annual Kewpiesta convention. *G&S*

delart.org

Tomás Sánchez's *Inner Landscape*

by Joaquin Badajoz

"Light: Outside, Inside," 2021, acrylic on linen, 39⅜ x 31½ in, by Tomás Sánchez. Photo by Julián Trejos Zelaya. Courtesy of Tomás Sánchez.

A man who channels universes and bridges, reality and imagination, Tomás Sánchez has been seen by some brilliant minds as a demiurge and his own creation, a master and his most faithful servant, a man in peace with all human contradictions, a mystic, and a saint-in-progress. But setting his evident mastery of art aside, one of his highest achievements is to have found spiritual enlightenment through esthetic search. When meeting this humble artist's artwork, people should realize he is one of the most important living painters. The recent Marlborough exhibition *Inner Landscape* was Tomás Sánchez's first solo show with the gallery since 2005, and a

rare opportunity for New Yorkers to grasp this averment.

Writing about Tomás Sánchez is to struggle with the temptation to summarize a manifold of assertations a la Macedonio Fernández. A listicle, a bullet point summary without further explanation, for his grandeur seems so apparent that the synopsis can spoil the whole plot and break the spell even for the clumsiest audience. So, for many years, writers, critics, and collectors equally in admiring complicity have just complimented his work and taken the analysis for granted. As if his art weren't more polysemic, labyrinthic, and intellectually challenging than most contemporary art. Also, writing about Sánchez requires them to devote a reasonable effort to writing about his painting technique, and most contemporary critics are not well equipped to write about craftmanship. Therefore, this exhibition was a perfect excuse to draft some ideas about an extraordinary career spanning six decades and two centuries.

We are not used to thinking of Tomás Sánchez as a contemporary artist, but we should. Sánchez embodies the representation of what a truly contemporary artist is—one who, through mastering craftsmanship, can reinvent and update the tradition. Sánchez has pushed forward a centuries-old practice into the debates of contemporaneity while also setting the tone and most of the paradigms that landscaping artists—and any painter—will face in the decades ahead. And he has seamlessly achieved all of this without alienating traditionalists and forging a universal code. How has he been able to do that? First, because he is a genius at composing—I always joke that Sánchez's paintings in the earliest stages are Georgia O'Keeffe's finished landscapes, and I don't think it's necessary to clarify that O'Keeffe's talent is unparalleled in American art. My comment intends to emphasize the number of layers, details, and hours of painting invested in his landscapes. Sánchez is also the lord of the golden ratio—that divine proportion that transforms his paintings in space-balanced, perspective-proofed, meticulously constructed excerpts of a universal continuum, giving the spellbound audience the sensation that the canvas is spinning and expanding fast.

Sánchez blends and folds time and space and merges genres, making a coastline a geometric abstraction or giving a forest architectural balance or quasi-human personality. I have always suspected that Sánchez faces the landscape as the remarkable figurative painter he has always been since his neo-expressionist days, deifying nature, exploring its physiognomy.

Admiring a Tomás Sánchez is a journey to a particular realm, which is classical and contemporary by its visual immanence. I believe the viewer notes a quality that does not belong to the ordinary relationship of time and space. An image that is cropped and isolated in a way that contains all the contradictions of its surrounding universe.

"El Testigo," oil on linen, 2000,60 x 48 cm | 23 $^{5}/_{8}$ x 18 $^{57}/_{64}$ in

It's worth noticing that architecture is implicit in all his landscaping. The way he creates natural enfilades of trees —*El testigo en la Orilla* (The witness in the riverside), 2018, or *Light: Outside, Inside*, 2021—as if multiple arcades were connecting the spaces of his majestic natural cathedrals, carving visual corridors, engineering scenes emerging from the hinterland of his mind. I've said before that Sánchez's landscapes are not hyperrealist depictions of his native Cuban countryside, as many believe, not even the coffee farm turned into a profusely eclectic jungle that is his residence and studio in Escazú, Costa Rica. They are something else: imaginary landscapes, visual meditations, ecological heavens, stifled screams. In his landscaping innovation, Sánchez also infuses the traditionally apolitical genre with all the tensions of politics and concepts, moving it from a contemplative mimetic art to an inquisitive dialoguing battleground. Collectors are not any more in front of a candid window to outer space but a complex abysm or avenue into the inner self.

The idea that "nature is not ideological; nature carries its own ideology" has been a pillar of his approach to landscape painting for over fifty years, whether it is a

coastline, a waterfall, or a dumpster reserved for "the slow dissolution of polluting objects," Sánchez treats nature as an altar and meditation space, the great womb, house, and tomb.

Sánchez's ecological consciousness results from many contemporary art and ecology activism debates during the sixties and seventies. Still, he is in a sense a pioneer of the ecological-political art —in the way György Kepes defined it— who early on started denouncing the devastation and exploring the sociopolitical edge of garbage as an expression of the society of consumerism, two decades before a very influential contemporary artist like Vik Muniz. But, like most trailblazers, Sánchez has always been decades ahead of his contemporaries, introducing new topics, exploring, and experimenting with tradition.

In Tomás Sánchez's landscapes, wildlife is not prominently displayed. From a very subtle anthropocentric perspective, he incorporates the human being—or 'meditator'—for reference and scale, magnifying the magnitude of his forests packed with elongate Grecoesque stylized trees, placing man humbly (and proportionally diminished) into his magnificent habitat and inviting the observer to live a vicarious experience—which he achieves through composition, rather than using the rückenfigur. Although Sánchez has accepted Caspar David Friedrich's paintings among his fundamental influences, Sánchez's works are more uncanny than romantic or gothic, the human presence is never mastering over a landscape, but to put it in Sir Thomas Browne's words, showing that "we carry with us the wonders we seek without us... (that) we are that bold and adventurous piece of Nature."

Sánchez's conceptual contribution is more subtle and requires more sensibility and artistic

Tomás Sánchez, "Inner Lagoon...Thought-Cloud," acrylic on canvas, 78¾ x 78½ in. / 200 x 199.4 cm. Courtesy Private Collection. Photo: Matt Grubb

training to notice it in his apparently more conventional artworks. However, it is more evident in the garbage dumps series started in the late 80s—which include capital pieces like *Hombre crucificado en el basurero* (Crucified man in the garbage dump), 1992, a view from a dramatic perspective of a Jesus-Christ-like figure nailed to the wood crucifix thrown in landfill—a deep symbolic exploration of society depicted through their discards.

In the same way that other artists use abandoned architecture and ruins to show the traces of human life, Sánchez's garbage dumps are warning calls of contamination of catastrophic proportions more than postapocalyptic postcard landscapes. A work like *La Batalla* (The battle), 2015, shows the clash between unrestricted dumping of man-generated waste and nature, like two armies in an ecological battleground, but in a subtle twist, the artist makes the observer take sides closing ranks with nature.

When the late Hilton Kramer, one of the most brilliant and influential art critics of the 20th century, wrote sixteen years ago for *The Observer* about Tomás Sánchez's exhibition at Marlborough —the gallery representing his artwork for over thirty years— he didn't hide his astonishment. "It's not often that an experienced critic finds himself confronting the work of an 'unknown' painter—unknown, that is, to the critic —only to discover that he's looking at the paintings of a master talent. But this was my experience upon visiting the exhibition of paintings by the Cuban artist Tomás Sánchez (b. 1948) at the Marlborough Gallery. I somehow missed Mr. Sánchez's first New York show, but

meticulous depictions of nature with...spiritual implications

I can now caution everyone with a serious interest in painting not to miss this one."

"Mr. Sánchez's landscape paintings have been likened to the work of Caspar David Friedrich as well as the American painters of the Hudson River School. This is itself very high praise, but not any higher than the work deserves," his art review continues. "Like Friedrich and the Hudson River painters, Mr. Sánchez brings an epic vision to the depiction of landscape—a vision that combines the most meticulous depiction of nature with a metaphysical comprehension of its spiritual implications."

"From the clouds in the sky to the majestic waterfalls that flow into the leafy, rocky terrain of a virgin wilderness, Mr. Sánchez is a master of everything he surveys, and he never hesitates to pack his paintings with a surfeit of detail that affords every rock, tree and sunlit vista its share of pictorial brilliance," remarks Kramer, who was editor of *Arts Magazine* and chief art critic at *The New York Times* until he abandoned the newspaper to found *The New Criterion*.

The more you invest yourself into Tomás Sánchez's canvases, the more you understand that "metaphysical comprehension" of nature that Kramer highlighted and its implicit magic realism—discovering the thousands of almost invisible stories intertwined that didn't go unnoticed by the creator of Magical Realism himself. Sánchez's creative power to build surrealistic worlds disguised as hyperreality was immediately prized by Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, who couldn't escape "the spell cast" by his equal. In his very well-known foreword to the 2002 book of Tomás Sánchez's art, the Nobel Prize-winning author wrote: "I believe that the destiny of Tomás Sánchez is to create with his work the model of the world that we must build from scratch after Final judgment." That prediction is still a possibility. In parallel to building a conscience about the ecological and ideological apocalypse and the excesses of consumerism in the later industrialized society, Tomás Sánchez not so secretly fulfills his most primal mission and is obsessive as an old copyist monk sketching the blueprints for a new world. *G&S*

IG/FB: Tomassanchezstudio

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G&S Fundraising Auction
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We are looking for donations of small works to be auctioned to raise money to continue publishing the G&S magazine.

All artists who donate works will be entered into a draw for a spotlight article in the magazine.

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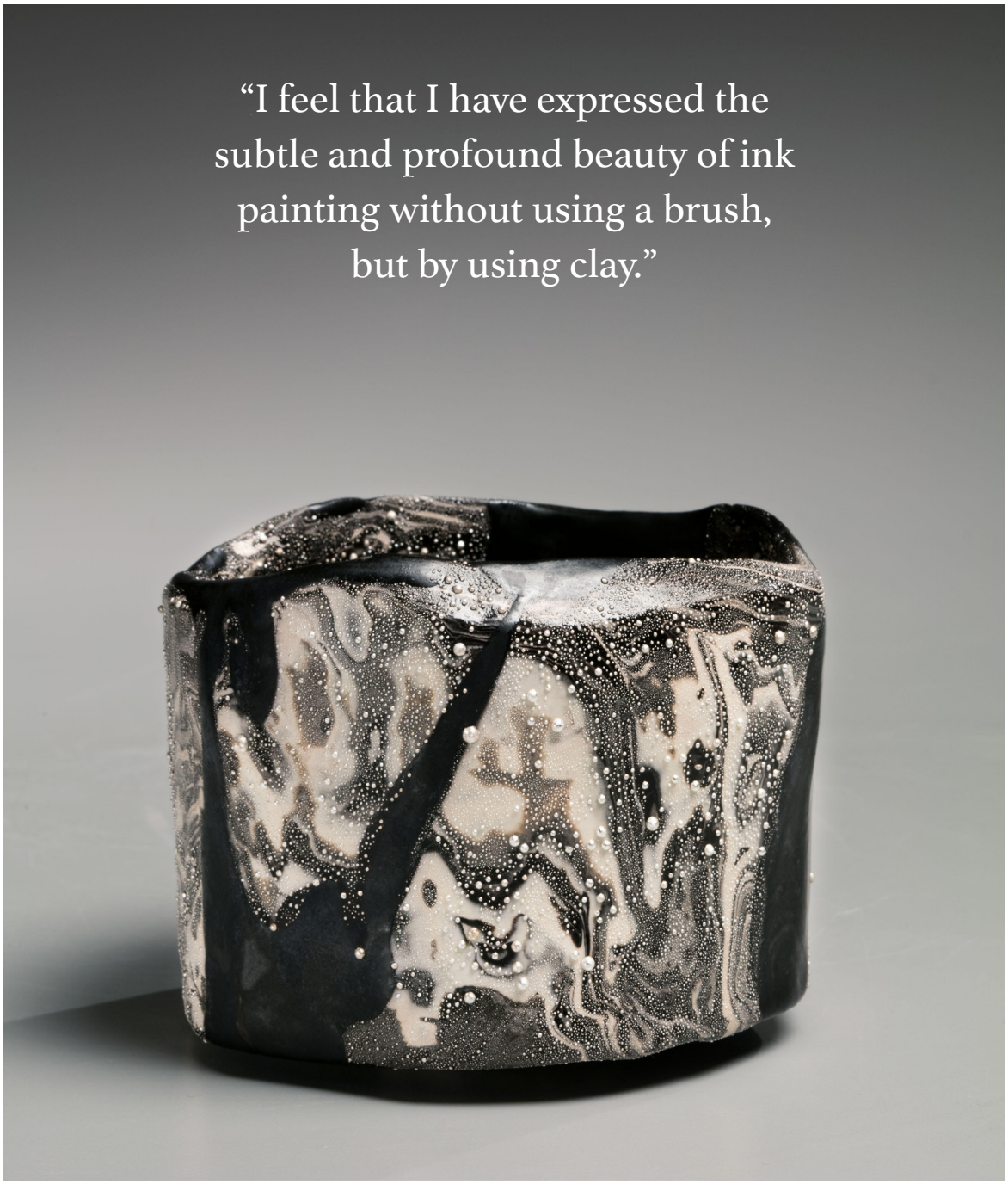
Online Auction 11th – 18th June 2022

Kondō Takahiro: "Making Waves"

by Bobbie Leigh



Ginteki wan Nami; "Wave teabowl with silver mist glaze," 2020, Marbleized porcelain, "silver mist" overglaze, 3¾ x 4¾ in.

Acclaimed artist Kondō Takahiro has broken with tradition and created a new artistic identity with the creation of his unique "silver mist" on view at a recent exhibition at Joan B. Mirviss Ltd. His distinctive silver mist is a radiant overglaze technique, an amalgam of platinum, gold, silver and glass frit (gold, silver and glass powders and pastes) to create the impression of dew drops on the surface of his ceramics.

This glaze is so ephemeral that only the creator himself can capture it in words. "The process of creating these new sculptures made me more aware of how water, waves, and waterfalls flow," says this esteemed artist. "By incorporating a whiter clay, my work has evolved and been

elevated. I feel that I have expressed the subtle and profound beauty of ink painting without using a brush, but by using clay."

No surprise that his current solo exhibition at Joan B, Mirviss Ltd. is titled *Making Waves*. Water in all its forms —dew, fog, mist, ice, oceans— is central to this master artist's work. Mirviss, the leading Western dealer in Japanese art, has worked with and exhibited Kondō for at least 20 years. "Water is his focus," she says, describing his work as "swirling whirlpools of black, gray, and white marbleized porcelain that glisten with the silver mist."

The two most important elements in ceramics are clay and fire. Kondō's idea was to use clay as a medium to connect fire and water, "two very contrasting elements." His range of forms, all endowed with the silver mist glaze in the Mirviss exhibition, includes five huge sculptures, one five-feet high; 15 table top sculptures; 12 tea bowls and seven glass-covered box-like forms.

The play of light on each sculpture's surface is a key component of what Kondō calls "porcelain-ink paintings." All of his alluring geometric forms catch the light from different angles. The combination of darker and white clay appears to be in an ebb and flow motion. The work is alive, sensual, and imbued with endless possibilities. What Mirviss calls an "ink-on-paper" effect elevates his zig-zagging rhomboidal monoliths, glass-capped vessels and wondrous tea bowls to a level unseen even in contemporary Japanese ceramics.

Kondō Takahiro (b.1958) lives and works in Yamashina adjacent to the cultural capital of Kyoto in what was his grandfather's original studio. Kondō Yuzō (1902-1985) was named a Living National Treasure in 1977 for his work in sometsuke, an underglaze in cobalt blue decoration. In spite of being born into a legendary family of ceramic artists famous for its blue-and-white porcelain, Kondō's first passion was table tennis. He became Japan's top ranked table-tennis player, before starting his ceramic career.

It was not until age 26 that Kondō returned to the world of clay. After working with his father, who was also a ceramic artist, Kondō continued his ceramic education in Kyoto. In 2003 he went to Scotland where he earned a Masters of Design and Applied Arts at Edinburgh College of Art in the study of glass.

While this formidable artist's early career was traditional, he soon established his own identity, especially following the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami of March 2011. He began to think of his work more philosophically, what role a ceramic artist could play in a world that produced such devastating tragedies. In response, Kondō produced a personal series of works that express his concerns about the deteriorating relationship between humanity and nature and how natural disasters reverberate throughout the world. At that time, he created a series of Zen-like meditative figures that are as memorable as anything you might see in any contemporary art gallery.

"Water has been his major theme for many years," says Monika Bincsik, the Diane and Arthur Abbey Associate Curator of Japanese Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art which owns two Kondō works. He considers this element as a source of life and natural resource."

Kondō has created powerful sculptures that you respond to intuitively as well as intellectually. His timeless luminous work honors the classic Japanese ceramic traditions and at the same time, revolutionizes them. *G&S*

"Wave," 2021, Standing black and white marbleized form with pâte de verre cast clear and black glass cover and "silver mist" beaded glazing, 2021, 20½ x 9⅞ x 4¾ in.

Nami shizuku; "Wave Droplet," 2021 Marbleized porcelain, "silver mist" overglaze, cast glass, 7¾ x 8½ x 3¾ in.

Recently seen at mirviss.com

Lee Edwards – "The Body is an Archive"

by Roger Parris

Photo by: Jaqlin Medlock, Piece: Letters II Mama during the 2019 Booking Dance Festival at Jazz at Lincoln Center, Dancers: Nyasha George, Mynesha Whyte, Desiree' Lovett and Lee Edwards

On a cold winter evening three years ago, my granddaughter, one of her friends and her friend's grandmother, attended a dance showcase with me at the Dixon Place Theater in lower Manhattan. Towards the end of the program, Lee Edwards and Dancers performed and I immediately felt that we had made the right decision to witness an emotional and moving evening of dance and poetry. I knew I wanted to follow Lee's career and be a collaborator on a future project. Through the years, dancing in church, parents' backyard and in various dance venues, Lee has become a serious performing artist and presently is a candidate for a Masters of Fine Arts in Dance and a Graduate Certificate in African & African American Studies at Duke University. These are edited excerpts from our phone conversations.

Roger: So many performing artists began in church. What is it about the church experience that influenced you?
Lee: Church provided a space for me to explore the arts outside of my home.

Roger: When I saw your company perform, mental health was one of your themes. What inspired you to include that in the performance?
Lee: I was living in Philadelphia and working in the school system as emotional and behavioral support staff, while working to understand the importance of my own mental health. In the piece, I talk about my own struggles with depression and experiences as a teacher.

Roger: As an artist do you feel a responsibility to address social and political issues?
Lee: Yes, Nina Simone said "An artist's duty is to reflect the times."

Roger: At what point did you want to include poetry and storytelling with movement?
Lee: In college. The first time was for a class assignment, at The University of the Arts in Philadelphia, I put a Tupac Shakur interview with a Kendrick Lamar song, and audio I recorded while walking through the city, and set it to

movement. My senior year I choreographed *Silence is the Noise of the Deferred Dream*, another original dance with text.

Roger: Sometimes, entertainment values of performance get overwhelmed by social and political statements. How do you balance those two performance goals?
Lee: My goal is to offer a story and share an experience, and keeping that in mind maintains the balance.

Roger: You've performed with Putty Dance Project, DanceSpora and Lela Aisha Jones|FlyGround. What were those experiences like?
Lee: I enjoyed dancing with all those companies. Putty explored the connection and communication between music, text, musicians and dancers. Lauren Putty White and Brent White are the Co-Directors. With FlyGround, Lela Aisha Jones, the Founder and Director has been a mentor. Encouraged me to get my Masters. I was trained in ballet. Love ballet. My initial goal after college was to work with a contemporary ballet company whose choreography felt good on my body and DanceSpora headed by Heidi Cruz-Austin was that.

Roger: What are the challenges of having your own company versus dancing for another company?
Lee: I was young, and still learning. I learned how to be flexible and coordinate multiple schedules. I was funding it and paying my dancers and collaborators out of pocket. I was also working three jobs and freelancing so I was tired, and sick a lot of time, but had people supporting my creative journey. As both a choreographer and a dancer I have learned a lot about the different types of rehearsal spaces and the role of the choreographer in creating space that holds the project and the people within the project. My role as a dancer varies based upon what's asked of me, but my job is always to remain present and be aware of the energy I am contributing to the space.

Scoville Phtography, Piece: Mending in Space (2020) during the ADF Creative Healing Parade

Photo by TP Photography

Roger: How has Covid impacted you and the dancers you work with?
Lee: Covid was really rough. Not being able to dance in person was really challenging. Performances and gigs I had lined up with other companies were canceled. A lot of dancers danced virtually. I did not. Fortunately, I was able to dance in my parents backyard, then I started school and went back to dancing in person.

Roger: How do you see the connection between dance and African & African American Studies?
Lee: One hundred percent connected. You can't talk about dance and not talk about Black people. I'm currently doing embodied research, investigating what the body holds, viewing the body as an archive and movement as an expression of that archive.

Roger: Talk about your recent installation at Duke that is part of your thesis.
Lee: The title is *Cyclical Navigations: In the In Between*. It's an interdisciplinary installation that contains interviews with multigenerational Black folks and excerpts from the lettering practice where participants are asked to write letters with their bodies through movement then transcribe what they wrote from movement into written text from memory. The letters hang throughout the installation. There is also an ancestral altar, a video projection and three monitors with myself and six other folks dancing. The installation is an investigation of embodied storytelling.

Roger: What comes to mind when I say Katherine Dunham, Urban Bush Women and Camille A. Brown?
Lee: Pioneer….. Radical….. Stories of Black culture.

Roger: What should we expect from Lee Edwards in the next few years?
Lee: I'm not sure. More dance. More artwork. Great things (laughs). Graduation. *G&S*

leeedwards.org

Do you know Théo van Rysselberghe?

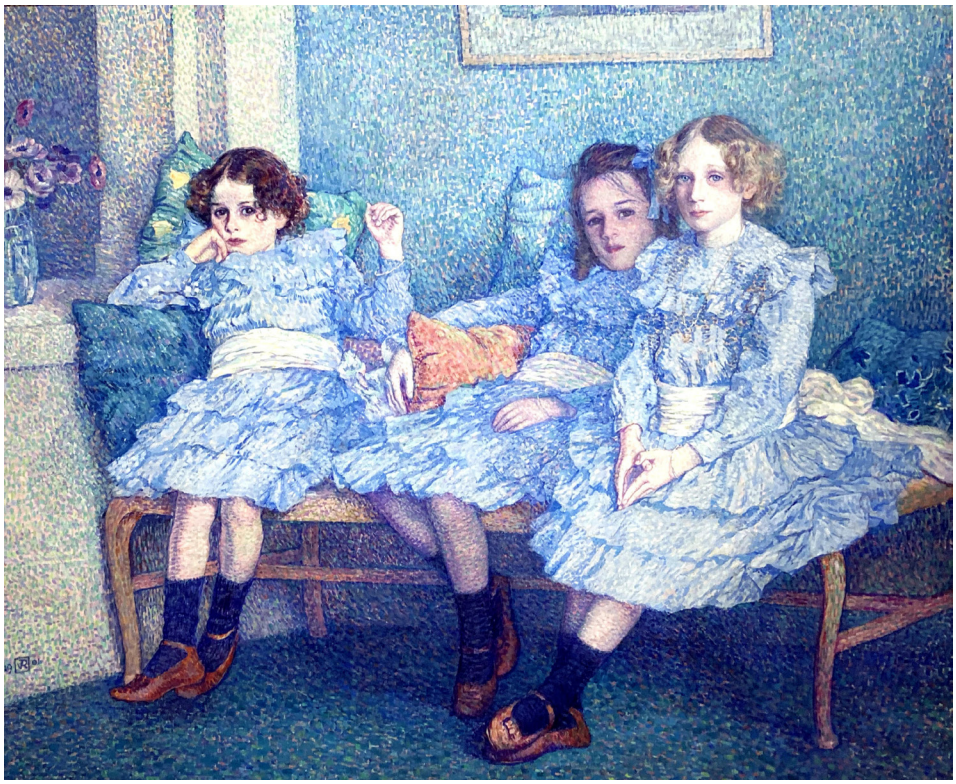
by Dr. Bill Thierfelder

Théo van Rysselberghe. If you were to look him up, this is what you would find written in half a dozen web entries, including WikiArt: "Théophile 'Théo' van Rysselberghe (23 November 1862 – 14 December 1926) was a Belgian neo-impressionist painter, who played a pivotal role in the European art scene at the turn of the century." But unlike contemporary friends such as Toulouse-Lautrec, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Signac, van Rysselberghe's name is hardly known to any but a few art lovers.

Part of the reason for this near anonymity is the fact that the vast majority of his work remains in private collections; they can rarely be seen in person unless they're out on loan. Further, after extensive Google and Yahoo searches, one finds that there have been only a handful of retrospective shows of this "pivotal artist" within the past twenty years —all of them held at modestly-sized art museums or galleries. Yet, every encyclopedia waxes quixotic about his "brilliance" and his "importance."

My interest in van Rysselberghe began at the Portland Art Museum where one work —a pointillist beauty from 1900 called *Plage à marée basse à Ambleteuse, le soir* (*Beach At Low Tide, Ambleteuse, Evening*)— caught my eye. About a month after that encounter, another work —on loan from an anonymous private collection— was shown at the Museum for a few weeks: *Trois enfants en bleu (Three Children in Blue)*. It bowled me over. Who was this artist? I needed to know.

Born in Ghent into a bourgeois French-speaking family, van Rysselberghe proved to be a born artist, studying at such prestigious institutions as the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels where he developed an impressionist style. Between 1882 and 1888, the twenty-something painter —influenced by his teacher Jean-Francois Portaels



"Three Children in Blue," 1901

—journeyed three times to Morocco where he spent months at a time absorbing the local culture and creating picturesque scenes of street-life, the kasbah, and the local bazaars, including *Arab Street Cobblers* (1882).

It was during this same period that he became one of the principal co-founders of the Belgian artistic circle called Les XX, a group whose membership would eventually include such luminaries as James Ensor and Odilon Redon. They hosted ten annual shows in Brussels between 1884 and 1893 (one of which, in 1891, was the first retrospective show of Van Gogh's paintings) that also featured literary lectures and concerts by some of the leading composers of the day, including César Franck, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, and Gabriel Fauré.

After several years of experimenting with the lighting techniques of impressionists like Monet and Renoir, van Rysselberghe discovered the paintings of George Seurat during a visit to Paris on a "field trip" to find new talent for a Les XX exhibition in 1887. Although Seurat's now legendary *La Grande Jatte* was poorly received at the Les XX show, for von Rysselberghe, that painting proved to be a catalyst; he abandoned impressionism and delved fully into pointillism.

His extraordinary 1888 blue and gold *Portrait of Alice Sethe* —now on display at the Musée départemental du Prieuré, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France— was a turning point. This enormous work, measuring 8 feet by 16 feet (492 x 245 cm), became his calling card, and from the late 1880s until around 1910, he vividly experimented with the dots and dashes of the pointillist method even when he was beginning to regularly incorporate other techniques.

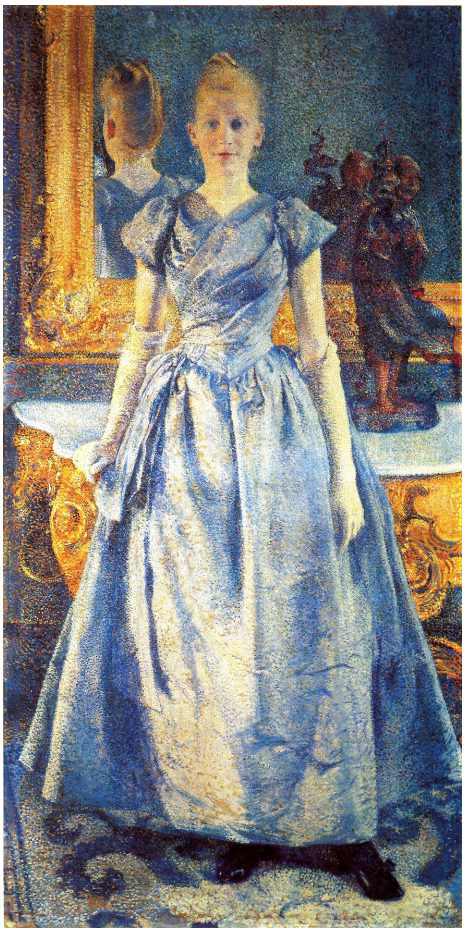
A year after the success of the *Alice Sethe* painting, he married Maria Monnom and together they had a daughter, Elisabeth, who became famous in her own right as

Every encyclopedia waxes quixotic about his "brilliance" and his "importance."

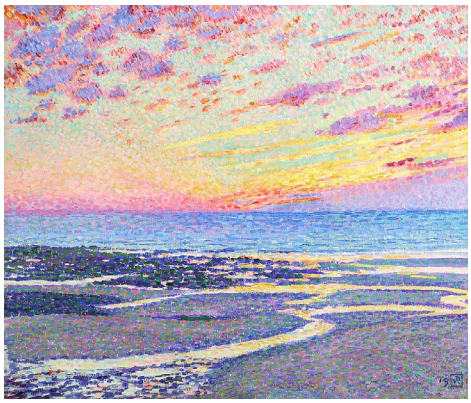
a translator —not to mention as the mistress of such literary luminaries as Rupert Brooke and André Gide. That, as they say, is a fascinating story for another time.

The van Rysselberghes moved to Paris in 1897, where Théo contributed to an anarchist magazine *Les Temps Nouveaux* with fellow artists Paul Signac and Camille Pissarro among others and spent significant time scouting around for new artists to support and promote. During one such search in the early 1900s, he famously decided against some paintings that he found to be "ugly and uninteresting." The artist? Pablo Picasso—who was immersed in his "Blue Period" at the time. It was a decision van Rysselberghe would later rue.

At the turn of the century, he began applying broader, more fluid and flexible brush strokes onto his canvases. *The Reading Room* from 1903 —a large group portrait measuring nearly 6 by 8 feet (181 x 241 cm)— is an excellent example of this shift in style, one still rooted in pointillism, but beginning to show the influence of other painters, including Van Gogh, whose work he found engrossing. He had invited the Dutch artist to exhibit at the 1890 Les XX show, and it was there that *The Red Vineyard* was purchased by painter Anna Boch—the only painting Van Gogh ever sold in his lifetime.



"Portrait of Alice Sethe," 1888



"Beach at Low Tide Ambleteuse, Evening," 1901

What a web search will also show is that through his entire career, in addition to the paintings, he also produced superb charcoal and pastel drawings, including several self-portraits and depictions of his wife. Like his oils, these drawings reveal the progression from pointillism towards a relaxed use of line and shading reminiscent of John Singer Sargent's work.

His brother, the well-regarded architect Octave van Rysselberghe, built him a spacious residence on the Côte d'Azur in 1911, and the artist moved there permanently, far from the Parisian and Brussels art scenes. Here —until his death in 1926— he continued to paint, especially portraits, which were always a great passion, as well as numerous Mediterranean landscapes and local scenes like *The Balustrade* (1921).

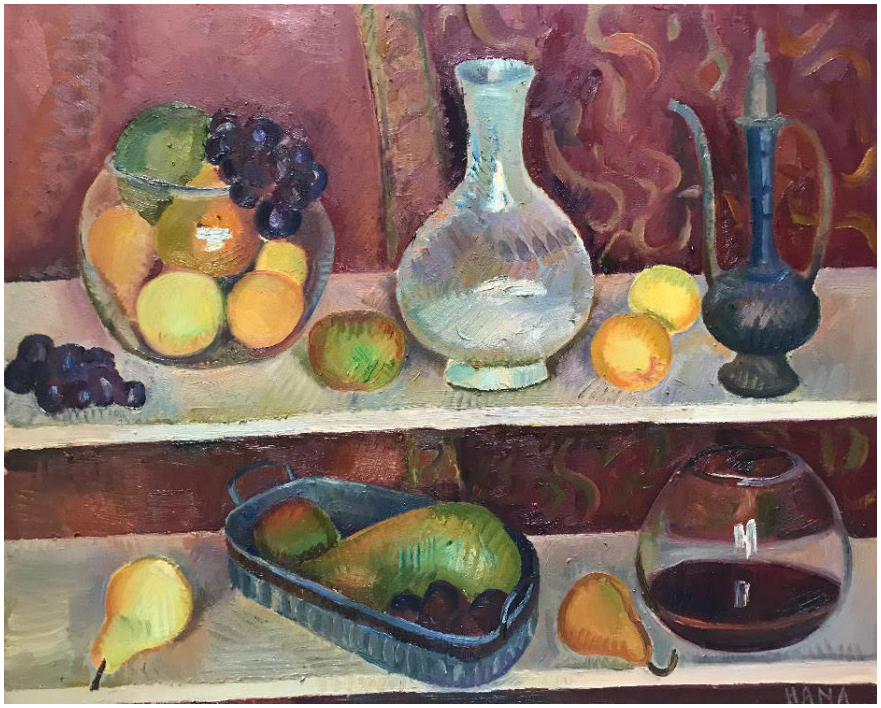
Though you will discover a few illustrated books online or in second-hand bookshops, their quality is nowhere near that of a solid museum catalogue. However, any visit to WikiArt and other online resources will reveal the remarkable output of a prolific artist who, sadly, remains unknown to many because so few of his pieces are in major museums. The Met in New York has one modest-sized painting and four small drawings/etchings; MoMA has two drawings; there's nothing in the Louvre or the Hermitage; one can find only a single small painting in the Prado —and searching the websites of other major museums in Europe, Asia, and the Americas will prove fruitless and frustrating. Why this is so remains a mystery. Fortunately, the internet allows access to over 200 pieces. Granted, it's not the same as seeing a painting or drawing "in person," but it does give you a glimmer of a noteworthy artist who lived up to the name "pivotal" — truly an artist we should know. G&S

"The Reading Room," 1903

portlandmuseum.org

"Harmony Within This Natural Chaos" Hana Vater's Still Life Painting

by Mary F. Holahan, Ph.D.



"Tribute to Pompeii," 2021, 24" x 30"

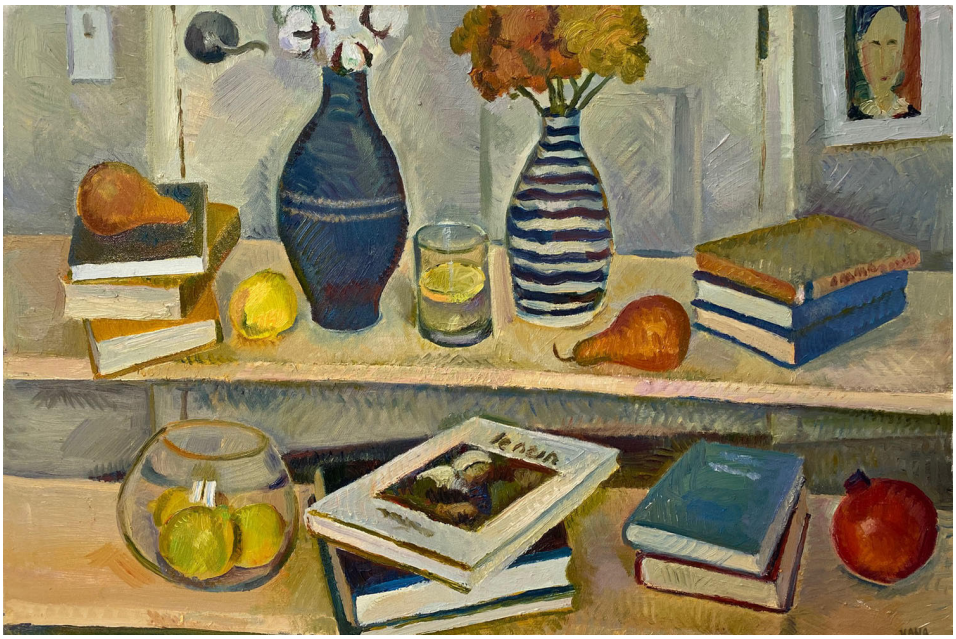
Quite a few of Hana Vater's still-life oil paintings include books. This is not just because she is an avid reader or finds them useful props. Their titles alert us to artists she loves. She sometimes paints sketches of well-known works on a painting's background wall. These don't just help orient us in space, they hint at her own artistic dialogue with the history of art. Vater embraces Masters such as Poussin, Ingres, the Le Nain brothers, and Chardin, whose mastery of color and form reflect a concentrated observation of nature. Cézanne and Morandi are her favorites, not surprising given their pivotal stature in modern still life painting. This is not imitative adaptation or reliance on models. Vater has absorbed their lessons but brings her own eye and energy to the still life.

A graduate of the Academy of Art in her native Latvia, Vater assimilated the founding principles of Latvian art: the realistic traditions of 19th and 20th century European painting. But Latvian art's special emphasis on colorism has been her stylistic mainstay and "source of artistic satisfaction." With international experience as a teacher of painting, drawing, sculpture, and graphic arts, she has exhibited in Riga, Tel Aviv, the Seattle area, and New York City. Like Morandi, who taught schoolchildren in Bologna, she has also given art classes to children.

Vater is an artist in constant conversation with nature. Her primary key to its mysteries is color: "Every time I work on a still life, I challenge myself by asking 'Where is the secret of this little piece of nature and the mystery behind this beauty?' I search for the answers to these questions by carefully 'reading' the colors of nature, comparing them with one another, and fixing them on my canvas. In a still life I see a model of nature, its mysterious representative." Her complementary goal is to "achieve the illusion of depth within the picture itself (and) to make the surface of the canvas disappear." She uses Cézanne's non-traditional tilted perspective, bearing in mind that the painting is "about conveying space through color." She sees the world as "a unique composition of various color spots and (tries) to discover the harmony within this natural chaos." Her selection and arrangement of objects and backgrounds often take as much time as the painting itself. She thinks of them as she would a landscape or cityscape, seeking harmonious proportion and balance.

Vater's *Tribute to Pompeii* celebrates the ancient heritage of still life in European art. In the two-tier setting typical of first-century Roman painting, the glass globe with fruit in the upper left and the wine glass in the lower right serve as counterpoints. The solidity of the ceramic bowl, projecting slightly toward us, makes the almost-opalescent glass vase and long-necked pitcher above seem delicate and graceful. A wine-colored curtain-like background evokes the

"In a still life I see a model of nature, its mysterious representative."



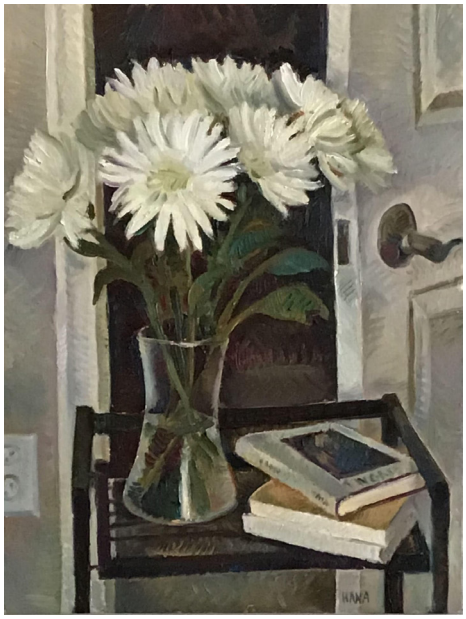
"Still Life with Lemons," 2021, 24" x 36"

natural tones of Pompeiian frescoes. As it would have in one of the city's villas, the painting offers comfort and welcoming hospitality.

Two works show Vater's deft control of focus and atmosphere through color and space. In *Still Life with Lemons*, the fruits —on the shelf, and in water and glass— bear out

"Still Life with Fruits," 2021, 24" x 30"

Cézanne's observation that "shadow is a color as light is, but less brilliant." While vigorous brushstrokes on the door and wall create a sense of flickering light and shade, the vases' cool blue shades and horizontal stripes lend a restful mood. Each object and grouping have their own measured placement in the formal arrangement. A glimpse of the floor leading to the door lets us perceive our own place in the room. In contrast, *Still Life with Fruits* wraps us in a more intimate space. A half-moon framework partially encircles a round table; a vivid orange-and-white runner seems casually thrown over the top. The matte white bowl and lustrous black jar echo the table's contours. Curving outlines of the teapot overlap with the pale bronze, iridescent cylindrical pitcher and the tall patterned jar. *Still Life with Lemons* and *Still Life with Fruits* highlight Vater's respect for another Cézanne trait: her colors often change within one brushstroke, which enlivens both muted and brilliant hues. Such subtle modulation also illuminates the quiet, dusty grays of the *Still Life with Books 1* and the windswept, sunlit blues of *Still Life at Seaside*.



"Still Life with Books 1," 2019, 24" x 18"

"Still Life at Seaside," 2021, 22" x 28"

In an 1896 letter to his son, Camille Pissarro noted that "We ask nothing better than to be classics, but we want to achieve that in terms of our own experience." In this spirit, Vater honors and challenges the traditions of still life but unveils the mystery of our world with her own perceptive spirit and versatile style. Her gift to us is an invitation to discover not just her paintings but the endlessly varied world we live in. *G&S*

Hana Vater can be seen in the year-round Salon at Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery, Montserrat.us and is also represented by Agora-Gallery.com

Getting By, Getting Through

by Jude Kamilhor

I turned the transistor radio off in disgust and huffed into the bedroom. My girlfriend, Colleen, was reading in bed, listening to Vivaldi.

"I'm sorry," she said and kissed me goodnight.

I closed my eyes and let the tears flow. Thinking about the incredible highs of the past few months with Colleen and the inevitable low.

A few minutes later, Elmhurst, Queens, erupted in shouts and honks.

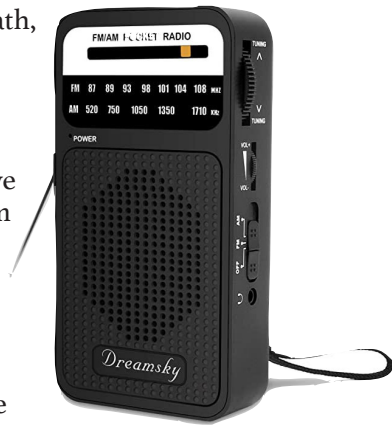
I ran into the other room and grabbed the radio, fumbling for the on/off knob as I streaked back to the bedroom.

The Mets had just won Game Six of the 1986 World Series, and I—their biggest fan—had given up on them again.

Colleen looked like a young Julie Andrews and had the sense of humor of George Carlin.

We started an instant relationship in February, and she learned my passion was baseball, and that I watched most sports religiously. She didn't like sports, preferring singing, dancing, and acting, my Triple Threat.

"I have a request," she said sometime between Spring Training and Opening Day. "I want you to choose only one sport to follow. I can't compete with them all."



After a pause to catch my breath, I asked if I could think about it.

A few days later, I told her I chose hockey.

Her eyes widened.

My decision was based on love and self-sacrifice. Baseball fandom requires 365/24/7 attention, while in New York, hockey is a niche sport and not nearly as labor-intensive to follow.

I did my best to honor our agreement. By late September, she she said it was okay to listen to the World Series since she couldn't deny me that.

Baseball kept my family together after my mother died right before my tenth birthday. It filled the void as much as anything could and gave me a reason to keep going.

Colleen hid our relationship from her strict Irish Catholic parents, craving their approval. She wanted to give them lots of grandchildren or at least to become a nun.

On Father's Day, 1989, Colleen and I were at her new apartment a few blocks away from mine in Washington Heights. It was a warm morning and I sat on a kitchen chair with the cat, a tuxedo named Patricia Solameda.

"Am I crazy to be jealous of Michael?" He was her co-worker at a Catholic non-profit in northern Manhattan.

No response. My heart stopped. I jumped up and strode to the door. She got there before me and thrust her arm out to keep me from opening the door. My body let go and collapsed against the bottom of the door.

"I'm not sleeping with Michael, but I am breaking up with you and he and I are going to get together."

All my questions went unasked. Did it matter? I always knew I couldn't compete with a man who could provide legitimacy and babies, and parental approval. I pretended it wouldn't happen.

My dad and I had plans to go to Yankee Stadium that day, since the Mets were on the road. I tried as hard as I could not to tell him what happened. I broke down during the first few innings and told him. It didn't help.

For months I wanted to kick Michael's blue motorcycle down whenever I passed it. It never occurred to me to walk a different way.

I had always considered Colleen the love of my life. After years of learning to love myself as much as I loved her, and to forgive myself for putting her happiness ahead of my own, I realize that Baseball is. *G&S*

Queer Stories in *G&S* are dedicated in memory of Holden McCormack and edited by Robin Goldfin

Honoring Jazz

Poet Simone Black and Artist Michael Chamblee

Michael Chamblee (1949 - 2022), "Seated Nude"

Timeless

By Simone Black

Start with a room…
saturated scent of cinnamon stick laying upon a burgundy ceiling
toasty vibrations of theater and poetry and
written journals drape their lyrics within their covers
singing on their shelves.

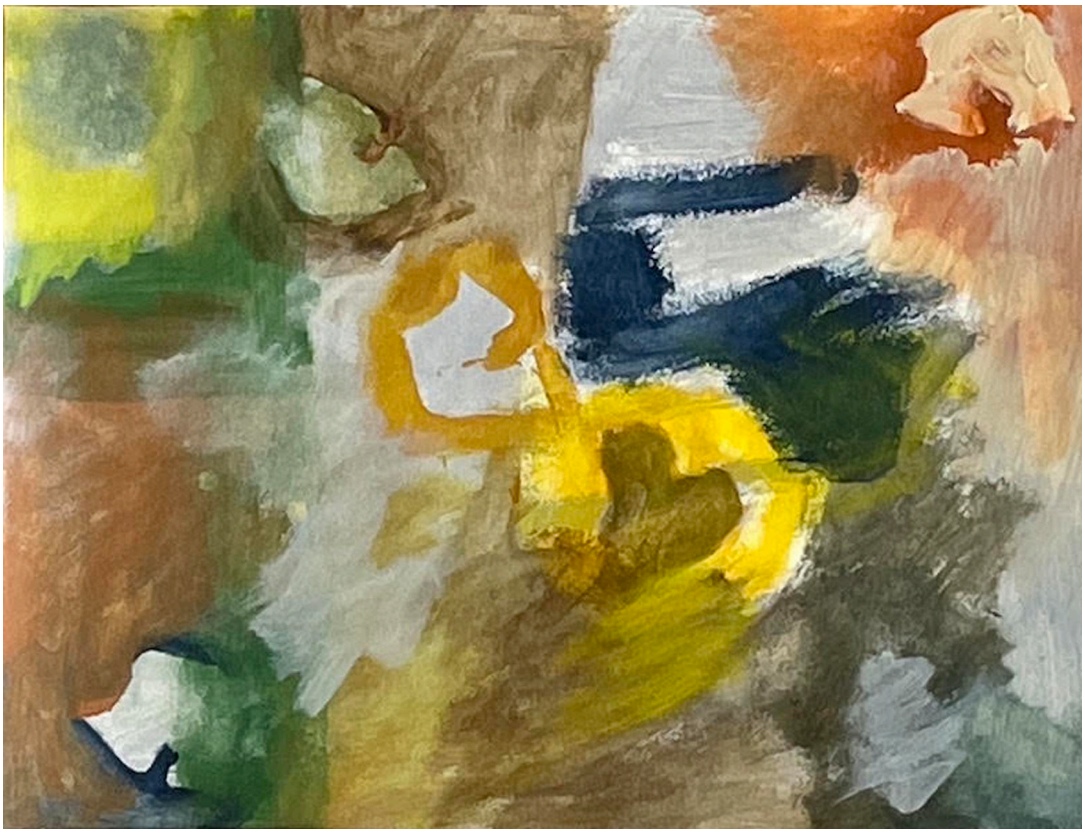
Put in a figure…
round, risqué, full figured, caramel flavored,
sweet tinged fuzzy fro, the features must be woman
light skinned, brown suga, full-bodied momma.

Then start the music playing…
strained, hurried, slowed down, sped up…
Injection of sax bounces upon citrus melodied hipbones
one side push other side pull
swings around extended arms shimmies down
kisses toes and notice the ride of the exaggerated grind
Snap one…two - Pop - three…four
Sizzle - five…six…as the crimson cloth
flicked by the matador's jones and enticed by the she beats… bucks

Then as a trickle of
exhausted rhythm ~ s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-s ~ between the rise and fall of her mocha bosom
the lull of her pillow top mattress
softens the glide ~ smoothes the connection
as infused melodies
lick …
her eyes closed…

Fragments Reorganized

by Anne Rudder



Untitled, mixed media, 9 x 12, 2021

The recent solo exhibit of paintings and drawings by Danièle M. Marin at Noho M55 Gallery, Chelsea, titled "Simultaneous Views" was a multimedia showcase of twenty new abstract-expressionist pieces, revealing vicissitudes and epiphanies of life through the language of form. The show provided viewers an opportunity to awaken emotions, long chilled by winter, but now invigorated as strong recollections tempered by judicious plastic manipulations.

Marin was born in Paris, France where she started to study art at the Louvre School. She continued her studies at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University after she moved to the USA. Her bi-cultural education and experiences are easily felt in her historically grounded technique that is overlaid with a pioneering spirit.

Within her numerous solo shows, Marin has included still life, installation and figurative works. The unifying element in each of her approaches is her unique commitment to her compositions, in which forms congregate and disperse. Her strength is in how she brings incongruent forms and objects together in a single statement of solidarity. By not following the conventional rules of perspective and color relationships, she creates compositions which are asymmetrical yet unified. She does not rearrange the world into a balanced and symmetrical image but shows us that odd relationships and unexpected images and forms can have a natural order in the multitude of visual and internal stimuli.

In this exhibition, Marin has created painted collages as reorganizations of the past, recalled through concept and form visualized "in both steady and changing states." She created these pieces during the long days of the pandemic, revealing a broad range of feelings since her previous show, also mounted during the contagion. Here, the pieces provide a greater sense of emotional wholeness with more languorous brushwork, akin to some of Helen Frankenthaler's pieces. Marin's previous paintings demonstrated more agitation as they were produced during the time of her late husband's illness. These collages are more tranquil but still have pictorial tensions due to linear gestures showing Marin's love for Willem de Kooning.

Marin enthuses about the impasto method. Her *Tintoretto*, celebrates not only Tintoretto's use of technique, but also acknowledges Rembrandt as a hero and the impasto's inventor. The artist also references Perle Fine, another artistic

protagonist, who also worked fluidly with paint and collage on canvas. Marin juxtaposes stillness and motion on these new canvases, creating collages with fragmented edges, so that when the works are viewed, combinations of movement and stasis become evident, underscoring the exhibit's fitting name.

The piece, *9x12 Untitled*, intimates for me doves sailing toward a diaphanous heart rising up to meet the birds in flight. The brushed colors are scumbled washes wherein the yellow pigment climbs toward optimistic heights. Her pastel work is airy with painted energy as she heals from the loss of her husband.

Marin's collaged fragments appear to be efforts to reorganize the past through involuntary memory. Her current works break free into the vivid expressive present, and without any anthropomorphic vestiges are entirely non-objective dramatic inventions tempered by subtle uses of white. Like her earlier works, they show a synthesis of stasis and non-stasis. If her abstract works could speak, they might tell a story of bringing stability to the turning tides.

I sense in her current foray, Danièle M. Marin is working through emotional trauma and the light touches are glimpses of appreciation. These pieces are like Proust's "madeleine moments," fragmentary recollections visually reinterpreted for today. No longer narratives, they are now abstract renditions of the artist's grateful signs of life. *G&S*

Untitled, mixed media, 8x10, 2021

Untitled, mixed media, 28x22 2021

Simultaneous views

Memories join occurrences that hadn't previously met,
They change the perceptions of the current time
Becoming closer to witnessing life passing.
The collage fragments added to my acrylic paintings are
Collected from past moments, they are themselves in
Motion on the canvas surface.
Initially separated in time and space, they have the
Connecting function of bringing the collage pieces and
The painted edges together. The fragments reorganize
The past with the present time, they are evidence and
Recollection, concept, and form.
My work is a meditation on the nature of memory, both
A steady-state and a changing state.

Danièle M. Marin

danielemarin.com
55mercerstreetgallery.com

Tombs and Temples

by Norman A. Ross

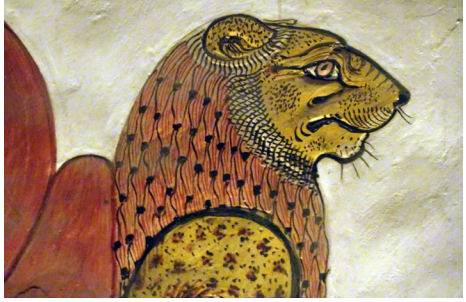
Great Court of Rameses II in the Temple of Luxor

I'm a bit obsessive when it comes to visiting museums, although I always feel when leaving each one that I haven't retained nearly as much as I would have liked. Fortunately, most museums allow photographs, so that helps.

In Cairo in February we visited five museums with different foci: The Coptic Museum (Christian art); Museum of Islamic Arts; Gayer-Anderson Museum (two medieval houses joined together long ago, with beautiful furnishings); The Khalil Museum (French Impressionists); and The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, which retains the Tutankhamun Exhibit (no photos permitted). Some of the major works have been moved to the new Grand Egyptian Museum under construction in Giza, near the pyramids. Unfortunately, the opening keeps getting postponed and we were unable to visit. But much of the best art in Egypt remains in the tombs and temples in Upper Egypt, especially around Luxor, but also in Aswan and Abu Simbel. Thus, as I wrote recently about Roman and other ruins being the equivalent of museums, I think the tombs and temples also comprise the same. (Upper Egypt is in the south because the Nile flows north, and gradually downhill.)

Although the tombs and temples are replete with images of Egyptian gods, it was of course, the pharaohs who built them, not the gods themselves. This may seem obvious, but the pharaohs built temples and statues of themselves that imbued their images with god-like features — for instance the huge size of many of the statues; their faces often replaced with the faces of gods; and wearing the crowns of gods. In Abu Simbel, for example, there are two temples, including one of the most magnificent monuments, not only in Egypt, but I think, in all the world–the Temple of the Pharaoh Rameses II, which is 108' high. Sitting outside are four statues of Rameses; he wasn't bashful. Inside, in the deepest depths of the tomb, are four more statues, much smaller, one of which is also Rameses. Twice a year, on his birthday and the anniversary of his ascending the throne, the sun lights up the three with crowns for a few seconds. The fourth, Osiris, god of the underworld, never gets lit—all of this thanks to brilliant engineering.

Rameses II, 19th Dynasty, was Pharaoh from 1279-1213 BC, so what we saw was constructed more than 3,000 years ago. (Other temples were much older. The first dynasty dates to ca. 3000 BC.) In 1963 however, just before it would have been flooded as a



Sacred Egyptian animal accompanying Nefertari to the next life. From her tomb in Luxor

Queen Nefertari in her tomb in Luxor with the vulture headress of the goddess Mut

Sacred Egyptian animal accompanying Nefertari to the next life, perhaps representing her pet dog. From her tomb in Luxor.

result of the construction of the Aswan High Dam, the entire temple was taken apart and moved to higher ground. It was during the same period that the Temple of Dendur was rescued from the new Lake Nasser (largest man-made lake in the world) and moved to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, owing to a large financial donation from the U.S. Government; many similar deals were made with other countries.

As with all of the extant ancient temples, the interior contains abundant extraordinary works of art, including many additional statues, beautifully decorated pillars and ceilings, and walls covered with hieroglyphics. It is believed that Rameses chose the location to pacify the region, which was mostly inhabited by Nubians, and also to demarcate Egypt's southern border. Next to it is the Temple of Hathor, goddess of fertility, which is dedicated to Queen Nefertari (not Nefertiti). The goddess Hathor gave birth to the sun every day. The dual purpose of the temple, and its juxtaposition next to the Temple of Rameses II, can lead to confusion. One needs a scorecard (or guidebook) to know which temples are to gods and which to god-like human beings: all of the pharaohs were attributed god-like powers, and all of their temples abound with images of gods.

Tombs, on the other hand, also covered with images of gods, are all dedicated to people—the people, generally pharaohs, who were buried inside them--so the purpose is clearer. (There are groups of Temples of Nobles other than pharaohs in both Luxor and Aswan.) Another element of confusion is the redundancy—there are several temples dedicated to Rameses II as well as to Hathor, but not every temple to Hathor is also dedicated to Nefertari. The tomb of Rameses II is all but lost to the flooding of the Nile, but the tomb of Nefertari has been restored and is extraordinarily gorgeous—and not far from the tombs of Rameses III and Sety I. All three are *** in our Michelin Green Guide. All three are in the Valley of the Queens on the west bank of the Nile, opposite the city of Luxor. The tomb of Tutankhamun is also there, but thanks to Howard Carter, who famously discovered the buried tomb in 1922, everything has been removed except his body, so tourists are not encouraged to visit.

All *G&S* readers are at least somewhat familiar with Egyptian art; it's impossible to avoid it. Having grown up a mile from the Brooklyn Museum of Art, which has a particularly excellent Egyptian collection, I began seeing sarcophagi and other Egyptian works as a child. But seeing pharaohs and gods face to face, as it were, inside Egyptian tombs and temples, is a different experience. We were overwhelmed by the beauty and complexity of what we saw, as well as the skills of the ancient artists who completed the works. Think of it: each tomb and temple had to be conceived and described, presumably initially by a pharaoh. Then architects—and there were architects 5000 years ago—had to create detailed plans. Next, each wall, indoors and out, many of them 100' high or higher, had to be planned, including the choice of the gods to be depicted (with the pharaoh) and their precise appearance and juxtaposition.

Temples built by one pharaoh were often added to by other pharaohs, some of whom had their predecessors' (parents') names and images replaced with their own. Thus there are many temple complexes that grew over the centuries, such as the Temples of Luxor and of Karnak, near each other on the east bank of the Nile in the heart of Luxor, and the two largest in Egypt. Each of the pharaohs' tombs, though, dug across the river, were dedicated to one particular pharaoh, with enormous efforts toward hiding them to protect them from thieves. Otherwise grave robbers might break in and remove the worldly goods buried with the pharaohs that were there to enable them to ascend to heaven, well clothed and fed. While that occurred many times over the eons, another tragedy was the invasion of European archeologists who filled their museums with what was essentially stolen treasures.

Very sadly, centuries later, Christians, under orders of the Emperor Constantine and others, destroyed myriad faces of the pagans, just as later groups defiled the faces of Roman gods on their statues. (That may help explain why so many marble statues of Roman gods lack noses.)

Our Cairo guide told us that the pharaohs did not use slaves to build the pyramids, tombs or temples. However, we felt that was perhaps somewhat an apology in defense of Egypt's history, since the masses of workers were fed, clothed and housed for years during the construction of the enormous works, and probably had no option of changing jobs. The pharaohs taxed the peasants and farmers to feed the artisans. It does not appear that money changed hands, although we saw ancient Egyptian coins in more than one museum. In addition, our guides in Aswan and Luxor showed us images on the walls of tombs and temples of pharaohs leading groups of foreign captives with ropes around their necks; I assume they became slaves in Egypt.

Visiting the tombs and temples was an awesome experience unlike any other we have ever experienced in any other country. *G&S*

The Nine Lives of Martha Szabo

by Kathleen Hulser

"Sunset City," 1976

Shrouded with mystery, the cityscapes of Martha Szabo haunt rooftops and skylines —views she saw daily from her penthouse studio. Her stunning paintings range from an early focus on urban geometry to an emerging metaphysical take on that busy, yet unpopulated cloud arena wreathing the tips of skyscrapers. Rooftops, spires and cornices gracefully mutate in high-rise space, where Szabo peoples the usually barren urban scene with a cast of wraiths appearing as finials and shadows. And she contrasts New York's fat-bellied water towers with the mundane, flat expanses that architects think no one will ever see. Spectacular scenes are nevertheless gritty as this behind-the-curtain view visits unpretentious apartment buildings, where once working class stiffs in T-shirts played pinochle, and immigrant women hung their laundry in competitively designed lines of blowing trousers and drawers. The marvelous chemistry of city forms and Gothamite gumption emerges in the mixed and subtle light of many of these canvases. The shadow witnessing of the built environment reminds us that brick, mortar and stone are part of the city's great circulatory system, carrying us from moment to moment, connecting people across neighborhoods and ethnicities.

The modest chimney pots in the foreground of *Untitled* (circa 1963) point the eye towards the subtle shade of building bricks caught in slanting light. In *Bridge after Sunset* (1975), the parapet is crowded with figures silhouetted against a blush sky and the cloud-capped Queensboro Bridge. In both works, city geometry is animated,

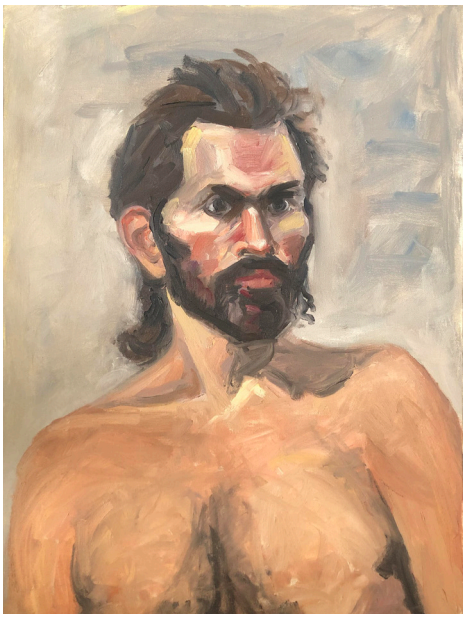
Untitled, c. 1963

"Bridge After Sunset," 1975

claiming space as a character.

Born in Debrecen, Szabo was schooled in modernist Budapest, scarred by World War II and revived as an immigrant in the late 1950s wave of Hungarian refugees escaping Soviet domination. Her professors leaned to modernism, and she forged her own style early on, painting mostly portraits and landscapes. At age 93, Szabo has seen much, painted much and is ripe for one of those stunning discovery moments when the world wakes up to the treasures they missed, as the museums bypassed such artists.

Szabo's open mind is striking. She sees people as people, and captures who they are with respect and a voyeurism-free curiosity. This open-minded approach radiates from her many Art Students League portraits, where models appear in unusually casual poses as part of the panoply of possible human beings. Race, class, gender, are readable but not ideological, and categories dissolve in the humanity of her portraits. As someone who twice in her lifetime had her freedoms brutally smashed, Szabo's ability to depict freedom with her brush is a tribute to the survival of the best of the soul through the worst of its trials. For example, a confident Latino nude meets our gaze with a glare, refuting any attempt to undervalue him as "just a model." Szabo's vision emphasizes how his gloriously tousled hair and powerful



Model, Art Students League, 1990

chest exude a confident sexuality.

Many portraits were rapidly executed, as she benefitted from painting live models at the Art Students League (ASL) of New York. Her mentor there was the instructor Hananiah Harari, a proponent of modernism who had studied with Fernand Léger. Although she was

already a mature artist with her own style by the time she started frequenting art classes at ASL in the late 1980s/early 1990s, one can compare Szabo's fluent, personalized portraits to Harari's lyric expressionism. Interestingly, Harari was an artist who gracefully bridged styles and schools, painting in turn abstractions, expressionist work and realist precisionist pieces, as well as drawing illustrations and doing murals under Burgoyne Diller during the WPA years. Szabo painted directly in oils, which she would let dry in her locker at the League. "I like to work with oil paint," she says. "I can do the things I want to do with it… I can change it, make it finer or heavier."

With paint applied in long assured strokes, Szabo captures the individual qualities of her models. An older lady

Model, Art Students League, 1990

in a jaunty felt hat flaunts nail polish that matches her red-lined purple coat, underscoring her confidence and urbanity, even as her sneakers indicate a preference for mobility over fashion. Like many of Szabo's portraits, this is compassionate, yet unflinching in detailing wrinkles and loose, crepey skin. Age is proud. Many of Szabo's nudes have awkward folds, unflattering bulges and disproportionate limbs, yet all project self-assurance, a confidence that Szabo is glad to grant them. In the sprightly portrait of a nude woman

Studio Scene, Art Students League, 1990

reading, the painter applies witty red spots to toenail, nipple and cheek.

Skipping lightly over studio conventions, Szabo's life paintings often encompass other painters, so that the figures seem to converse. For example, an artist in red shirt paints an oversized male model wedged in the foreground. His curvy buttocks and incipient man boobs lend his powerful figure a touch of androgyny. Another intriguing pairing depicts a slim nude woman, eyes lowered as bold slashes of white define her downward gaze, seated in front of a "twin" onlooker dressed in strappy black dress and glamorous hairstyle. Both women jut an elbow out, hand on hip, adding a note of defiance to their parallel pose. These might be the same woman, pre- or post- modeling session.

Every encounter with powerful art reconfigures the viewer's sensory operations. Expectations eagerly seize upon what the eye perceives, filing it in our mental cubbyholes. Indeed, the work's credibility may rely on its

Painter and Painted, Art Students League, 1991

escaping viewer assumptions. Szabo's art gives us an opportunity to rethink how we define figurative art, especially in regard to portraits. While, yes, we can read personality and character, we are literally seeing splashes and daubs of oil paint whose colors form edges and guide the eye. And this is one reason I was delighted to realize there was no useful distinction between Szabo's people and pet portraits. Different species of New Yorker, her dogs and cats are imbued with attitude like her life drawing models —and are just as abstract. Torkan the cat is as jaunty as the Musketeer D'Artagnan, her plump body gathered into a fat ball with tiny paws and dapper whiskers. Torkan's eyes are high beams glaring from their perch in a furry black tonal experiment. Szabo's nine lives have spanned many chapters of high modernism, while escaping easy categorization. Her legacy rewards our open minds. *G&S*

"Portrait of Torkan," 2003, 24" x 24"

marthaszabo.com

The "Freedom" Competition

"No More Masks," 20" x 24", acrylic

The winner of the Freedom Competition is Sonia Barnett whose buoyant free-flowing composition is uplifting to look at and also tells more than one story.

We received many images that beautifully illustrate the idea of freedom. We chose this one because it not only illustrates freedom by the way in which colorful flags of various nations float against a timeless pale blue sky, but when one looks closer it becomes clear that the flags are also masks, sailing in the wind like small kites. Hands of various shades reach up to seemingly release the masks, indicating a freedom from the pandemic illness. However, this image can also indicate unity of all people and nations reaching toward flags flowing together, implying freedom from wars, anger, and conflict, all so prevalent in the 21st Century. This emblematic artwork could also be a flag of hope for humanity.

Barnett is self-taught and has painted for over 20 years. Her first solo exhibition in 2002 was organized by Roger Parris where she sold 18 of 36 paintings. She has not looked back since. She fondly remembers the encouragement she received from her high school arts teacher who saw a portrait that she had drawn of President Kennedy and said "You're good! You have a touch."

Barnett is inspired by her environment, nature, people and music. She was born in Jamaica and moved to New York when she was eight years old. She also spent some time in the Virgin Islands, and that is what comes through in many of her paintings. It is that Caribbean spirit of multicultural inclusion, relaxed vibe and welcoming camaraderie wrapped in the warmth of the islands' sun.

Early in Barnett's career, she worked in foster adoptions, earning a master's in social work. Later she taught English to middle school students. She also made time to teach art to Seniors and showcased their work with grants that she applied for. Her career impacts her artwork which displays compassion and encouragement for diversity and inclusion.

The Covid-19 pandemic reinforced the "the oneness, the commonality" of the world according to Barnett and the easing of the mandates is what inspired her winning painting. She herself found that she couldn't paint during the early days of lock-down but continued to sketch a little which slowly returned her to painting again.

She is enthusiastic and genuine. "Art is Love. Art tells a story." These simple words underly her instinctual style of art which draws people to buy her work. Even the Obamas have a painting created by Sonia Barnett. *G&S*

“Freedom” Competition Runners-up

Pilar Jimenez “Springtime,” mixed canvas, 36 x 36

Hiroko Wada, “Pushing Forward,” 12.7 x 9.7, charcoal on paper

Kazuo Ishikawa, “Paths Between Fields,” 17 x 16 x 4, mixed media

Rich Milo, “Proud As An Eagle,” 48 x 54, acrylic on canvas

These Are Not The Right Colors!

by Laurel Nathanson

"*When did you decide you were an artist?*"

This deceptively simple question has led me to more and more questions and an easy answer is nowhere to be found. My initial reaction to this seemingly benign question was one of shock, almost offense.

"Decide" implies making a conscious decision. That I had a choice in the matter, like what kind of soup I was going to make this week or what I was going to wear to work tomorrow. "My identity as an artist wasn't a calculated decision, I was born this way, darn it, to not follow this path would surely go against the very essence of my gifted being. Not pursuing my art wasn't even an option if I wanted to live an authentic, fulfilled existence." On and on and on, the story unfolded in my indignant mind.

When the chatter in my brain chilled out a bit, I realized that this idea of the artist origin-story was one worth considering with a more open mind and loving heart. I started by tweaking the question. "When did I realize that I was an artist?" This shift in verb cracked open a window, and let in a breeze, filled my lungs with possibility. When did I **realize** I was an artist... and, when did my artistic nature emerge?

I suspect we all have moments in our childhoods that can be interpreted as evidence of burgeoning artist tendencies. Although my memories have been dulled by time and enhanced with a hearty use of creativity, I do have a vague recollection of being on the playground in 2nd or 3rd grade. I wasn't playing dodge ball or running around like the other kids (perhaps the earliest evidence of my artist identity). Instead, I sat on a bench and used my idle time efficiently. There were red rocks that lined the periphery of the school yard, and I would collect piles of these rocks and grind them together, creating mini mountains of coarse red dust. The finer the dust the more successful that day's lunch period was.

In retrospect, was this an act driven by the boredom of a low achieving, introverted kid, or was this a precursor to the women's work by which my life would eventually be consumed? Like grinding pigments, sharpening pencils, or crushing grain, was I preparing my materials?

There are also many examples from my childhood that illustrate attempts to discourage the artist within from emerging. If you come to my house today and use the bathroom you will see a framed drawing, one of my very early works on paper, which will be displayed as evidence of my artist prowess when I have my first museum retrospective.

When you see this drawing you will laugh, for you will have walked through an explosion of color and pattern before you reach the small

lavender bathroom. The statement "these are not the right colors" written by my teacher has followed me throughout my life and career as an artist. They speak to my identity as bi-racial, straddling two cultures, and as an artist whose use of color has caused invisibility, the work being labeled as simplistic and childish.

As a teacher myself I wonder how hard it would have been for this teacher to see more in this drawing, more in me. How many other kids display tendencies outside of western society's expectations of what success and intelligence looks like and are discouraged from pursuing something that is so true and unique to them. Too many, I'm sure...

The question of artist identity, be it chosen, realized or a label given without asking, is complicated, as is all identity. By my mid-teens I was driven to create, and my alone time crafting in my upstairs bedroom was my most rewarding. By my early 20's I knew without a doubt that I would pursue life as an artist even if I had no idea what that would entail.

Now as I write this and I look back at the years in which I began to embrace this identity, I do see the decision in it. As a young woman with no real connection to either of my racial identities, no religious affiliation, and with bisexual tendencies, being an artist was something solid and concrete. There was nothing fluid about it, it wasn't on a spectrum, it was total and complete and real. I not only embraced that identity, I think I actually, consciously or not, began to craft that identity; like a handmade coat that I would put on every day, it protected and saved me.

I recently heard through the Instagram grapevine, that if you are not showing work, you are not an artist. Of course, I take this statement with a huge grain of sea salt, for in some worlds, art is of course a business, but this would account for the smallest percentage of artists. So, money and success aside, what does make an artist, who gets to claim this identity?

In direct contrast to this high-art notion was another meme floating through Instagram that struck me.

This post was popular, it had lots of hearts and comments. For the most part I do embrace it, but is it too simplistic? Is being an artist fluid and shifting, and just something you feel in your gut? Are you born with it regardless of whether you use it or not? Or is being an artist an identity that has to be earned? I believe that being an artist means doing the work. The work of creating, exploring, and growing in our craft and intention. And this is work. If you are an artist, you will do this work regardless of what the tangible product ultimately looks like and where this work places you within the artworld hierarchy. You will do this work because you are compelled to.

YOU ARE STILL AN ARTIST IF YOU PURSUED ANOTHER CAREER FOR FINANCIAL STABILITY

YOU ARE STILL AN ARTIST IF YOU HAVE A SURVIVAL JOB AND MAKE ART WHEN YOU CAN

YOU ARE STILL AN ARTIST IF YOU HAVEN'T CREATED IN A WHILE

YOU ARE STILL AN ARTIST IF YOU ONLY MAKE ART AS A HOBBY

Instagram post

Or, not...

Turns out my artist origins story is not a linear narrative and really has no beginning or end. I have decided, realized, embraced and crafted my artistic identity. It makes me curious of other artists' origin-stories and the range of memories, sentiments and insights we would collectively have, and how this range of experiences would be as broad as art itself. I choose my colors carefully, and I do it for me, a greedy act of satisfying a beast within, and sometimes on really good days our paths intersect, and my colors are your colors too. *G&S*

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