



Inside The Painter's Studio | Joe Fig

January 25 – March 2, 2011

Stephen D. Paine Gallery

Hours: Monday-Saturday 12pm – 6pm, Wednesday 12pm – 8pm

MassArt.edu | galleryinfo@massart.edu | 617.879.7333

Introduction

This information packet is designed to be an educational resource that encourages connections between *Inside the Painter's Studio* and your classes. The exhibition offers a unique glimpse into contemporary artistic practice that we hope art students and faculty will find particularly engaging.

Joe Fig has interviewed painters about their methods and artistic philosophies, documented their studios, and recreated their workspaces in miniature. His astonishingly detailed sculptures, which are exhibited alongside paintings, drawings, and prints by the 20 artists he interviewed, transport the viewer into the mind and space of the creative individual. The works by Fig and by both emerging and established painters, coupled with frank interviews, detail the intricacies of studio life.

This packet contains biographical and stylistic overviews of Joe Fig and each artist he interviewed. By giving you background information about the artists, we hope to enrich your experience of the exhibit, provoking many interesting questions about how artists work, how they think about their art, and the opportunities and influences that artistic collaboration can create.

In addition, we would love feedback about the quality and value of the information in this packet so that we can make improvements for later exhibitions. Do you have unanswered questions? Would you have liked us to add something? We want to know from students and faculty at MassArt and beyond how best to connect your studies and disciplines with our gallery exhibitions.

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Meissonier Meeting Manet in the Tuileries, 2009-10



Self-Portrait, 2007

Joe Fig

In 2002, as a graduate student at the School of Visual Arts, Joe Fig began his project of interviewing successful artists and building miniature sculptures of their studios. As an undergraduate at SVA, he had been most interested in sculpture and painting, and his early work reflects it—his paintings included shaped canvases, layering, and appendages protruding outside the boundaries of the canvas. After ten years of working in this style, Fig hit a wall, feeling that his work had become formulaic. That was when his interest in miniature developed and he decided to go back to graduate school.

It was during this time that Fig started to notice and wonder about the relationship between an artist's studio arrangement and the kind of artwork he or she produced. He wondered if there were patterns or direct correlations—if he set up his studio just so, would he become a successful abstract expressionist? He started a letter-writing campaign asking to visit artists' studios. The late Michael Goldberg was the first artist who agreed to meet with Fig. Goldberg was a venerable seventy-seven years old and had been working in his studio for over forty years. Fig talked to him about everything from his creative process to the studio setup, his daily routine, and his painting table. At best he hoped to find some inspiration for a painting or sculpture, but the exercise was primarily to indulge his own curiosity, though he had photographed everything. He left the studio regretting that he had not recorded the interview. Wanting to know more about the aspects of being a successful artist that isn't taught in art school, he immediately devised a list of questions titled, "The Painter's Studio: An Artist Questionnaire." His talk with Goldberg had revealed knowledge that came from years of experience.

Fig's interests in miniature and studios quickly came together in a series of sculptures that investigate how to be a successful painter. Having spent between twenty minutes and an hour talking with each artist, and around two hours taking photos and measurements of the studio, Fig was prepared to painstakingly reproduce each studio to scale. All of his sculptures are painfully exact—down to the tone and placement of the paint splatters on the floor. Most of the individual pieces in the sculpture are hand sculpted from polymer clay and painted. Other pieces, like tiny screwdrivers and roof shingles, Fig bought at a dollhouse supply store and adapted, scanning and printing tiny labels for water bottles and paint tubes. To reproduce the artists' actual artworks, Fig painted tiny versions of the more abstract ones freehand; for the more realistic ones, he painted over the top of a miniature print. To make the figures of the artists themselves, he began with the face, trying to catch the character of the person before going on to sculpt the body. Some of Fig's simpler pieces of solitary painting tables took around a week to sculpt and build, whereas some of the larger pieces that include an entire studio building took up to four months to create.



Self-Portrait, 2007

Fig's work brings to mind other artists—constructive photographers like James Casebere, Thomas Demand, Laurie Simmons, and Oliver Boberg, who build and photograph miniature models to explore the idea of truth in pictures. Appropriation artists like Richard Pettibone, known for copying and borrowing pieces of art to create new art that recontextualize the images, also share a common idea. However, Fig is the first to use these techniques to specifically scrutinize the artists and their spaces, offering a unique insight into the work and business of successful artists. Fig intends his sculptures and interviews to be a useful and interesting tool for young artists. His questions to artists such as Chuck Close, Eric Fischl, and Julie Mehretu, range from, “How did you decide to set up your painting table?” and “How do you come up with titles?” to “What advice would you give a young artist that is just starting out?” For example, one thing that surprised Fig was that the most successful artists were those who faithfully worked a nine-to-five day. In his interview with Chuck Close, Close expressed just this, saying, “Inspiration is for amateurs—the rest of us just show up and get to work.” The exhibition includes all of the artist interviews in audio and in print form.

For More Info:

- His website provides a comprehensive view of his work along with press links and biographical info. [www.joefig.com/]



Arch III, 2006

Gregory Amenoff

Semi-abstracted landscapes with jagged geological forms and spiky cosmological explosions are the regular subject of Gregory Amenoff's paintings. They belong in the tradition of Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, and Albert Pinkham Ryder. But Amenoff's personal artistic mystique comes from his knack for "crystalline forms that nestle between the geometric and the organic."¹

While Amenoff's paintings can definitely be referred to as landscapes, he has very little interest in the genre, but instead is much more interested in art derived from landscape painting as an idea. Working between abstraction and figuration, Amenoff's paintings represent a tension between the physical territories of imagination and those of reality, creating a bridge from the known to the unknown. He explains, "Landscape painting is particularly powerful to me because of the implied sense of a figure longing for some sort of union with that which is pictured."²

According to Amenoff, art should offer a subversion of the status quo through beauty. He strives to create paintings that evoke the ferociously beautiful instead of the simply tasteful. "Art should knock the viewer off-center. If it is only reassuring, then art becomes the same as a television program, a sit-com... I want an excess that walks a line between the vulgar and the beautiful."³



Gregory Amenoff: 3/28/06, 2006

For More Info:

1. In this interview with Debra Bricker Balken, Amenoff explains the recurring thematic meanings and subjects common to his work. [<http://www.gregoryamenoff.com/essays/01.html>]

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

• Available at the MassArt library: *Letters to a Young Artist*; *Gregory Amenoff: Works on Paper 1975-1992*

• Amenoff's website includes samples of his work and a list of links to critical articles and reviews. [<http://www.gregoryamenoff.com/>]



Not One, Not Two, 2007



Ross Bleckner, 2007

Ross Bleckner

Over Ross Bleckner's nearly 35-year career, a tug of war between abstraction and representation has marked his work. He uses themes like the transience of beauty, the fragility of life, and the loss of love to investigate change and memory, often addressing the subject of AIDS. His work is visually elusive, with forms that constantly change focus and depict dissolving crowds, chains of DNA and microscopic cells, or blurred flowers. But Bleckner uses symbolic imagery rather than direct representation, often endowing the paintings with layered meanings—a ring of flowers may refer to a chain of protein molecules, a starry sky to white blood cells depleted by AIDS.

Bleckner collects newspaper, poster, and magazine images along with his own photographs, and often uses these images as a starting point for his paintings. Usually beginning with a dark blue-black background, he smears and blurs the painted surfaces to make his objects burst out of the darkness in brilliant light. In a more recent series of paintings, he expresses his concern with what lies below the surface, both physically and emotionally, by letting his paint dry thoroughly and then abrading it until the white canvas shows through, leaving a velvety matte finish. The missing paint becomes just as important to the meaning of the image as the visible paint.

For More Info:

- An overview of Bleckner's work, complete with critical articles. [<http://www.rbleckner.com/>]
- Available at the MassArt library: *The Paintings of Ross Bleckner* by Richard Milazzo; *Ross Bleckner: Watercolors*; *Ross Bleckner: The Milwaukee Art Museum*



Self-portrait, 2007

Chuck Close

Known for his giant photorealist portraits, Chuck Close has been a leading figure in contemporary art since the early 1970s. He works from images of family members and friends, including composer Philip Glass, painter Alex Katz, and former President Bill Clinton. His formal analysis and methodological painting of the human face have radically changed the definition of modern portraiture.¹

The paintings are time-consuming and Close works on one at a time, often taking several months to finish. He consciously creates self-imposed artistic limits, resulting in a rigidly systematic process. He begins with a photograph, creates an overlaid grid, and meticulously transfers each square to his canvas in paint using thousands of tiny airbrush bursts, thumbprints, or looping multi-color brushstrokes.

Close has dealt with life-long neuromuscular problems and learning disabilities, one of which is face blindness, an inability to recognize faces, which has driven him to produce his two-dimensional portraits. “In real life if you move your head a half an inch, to me it’s a whole new face I’ve never seen before. But... I have virtual photographic memory for anything that is flat, so it’s not an accident that I only do images of people who matter to me -- family, friends, other artists.”² Close also had to overcome a serious spinal cord injury in 1988 that left him paralyzed from the neck down. He now paints with limited dexterity, using a brush strapped to a hand brace, using a motorized easel that shifts his paintings up and down.



Chuck Close: 4/25/06, 2006

Close’s early work is characterized by harsh black and white hyperrealist images. However, in recent decades, his paintings more often resemble kaleidoscopic fields of light and color when viewed up close, only resolving into near-photographic images when the viewer steps back. Close is an acclaimed printmaker as well, and has worked collaboratively with master printers like Joe Wilfer, Kathan Brown, and Tadashi Toda—experts, variously, at the ins and outs of spitbite aquatints, reduction linoleum cuts, screen prints, handmade paper pulp multiples, and other arcane techniques seemingly impenetrable to the uninitiated.³

For More Info:

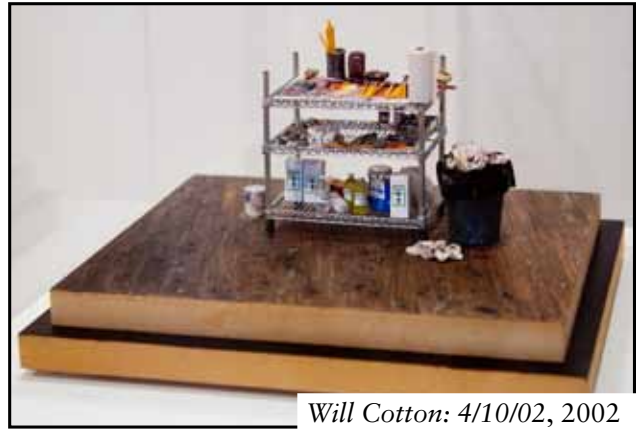
1. MoMA exhibition description from 1998. [<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1998/close/>]
2. Don’t miss this frank and personal PBS interview with the artist. [<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/blog/2010/07/conversation-chuck-close-christopher-finch.html>]
3. This is a great explanation of Close’s print-making techniques. [<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9804EED71130F935A25752C0A9629C8B63>]

• Available at the MassArt library: *Chuck Close: A Portrait in Progress* documentary; *Chuck Close: Up Close* by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan; *Chuck Close: Recent Paintings*; *Chuck Close: Self Portraits*

Will Cotton

Will Cotton uses his trademark candy land painting theme to explore the identity of American desire. Cotton's grandiose landscapes of gingerbread chateaus, chocolate lakes, and cotton candy clouds consciously reference the iconic American landscape tradition of the Hudson River Valley School, inspiring awe and desire for a new frontier. The scantily clad women that often appear in these landscapes, stretched out in pinup-style poses, only add to

the blatant message that these paintings are about American habits of appetite and indulgence. They are meant, in other words, to both allure and repulse us.



Will Cotton: 4/10/02, 2002



Abandoned, 2002

Cotton, who works a standard nine-to-five business day in his studio, paints from maquettes: scale models of houses, cottages, and landscapes made of cakes and sweets he builds himself. He used to paint directly from the models, but since they are perishable, he now photographs the maquettes and paints from those. In his conversation with Joe Fig, Cotton admits that he uses the same limited color palette for every painting – “[T]here’s white, a really cold red, yellow, orange, blue, and sometimes a little green. That’s it.” He also reveals that the best tool he uses to paint (secondary to brushes) is a stick. “I have this stick, which I really like a lot. It’s just a stick. But I found that for making a straight line, this is just the best thing... I can put this near the canvas but not touch it and just use it to guide the brush.”¹

Lately, Cotton's work has begun to cross genres. He has opened a bakery in Manhattan, designed pajamas for Creative Time (a New York City nonprofit organization devoted to public arts projects), and acted as the art director for Katy Perry's "California Gurls" music video. He says if there is one motto he tries to live by, it is to ask himself every day, is what I'm doing exciting to me? "If I come in here too many days in a row and I'm not excited, that's when I know I've got to change something."²

For More Info:

1. *Inside the Painter's Studio*

2. *ibid.*

• An interesting clip on the making of Katy Perry's album cover. [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cu9wk2KCCYU>]

• Take a look at his work. [<http://www.willcotton.com/>]

• Interview with 99% (arts site) [<http://the99percent.com/articles/6395/will-cotton-butcher-baker-candyland-maker>]

• Available at MFA: *Will Cotton: Paintings 1999-2004*

Inka Essenhigh

Drawing stylistic reference from both graphic novels and classic animation, Inka Essenhigh's paintings create tensions between sophistication and naïveté, skepticism and belief. "I think about [my paintings] as being about America: fake, fun, pop, violent, but also quite attractive," she says.¹

Essenhigh's richly colorful paintings dramatically distort figures and landscapes, breaking down the division between realism and abstraction. "I want (the figures) to be real enough that you feel a human presence, but animal enough that you're not really concerned about who or what this person is; it's just about energy," she explains.² Whether the protagonists of the painting are tearing and wrestling with their surroundings or gently floating or flying, Essenhigh captures movement within the work by giving viscosity to its edges and boundaries. According to an *Art in America* review, "Essenhigh is masterful



Green Goddess I, 2009



Inka Essenhigh Floor Sculpture, 2008

at drawing us into her paintings under the notion that we are in familiar territory, from which her work then pushes the viewer to reconsider the effects of distorted figuration and abstraction on our powers of recognition."³

When she first began gaining critical acclaim in the late 1990s, Essenhigh was painting with enamels, attracted by the ease with which they can be sanded down or erased with turpentine. But in 2001 she decided her work was beginning to have

the undesirable look of something being covered up and abruptly switched to matte oils. Essenhigh considers herself more of a draftsman than a painter. She doesn't do preparatory studies but instead, somewhat like the Surrealists, uses a form of automatic drawing with her brush that leads her into the images. "I walk up to the canvas and hope something's going to happen. It's almost minute to minute," she says.⁴

For More Info:

1. Enlightening explanations of a few of her paintings [http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/inka_essenhigh.htm]
 2. Article that explains her methods, art and inspiration [*Swirls, Whirls, and Mermaid Girls* by Hillary Sheets, *Artnews*, 2004; available on the Press page of her site]
 3. *Art in America* exhibition review from 2010 [<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/conversations/2010-01-15/inka-essenhigh-303-gallery/>]
 4. *ibid*
- Take a look at her work and some critical articles [<http://www.inka-essenhigh.com/>]
 - Available at MFA: *American Landscapes, Recent Paintings; Inka Essenhigh*



Study for Bedroom, Scene #3, Mistakes Mistakes!
Everything Shakes From All the Mistakes, 2004



April and Eric: 8/10/04, 2005-06



Eric Fischl Summer 2008, 2009

Eric Fischl is an internationally acclaimed American painter and sculptor with artwork in many distinguished museums. Arguably one of today's most influential figurative painters, Fischl has been compared to artists like Edgar Degas and John Singer Sergeant because of his interest in the human figure and his manipulation and use of light. The timing he captures in his images is implicitly narrative, but deliberately obscure. He paints the thing about to happen, the act implied but not illustrated. One painting depicts a contorted, naked woman laying on the bed in a darkened room as a young teenage boy looks on, his hand stealthily searching her purse on the table behind him. Another shows a woman in a wedding dress taking a smoke break on a park bench in the middle of walking her dog. This timing compels his viewer to emotionally enter the painting and interpret the situation, to place it within the context of an often disturbing or uncomfortable story.

Fischl works from photographs and uses Photoshop to develop compositions, but before the program was available, he worked by hand using overlays of translucent glassine paper. By moving figures around and adding or subtracting bits from the photograph, he builds images rife with physical and psychological relationships.

Fischl spent his early years painting an image-conscious suburban culture of prosperity and taboos. In more recent years, Fischl has moved away from the psychosexual drama of the suburban experience to focus on the figure. An obsessively honest painter, his nudes exhibit all the curves, sags, and wrinkles that Americans work so hard to keep hidden. According to a *BOMB Magazine* interview, "In an America that has developed an addiction for blotting out physical characteristics – our most basic identity – by embracing what is plastic and preserved, Eric Fischl shows us that even the nude, the stripped figure, wears a kind of psychological clothing that goes beyond the skin. What's hidden is in the thoughts."¹

For More Info:

1. Don't miss this excellent interview with the artist. Fischl speaks candidly about his subject matter and the ideology and questions behind his work. [<http://bombsite.com/issues/50/articles/1826>]

•Available at the MassArt library: *Fischl*; *Eric Fischl 1970-2000*; *Eric Fischl* documentary



Barnaby Furnas: 1/3/06, 2006

Barnaby Furnas

Barnaby Furnas uses watercolor to walk the line between sensationalist realism and abstraction. For subject matter, he pulls from a subversive world that is bizarrely populated by rock stars and dead ex-Presidents, constantly enmeshed in battles of cartoon ultra-violence. In this world, ex-presidents blowing each

other to shreds for the simple sake of beautiful carnage are just as common as the apocalyptic parting of a sea of blood. Furnas uses blood and guts as a means to flirt with abstraction and design. In *The New Yorker* he explains how blood became such a common motif in his work. “Basically, I wanted to do history paintings, and battle paintings. But I was having trouble painting figures. I was particularly frustrated with the faces and the hands, and as a way of getting around that I’d paint someone being shot, and then I didn’t have to worry. Like, I’m having trouble with this hand—splat! And that was interesting.”¹



Woman with Orange Scarf, 2010

Furnas is known for experimentation with materials. He mixes his own paint using high-intensity watercolors, pigments, and water or alcohol-based urethane additives. He looks for materials or processes that mimic what he depicts; for spurting blood, he uses hypodermic needles filled with red paint. When depicting



Apocalypse, 2005

an image of flesh, he paints on goatskin or calfskin vellum for its authenticity and historical significance. “Why not use flesh itself to depict flesh? Plus, skin is the substance that separates air from blood. The goal is to find a sort of material realism rather than a painted one... In a way I am hoping to recapture some of

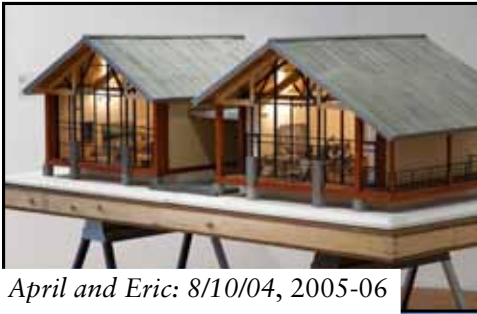
the spirituality of its historical use. The dead sea scrolls are on vellum. It’s an older surface than linen or paper or papyrus.”²

In some of Furnas’ most recent work, a series called *The Flood*, he paints on thirty-foot canvases, pouring, splashing and slathering the paint on. His two assistants use spray bottles of water to keep the paint flowing down the inclined canvas, which sits at a tilt on sawhorses of graduated heights.³

For More Info:

1. *The New Yorker* article [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/03/13/060313ta_talk_tomkins#ixzz1BIxGAFTS]
2. Interview with the artist [<http://www.heyokamagazine.com/HEYOKA.7.ART.BarnabyFurnas.htm>]
3. Watch him paint. [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0ptGa5mktc>]

• Available at the MFA: *Barnaby Furnas: Floods*; *Barnaby Furnas*



April and Eric: 8/10/04, 2005-06



Wind, Hill, Cloud, 2006



April and Eric: 8/10/04, 2005-06

April Gornik

April Gornik brings contemporary relevance to the traditional genre of American Romantic landscape painting by drawing, making prints, and painting unpeopled landscapes. Her paintings are most often life-size canvases the viewer can almost step into, creating a nuance and depth of light and space that encourage the emotional and psychological interpretation of each individual viewer. “They are complicated paintings, they’re not necessarily quick...it’s not primarily immediate impact I want from them.”¹ She strives to make art that challenges both her own and the viewer’s emotions, derives its power from being vulnerable to interpretation, is intuitive, and beautiful.

Gornik uses Photoshop to manipulate photographs and create the image from which she works. Because she paints from these imagined images, Gornik prefers to think of her work more as representational than realistic.

For More Info:

1. Interview with Gornik and Susan Rothenberg [<http://bombsite.com/issues/23/articles/1021>]
- Gornik’s essay on the state of visual literacy today [<http://www.aprilgornik.com/visualliteracyessay.html>]
- Interview clip with the artist [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixSFYryRh3A>]
- Take a look at her work [<http://www.aprilgornik.com/index.html>]
- Available at the MFA: *April Gornik: Embodied Landscapes; April Gornik*



Kissing Kids, Version Two, 2010

Jane Hammond

Jane Hammond's paintings and prints reflect the chaos and inconsistency of today's society. Amidst an excess of disembodied information, she paints to explore how meaning is constructed, creating a disjointed overload within her images that somehow still manages to maintain an antic and generous tone. A typical Hammond painting might be set in a great hall full of classical arches and columns, but

floored with diner-style checkerboard tile and inhabited by non sequiturs—a ballerina with an umbrella dancing on the tusk of a narwhal that is laying on a gas grill, a giant green Gandhi head sitting next to a giant blue Einstein head, and a Hindu diety wearing a weather vane. Her paintings feel open, eager to disclose themselves, and offer a frank attempt to excite the viewer's imagination through the friction caused by all of these images.



Jane Hammond: 10/3/06, 2006

Early in her career, Hammond worked in encaustic (wax); now she uses oils, but still favors painting on rough, stucco-like surfaces. She works with found images, acquiring her material from secondhand bookshops, antique stores and junk shops. She also draws from words as well as images—in 2001 she completed a nine-year project with the poet John Ashbery, who sent her a list of titles from which to paint. She wanted the titles to suggest the painting instead of the other way around, creating pieces from titles like, “A Parliament of Refrigerator Magnets,” “Do Husbands Matter?” and “The Wonderfulness of Downtown.” The final project resulted in 62 pieces.



Freud with Feathers

For More Info:

- Take a look at her work [<http://www.janehammondartist.com/paintings.html>]
- A list of critical articles: *The New York Times*, October 13, 2002; *Aperture*, Summer 2008; *Modern Painters*, Summer 1998 [<http://www.janehammondartist.com/text/articles.html>]
- Available at the MFA: *Jane Hammond: Paper Work*; *Jane Hammond: Rebus Painting*; *Jane Hammond*



Untitled (BH36in.2), 2007

Ryan McGinness

Ryan McGinness ransacks art history and popular culture to make colorful graphic silkscreened paintings that recall the work of Andy Warhol. A graphic designer by education, McGinness moved to New York in 1994 to work at a design firm where he helped produce logos for companies like Sony, Sega and MTV. But according to McGinness, his success as an independent artist came when he decided to stop

worrying about the difference between high art and graphic design. His art uses iconographic imagery, slogans, and logos. He makes paintings, sculptures, wall murals, and books, but deploys commercial strategies as well, stamping his designs onto t-shirts, soccer balls, skateboards and sneakers. “Products are the new art,” he explains.¹

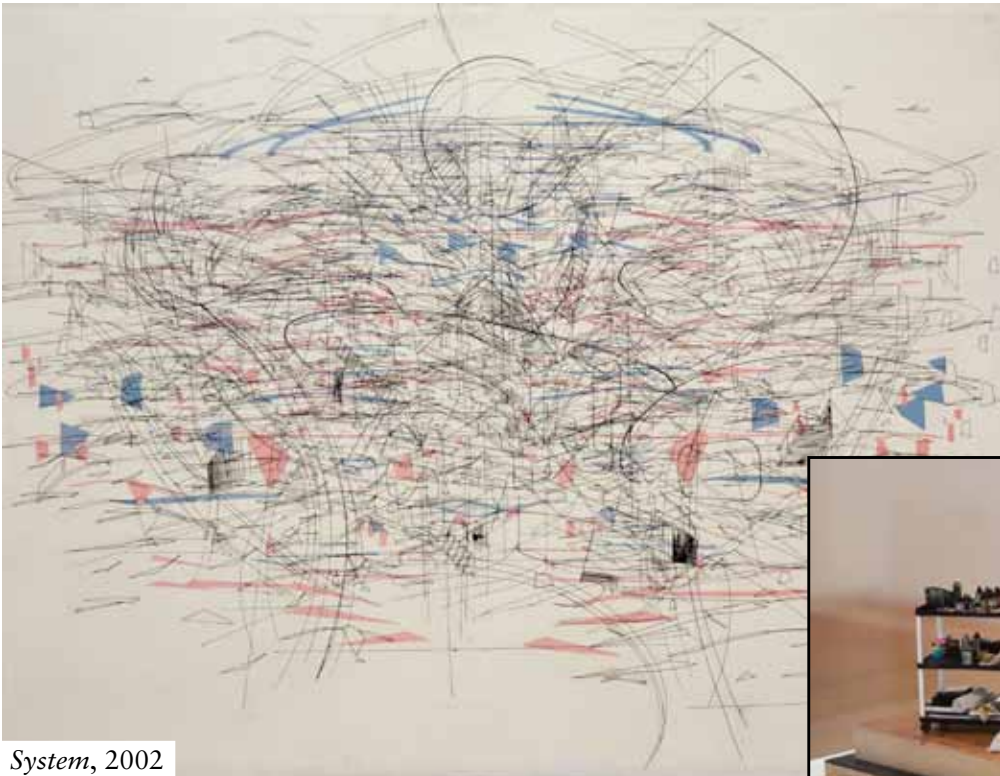
McGinness’ paintings are silkscreened in acrylic paint: deep tangles of pop culture images layered one on top of the other. According to *Blackbook Magazine*, “He takes widely distributed images – uncopyrighted clipart, basic fonts, images that are all around us, secretly communicating stable meanings – and works them over obsessively.”² The tension and interest arises in the satire and parody.



Ryan McGinness Wall Sculpture, 2009

For More Info:

1. Take a look at his work on this comprehensive site [<http://www.ryanmcginness.com/>]
 2. *Black Book* profile of the artist [http://www.deitch.com/artists/press_image.php?pressId=22]
- Available at the MassArt library: *Installationview: Ryan McGinness*



System, 2002



Julie Mehretu: 4/8/06, 2006

Julie Mehretu

Julie Mehretu makes large-scale densely layered abstract paintings and prints that represent the speed of the modern city. She works from images of cities, histories, wars, and geographies with a frenzied mark that captures the accelerated, compressed, and crowded cities of the 21st century. According to her bio on White Cube's website, her gallery, "Mehretu's work conveys a layering and compression of time, space and place and a collapse of art historical references, from the dynamism of the Italian Futurists and the geometric abstraction of Malevich to the enveloping scale of Abstract Expressionist color field painting."¹

The layering process is key to Mehretu's work. She creates her own surface by spraying on a mixture of gloss and silica-based acrylic paint, then sands it to create a smooth, transparent surface. She usually begins her paintings by tracing the lines of an architectural structure onto the canvas, often with the help of her assistants. Then she uses airbrush ink, paints, and pencil to form images that signify social agency as well as personal biography.

"Can you actually make a picture that charts the history of the development of capitalist systems? It's absurd,"² she laughs. But that is exactly where her artistic aspirations lie.

For More Info:

1. Her gallery's introduction to her work [<http://www.whitecube.com/artists/mehretu/>]
 2. PBS *Art 21* episode [<http://video.pbs.org/video/1281771991/>]
- Available at the MassArt library: *Julie Mehretu: Grey Area*; *Julie Mehretu: City Settings*; *Julie Mehretu: Black City*

Top of the Stretch, 2006



Malcolm Morley: 7/19/07, 2008



Sneaker and Watercolor Palette, 2008

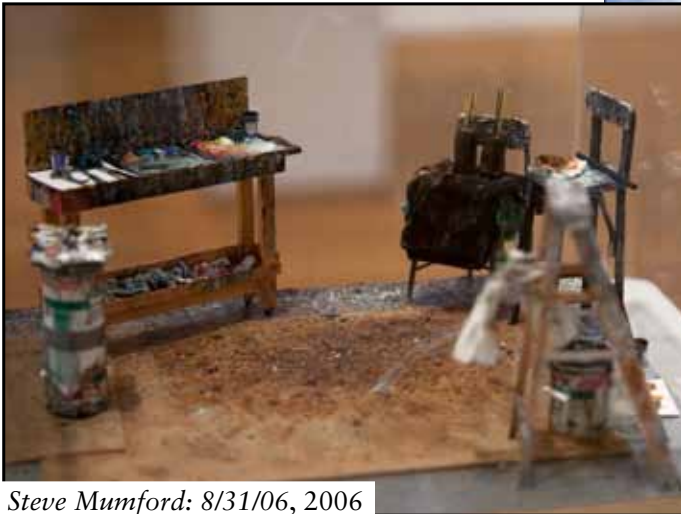
Malcolm Morley

Best described as a painter of the spectacles of modern life, pop artist Malcolm Morley is attracted to modern transportation, competition, and the catastrophe that the two create. He paints Nascar races, airplane dogfights, horse races, go cart crashes, and multi-car pile-ups on the highway. Athletes poised and ready on the playing field have also inspired many of his paintings.

Though his subject matter has remained fairly constant, Morley's style has changed again and again over his 50-year career. Born in London, Morley moved to New York City in 1958 where he met Barnett Newman and began painting works of solid color and horizontal black and white bands. After meeting Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, Morley moved into a phase of photorealism, for which he is most well known, often painting from upside down photographs overlaid with a grid. In the 1970s, Morley's work began to lean toward expressionism and incorporate collage. In the 1990s he returned to photorealism, but has begun to incorporate spatially complex three-dimensional elements in his paintings and to expand to the realm of sculpture and mobiles.

For More Info:

- Look at his work [<http://www.speronewestwater.com/cgi-bin/iowa/artists/record.html?record=8>]
- General bio [<http://www.malcolmmorley.com/>]
- Available at the MFA: *Malcolm Morley: new paintings and watercolors 1984-1986*; *Malcolm Morley: itineraries*; *Malcolm Morley: in full colour*



Steve Mumford: 8/31/06, 2006



Waiting for the Americans, 2010

Steve Mumford

Steve Mumford is a combat artist, a genre that pre-dates photography. Working in oil, watercolor, and ink, he creates large realist paintings that document the daily lives of Iraqi citizens and American soldiers in the Middle East. “I think that anything that’s important enough to send young men to potentially sacrifice their lives is also important enough for artists to not only make art about, but also to go themselves and get their own impressions.”¹ His first trip to Iraq was in 2003 right after the statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled and he has been back four times since.

When he paints and draws onsite with the army, everything Mumford uses to paint and draw must be portable, his watercolors and inks easy to cap quickly. About half the time he finishes the piece on site, otherwise he takes a few snapshots as references for later. The Middle East, he comments, is a great place to work in his chosen water-based mediums because the hot, dry climate dries the paint instantly. He also particularly likes working in ink because of its permanence. “Once you put it down, there’s no erasing it—it captures the spontaneity and emotion of a moment. It records something more than just the action.”²

In 2005 Mumford published *Baghdad Journal: An Artist in Occupied Iraq* in an attempt to capture his experience in the Middle East. The book is comprised of the essays, stories and accompanying artwork that he published in a blog on artnet.com during his time in occupied Iraq.

For More Info:

1. Short interview clip [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DewRt0nF5OM>]

2. *ibid.*

• Available at the library: *Baghdad Journal: An Artist in Occupied Iraq*

• Interesting interview about daily life as an artist embedded with the troops and Mumford’s place in the history of combat artists [<http://nplusonemag.com/interview-steve-mumford>]

Philip Pearlstein

Philip Pearlstein began painting studio nudes in the 1960s when Abstract Expressionism had made it taboo in the art world. His work was at the forefront of bringing the practice back into vogue. Pearlstein paints directly from models with a detached stark allegiance to what he sees—wrinkles, sags, disproportions and all. He cares less about anatomical accuracy. Though he's often described as a realist, Pearlstein paints with a



Male and Female Nude with His Master's Voice and Exercise Ball, 2003

compositional complexity that shows a conscious effort to declare the artifice of pose, cropping, lighting, and visual angle in his art. He paints objects, surfaces, and spaces the way the eye actually sees them, including optical distortions and irregularities in perspective. According to *Resource Library Magazine*, “Like non-



Philip Pearlstein: 12/12/05, 2006

objective abstract paintings, his are self-referential, and very much about the experience of seeing and enjoying visual forces at play.”¹ The images never suggest a realistic scene that the viewer has happened to stumble upon. Instead, Pearlstein likes to position his models in dynamic unexpected poses that break away from the conservative tradition of academic figurative painting.

For More Info:

1. General overview [<http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/6aa/6aa429.htm>]

• *Not Made in Heaven* is a documentary on the life and impact of Philip Pearlstein. This website gives a synopsis of the film. [<http://ubfilms.com/nmih/>]

• *New York Times* article [http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/p/pearlstein_philip/index.html]

• Available at the library: *Philip Pearlstein: the complete paintings* by Russell Bowman; *Philip Pearlstein : September 15-October 22, 2005*

(Trestle) *Study for Ship of Years*, 2007



Matthew Ritchie, 9/5/03, 2003



Matthew Ritchie, 9/5/03, 2003

Matthew Ritchie

Acclaimed in the art world for his room-size installations of paintings, sculpture, and digital projections, Matthew Ritchie's work investigates the idea of information explored through architecture, history, science, and the dynamics of culture. His work draws from subjects as diverse as ancient myth and medieval alchemy to cutting-edge physics and contemporary politics. All of his images are digitally compiled and manipulated from his own actual drawings. His sleek, sprawling iron sculptures look like tarred and tangled black thorns sitting in rooms illuminated by light boxes and projections of his paintings that evoke some kind of cosmic stew.

Ritchie's paintings, only a small piece of his multi-media art, are reminiscent of gothic architectural shapes or particles in another dimension. His splatters and brushstrokes lend a human element to the otherwise cold and scientifically speculative world he creates.

For More Info:

- PBS *Art 21* episode [<http://video.pbs.org/video/1239615688>]
- His work, critical articles [<http://www.matthewritchie.com/>]
- Download several reviews [<http://www.andrearosengallery.com/artists/matthew-ritchie/?view=press>]
- Available at the MassArt library: *Matthew Ritchie: more than the eye*; *Matthew Ritchie : incomplete projects 01-07*; *Matthew Ritchie, Proposition player* by Lynn M. Herbert



Alexis Rockman: 1/3/06, 2006

Alexis Rockman

Alexis Rockman's paintings use the language of natural history to examine our cultural relationship to plants and animals and the role we play in altering the landscape of nature and ecology. He identifies his work as pop art that uses natural history as iconography. Rockman draws from old field guides, mid-twentieth century science fiction film and animation, and the 19th century Hudson

River School of Romantic landscapes to create images that explore environmental issues such as evolutionary biology, genetic engineering, deforestation, and climate change.

Until 1989 when he met Mark Dion, a sculptor and installation artist with similar ecological and conservation interests, Rockman always painted in the studio. The two artists started taking periodic trips to make art, in the tradition of the 19th or early 20th century adventure researcher. It was about this time, in the mid-1990s, that he also experimented with materials. Taking a cue from the Earth artists, he used materials specific to the place he was making his drawing or painting. Instead



Blue Emissions, 2006

of paint, he used things like wombat poop, pulverized fossils, and garbage juice to make images that would fit nicely into a field guide.¹



Untitled (Mt. Rushmore), 2005

Much of Rockman's historical painting has to do with something that will be lost, which is why, as *Art in America Magazine* says, "Certain elements in [his] paintings, like the loving description of feathers or rat hairs, feel so wrong in the shadow of modernism, because modernism is really about denying biology."² Rockman subscribes to the idea that history is written by the winners and manipulated by those who have power. Therefore, he tries to make history paintings that are about failure and disappointment—about the destruction of Brooklyn due to global warming, for example, in his work "Manifest Destiny."

For More Info:

1. Extensive interview [<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/features/alexis-rockman/>]

2. *ibid*

•To see his work [<http://www.alexisrockman.net/>]

•Available at the MassArt library: *Alexis Rockman: the weight of air*; *Alexis Rockman : manifest destiny*



Dana Schutz: 10/7/03, 2005



Poisoned Man, 2006

Dana Schutz

Bright sunny colors illuminate scenes of dissection and dismemberment in Dana Schutz's work. Among other things, she has painted a race of humans who eat themselves and spontaneously regenerate body parts, a guy named Frank who is the last man on Earth, a gravity-phobic woman who has tied herself to the ground, and a number of different characters spliced open on operating tables for various reasons. Her paintings show a pert sense of merry macabre. "Her work is sadistic but not sinister, witty but not acid, and free of grown-up vengeance. Often, her most graphic images are her most cheerful," says *BOMB Magazine*.¹ In other words, the violence she does her subjects lacks angst, instead suggesting a whimsical curiosity.

Schutz makes rough drawings to plan out the general image of a painting and how things will fill the canvas. "I rarely draw directly on the canvas. When I'm starting a painting, a lot of times I'll just start with a wash on the ground and I'll mix a lot of colors beforehand - like 50 - because I don't like to stop when I'm painting. Then I'll respond to those and mix other colors to change them. A lot of times I'll paint a space and then put another space or a character on top of it. It's really a process of building things."² Her paintings' thick layers and brushstrokes reflect this process.

For More Info:

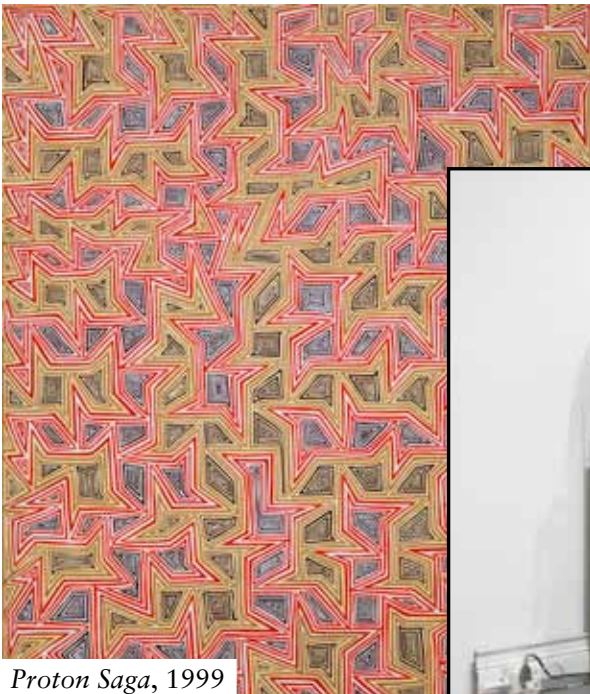
1. Interview with the artist [<http://bombsite.com/issues/95/articles/2799>]

2. *ibid.*

• Look at her work [<http://zachfeuer.com/artists/dana-schutz/>]

• Another, more recent interview [<http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/34564/what-painting-wants-a-qa-with-dana-schutz/?page=1>]

• Available at the MassArt library: *Dana Schutz: if it appears in the desert; Dana Schutz: paintings 2002-2005* 21



Proton Saga, 1999



James Siena Floor Sculpture, 2008



Sagging Grid, 2006

James Siena

Mathematical concepts, such as fractals (irregular geometric shapes that can be split into smaller copies of the whole) and the Golden Mean, create the basis for James Siena's structural and patterned artwork. He uses visual algorithms and self-imposed parameters to try to dissect the process of thinking about art—in other words, he creates art with the intention of making us think about how we think. "I try to make thought visible," he says.¹

Siena uses a diverse range of media to create his art, working in lithography, etching, woodcut, engraving, drawing, and paint. He paints with One Shot sign enamel on pieces of aluminum. Siena is interested in color, but is mildly color blind on the red/green spectrum, which means that his paintings tend to have a unique light.²

For More Info:

1. *Cornell Chronicle* article [<http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/April10/SienaAwardCover.html>]
 2. Interview with *The Brooklyn Rail* [<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2005/11/art/james-siena-with-chris-martin>]
- Available at the MassArt library: *James Siena: new paintings and gouaches*



Joan Snyder: 2/16/06, 2006

Joan Snyder

Joan Snyder's paintings can be described as "stroke" paintings. Her lush, drippy bars of color set over the top of grids create abstract works that first gained recognition at the height of the minimalist movement in the 1970s. However, she says, "For me, it was maximal."¹ Her rebellious artistic sensibilities, along with the subject matter and self-described emotionality of her paintings, placed Snyder within the feminist movement of the seventies. Her paintings are filled with contradictions: abstract, yet often narrative; formally thought out, yet intuitive and spontaneous; pointedly political, yet open to interpretation. The dripping loopy brushwork mingles on the canvas with scraps of cheesecloth, silk, burlap, twigs, seeds, glitter, strands of rope, leaves, and patches of plaster or simply dirt. The hint of a grid and a horizontal brushstroke are what holds everything together.



OH APRIL, 2010

For More Info:

1. *Boston Globe* article, 2005 [<http://www.webcitation.org/5e6AG7XMc>]

• Available at the MassArt library: *Joan Snyder* by Hayden Herrera; *Joan Snyder: work on paper, 1970s and recent* (MFA); *Joan Snyder: the nature of things*



Nathan, 1998

he has taken throughout his life of friends and family, his surroundings, everyday life, and the social scene of New York. These are the inspiration for his paintings and though he does them in ink and pastel, they retain the look of flashbulb voyeuristic snapshots—like his photographs. He renders them like a quick-sketch artist on the Riviera.²

Billy Sullivan

Billy Sullivan calls his artistic style “street realism.” His work has gained exuberant responses from graffiti aficionados as well as art collectors. Similarly to other photorealist artists, Sullivan works from photographs and admits that he spends painstaking time on microscopic details of his pieces.¹ He has been a photographer as long as he has been a painter, and keeps a portfolio of images



Billy Sullivan: 4/3/07, 2007

For More Info:

1. Short bio [http://www.agora-gallery.com/artistpage/billy_sullivan.aspx]
 2. Interview with the artist [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_n10_v32/ai_16097488/]
- Longer interview [<http://bombsite.com/issues/50/articles/1825>]