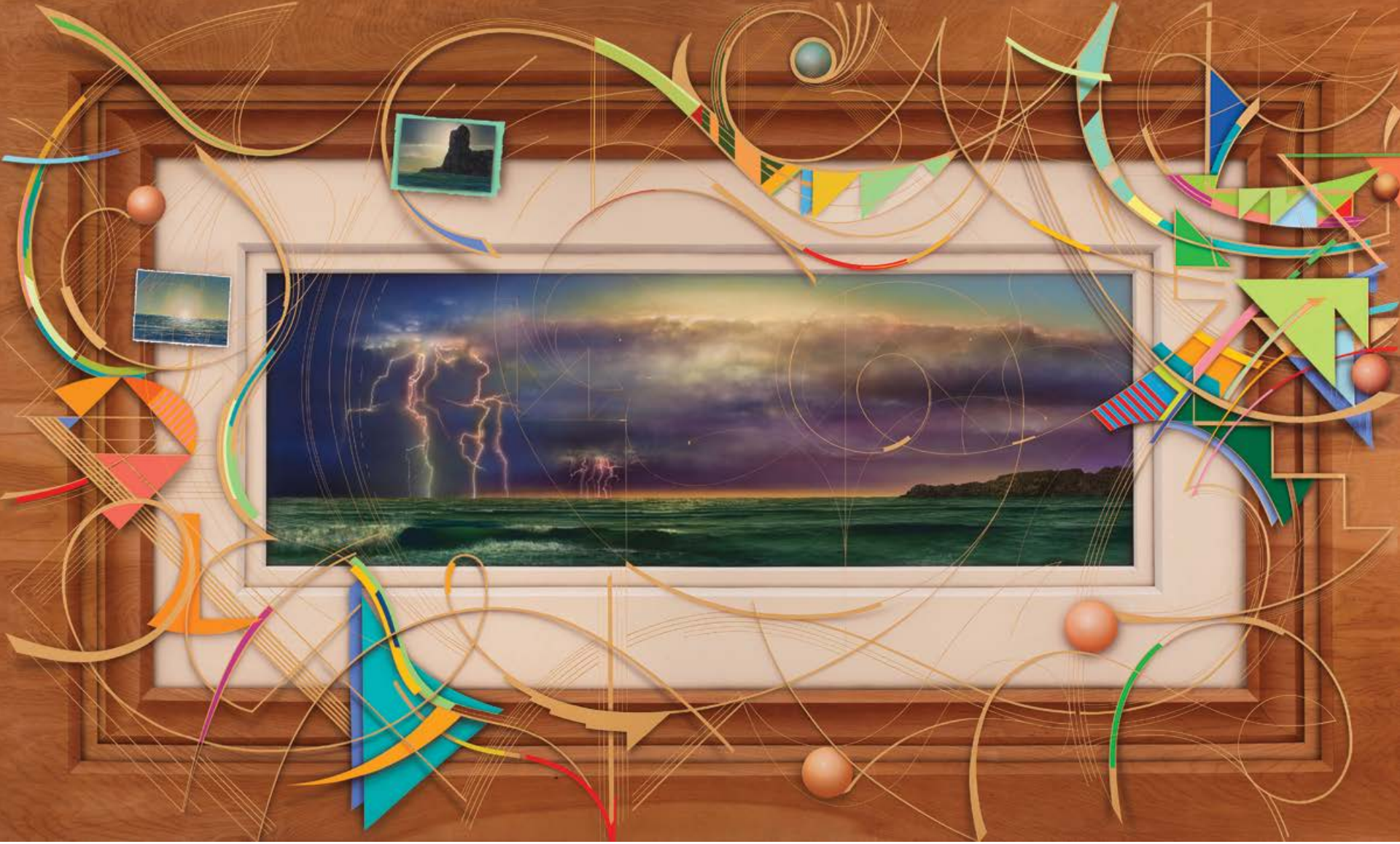


Marooned in Dreaming: A Path of Song and Mind
photographed by Aaron Johanson

48 x 80 inches, acrylic on birch

George D Green 2011

George D. Green

Robust Exuberance to Contemplative Revelation

1979–2017

presented by the Arts Council of Lake Oswego

George D. Green

Robust Exuberance to Contemplative Revelation

1979–2017

In 1975, a 6 foot 4 inch black-bearded man entered the Gallery. I expected him to tell me he was Paul Bunyan, but he turned out to be George D. Green, an artist from the Pacific Northwest. He was then and has continued to be, a giant of an artist.

While my gallery was beginning to be known for the post-modern photorealism with which I was deeply involved, I was also then becoming increasingly aware of works—essentially abstract works—in which the exploration of illusionistic three-dimensionality was a strong and provocative element. George Green became one of five painters representing what I was seeing, something I then called Abstract Illusionism. The other painters were James Havard, Jack Lembeck, Tony King and Michael Gallagher. These artists, who came from varied backgrounds and paces in the USA, had all been independently drawn to the idea of breaking the picture plane. This was exciting and compelling work. By 1980, the genre and these artists had plenty of exposure, both in the U.S. and Europe, through gallery and museum exhibitions as well as in the media.

George Green is unique in his success of the exploration of what the 19th century French called trompe l'oeil (in English, "fool the eye"). He has consistently produced vital and challenging work while developing ever-new ways to advance the vocabulary of the genre, yielding not so much deception (as implied in the genre's name) but a very real and very rich fullness of space. Green's first explorations of illusionistic three-dimensionality alluded to loose bands of canvas that had comprised an element of his works in the mid 70's. The lavish application of thick paint (a very real three-dimensionality) was characteristic of his work throughout the 80's and into the 90's. During this same period, shapes and colors were powerfully aggressive, and the works exhibited a most compelling and dynamic sense of movement, giving a vivid immediacy—making the viewer almost tactilely aware of the moment of the image's creation. His most recognizable works from the period were wildly shaped, and boldly illusionistically three dimensional—exuberant paintings—dynamic and vigorous yet movingly and deeply contemplative.

It is interesting to note that almost with each painting–from the very beginning to the very present–there has been a clear progression leading him to his present works. Viewing two or three successive works together from 1975 to 2016, changes and developments are subtle yet apparent. In seeing two paintings from five years apart, however, one would not perceive at once their relationship–they could, at a superficial viewing, almost appear to be the work of two different artists. A more contemplative viewing though, would reveal the works to be by the same artist, and moreover, to relate to one another on levels both stylistic and philosophical. At a point about the turn of the millennium, Green began painting on wood panels, incorporating the wood's natural grain into the illusion. These have evolved to the present work, which at a superficial (and very pleasing) look, appears to be beautifully photographed images of sea and stormy sky set in elaborate, well-crafted frames. But the seascapes are beguilingly skillful photo realist renderings of images conceived by the artist who says "there are no real clouds, waves, lightening" etc., and what he paints just simulates nature. The substantial, sculptural frames are in fact painted and rival the finest trompe l'oeil ever completed. The most recent work, unveiled in the present exhibition, employs a geometrical filigree superimposed and floating in front of the entire image of each painting adding yet another invention and advance.

George D. Green has been and continues to be the most inventive and original painter I have ever seen, know or studied, from the Renaissance to the present; his work is living proof that painting is not dead!

– *Louis Meisel*

Influential gallerist and author
New York, NY 2017

That Mr. Green's paintings have evolved so dramatically is in itself of great interest. It testifies to an ambitious and restless spirit, always ready to transform a mistake into a valuable and positive resource, a path for the future. It also suggests a critical stance that understands that one's most cherished esthetic positions are tomorrow's rote formulas. For those who are familiar with Mr. Green's oeuvre, it is apparent that there has been a continuing evolution, but not a linear or necessarily logical one. The evolution has been unruly and somewhat untamed, and is all the more interesting for that.

– *Don Eddy*

Internationally celebrated New York painter
New York, NY 2017

My enthusiasm in bringing together this collection of George's work stems from my years as a teacher of young children and my personal friendship with the artist. I found that including art in my curriculum provided many ways for students to creatively express what they had learned. George and I have a common belief that viewing art is of vital importance to all ages in experiencing the process of creative thinking.

My selection of paintings spans the most important years of George's work. It allows the viewer to see the evolution of his thinking and to discover the progression of each painting building on others. When viewing a group of George's paintings from different times, the diverse complexity of imagery demonstrates that creativity is not an immobile force. If allowed, it carries the creator to unimaginable places.

One of George's beliefs is that in the process of creating, nothing can be truly planned. A mistake, accident, or simply one idea bumping into another, are avenues to discovery. This is not only a valuable approach to any creative endeavor it is a wonderful lesson in living.

In the process of curating this exhibition I have been privileged to work with Executive Director, Nicole Nathan; past Public Art and Program Manager, Lori Goldstein; present Public Art and Program Manager, Kelsey Ferreira and Development Associate, Robin Krakauer. I also want to thank the Lake Oswego Review newspaper and Lake Oswego Living Magazine for their support and community outreach. And a special thank you to Marylou Colver, Lake Oswego Preservation Society.

– *Jane Ramsey*

Independent Curator "Robust Exuberance to Contemplative Revelation"
Lake Oswego, Oregon 2017

George Green is a fifth generation Oregonian recently returned to Oregon after a 30-year tenure in New York City.

His work is represented in 71 museum collections including The Guggenheim Museum, NY, the LA County Museum, LA, the Chicago Art Institute and the Portland Art Museum. To date, his career includes 63 national and international solo exhibitions in addition to 100's of group shows and publications.

He has recently started a non-profit institute. Its purpose is to bring some of the world's best painting to kids disadvantaged by geography or social circumstance. To young eyes, "watching" these pictures offers a unique experience of visual wonderment. These exhibitions are free and open to the general public.

– *Dan Biggs*

Past President, Portland Art Museum
Portland, Oregon 2017

Exuberant

Holy Rollers I, II 90 x 163 inches acrylic on canvas 1982

Bark Like a Fox 87 x 97 inches acrylic on wood 1982

Basic Ritual 1982
charcoal/paper 61 x 60 inches

The Great Dragon, The Ancient Snake 1983
charcoal/paper 69 x 59 inches

Drawing for Careless Music 1986
charcoal/paper 102 x 80 inches

Drawing for Prankster 1986
charcoal/paper 102 x 80 inches

Annunciation Blues in memory of William T. Jacobs 55 x 71 inches acrylic/wood 1987

Eccentric Beauty 72 x 108 inches acrylic/birch 1988

Bon-Ton-Roulette 47 x 95.5 inches acrylic/birch 1989

Neskowin: A Country and Western Horizon 76 x 112 inches acrylic/canvas 1990

The Traveler | 68 x 50 inches | acrylic/canvas | 1990

Buckskin Mary 46 x 62 inches acrylic/birch 1991

Neskowin Spring B | 22 x 30 inches | metal multiple | 1992/2016

Neskowin Spring C | 22 x 30 inches | metal multiple | 1992/2016

Velocity 60 x 73 inches acrylic/wood/canvas 1992

Spring of Chance 84 x 69 inches acrylic/canvas 1992

Zone of Middle Dimensions: Eclipse | 67 x 88 inches | acrylic/wood/canvas | 1992

The History of Nature 1994
acrylic/mixed-media/wood irregularly shaped, 67 x 51 inches

Ordinary Moment 1994
mixed-media/wood irregularly shaped, 48 x 83 inches

Moment to Moment 1993
acrylic/canvas/wood irregularly shaped, 48 x 78 inches

Storyteller 1993
mixed-media/wood irregularly shaped, 77.5 x 59 inches

Pirate 78 x 50 inches acrlic/wood 1994/2016

The Journey 32 x 48 inches acrylic/birch 1999

Rough & Tumble (96 x 204 inches) 8 x 18 feet acrylic on shaped panel 1997/2016

Contemplative

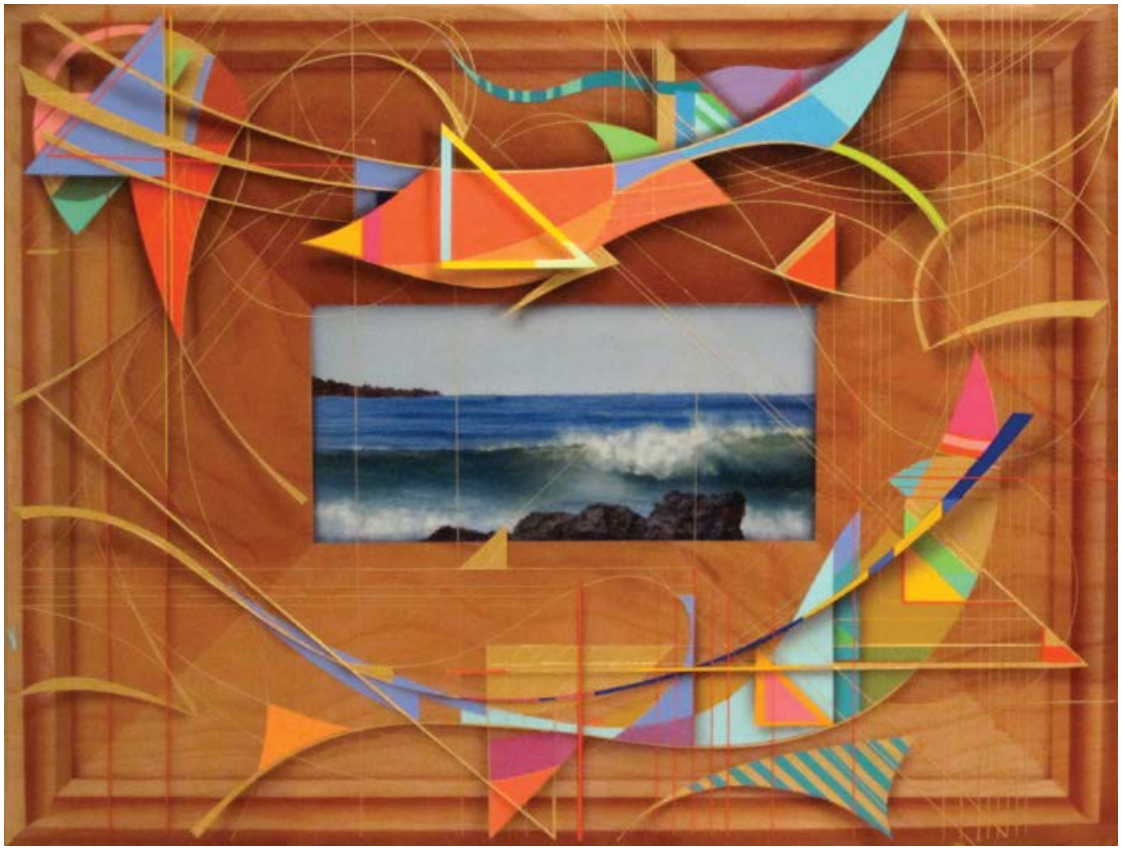
Sunset at Thessaloniki: An Abstract Picture 36 x 54 inches acrylic/birch 2006

Rembrandt 48 x 80 inches acrylic/birch 2010

Bounding Airborne Walloons 12 x 16 inches acrylic/birch 2011

Walking Pendulums: Cowering Jounce 12 x 16 inches acrylic/birch 2011

Captain Hometown Scrimshaw 12 x 16 inches acrylic/birch 2011



Crosshatch Briarpatch Pajamas and Moon 12 x 16 inches acrylic/birch 2011

Milkmaid Moonmind 12 x 16 inches acrylic/birch 2011

Astoria 24 x 40 inches acrylic/birch 2012

The Elements | 20 x 30 inches | acrylic/wood | 2012

Leapfrog Superstring: a church of the magical science 24 x 40 inches acrylic/birch 2012

Poetry of HD Moe: "giants of everything: distilling waters of reflection" 19 x 22.5 x 4 inches acrylic on panel/gold leaf sculpture 2013

Poetry of HD Moe: "giants of everything...seven waves of the Oregon Coast" | 20 x 26.5 x 4 inches | acrylic on panel/gold leaf sculpture | 2013

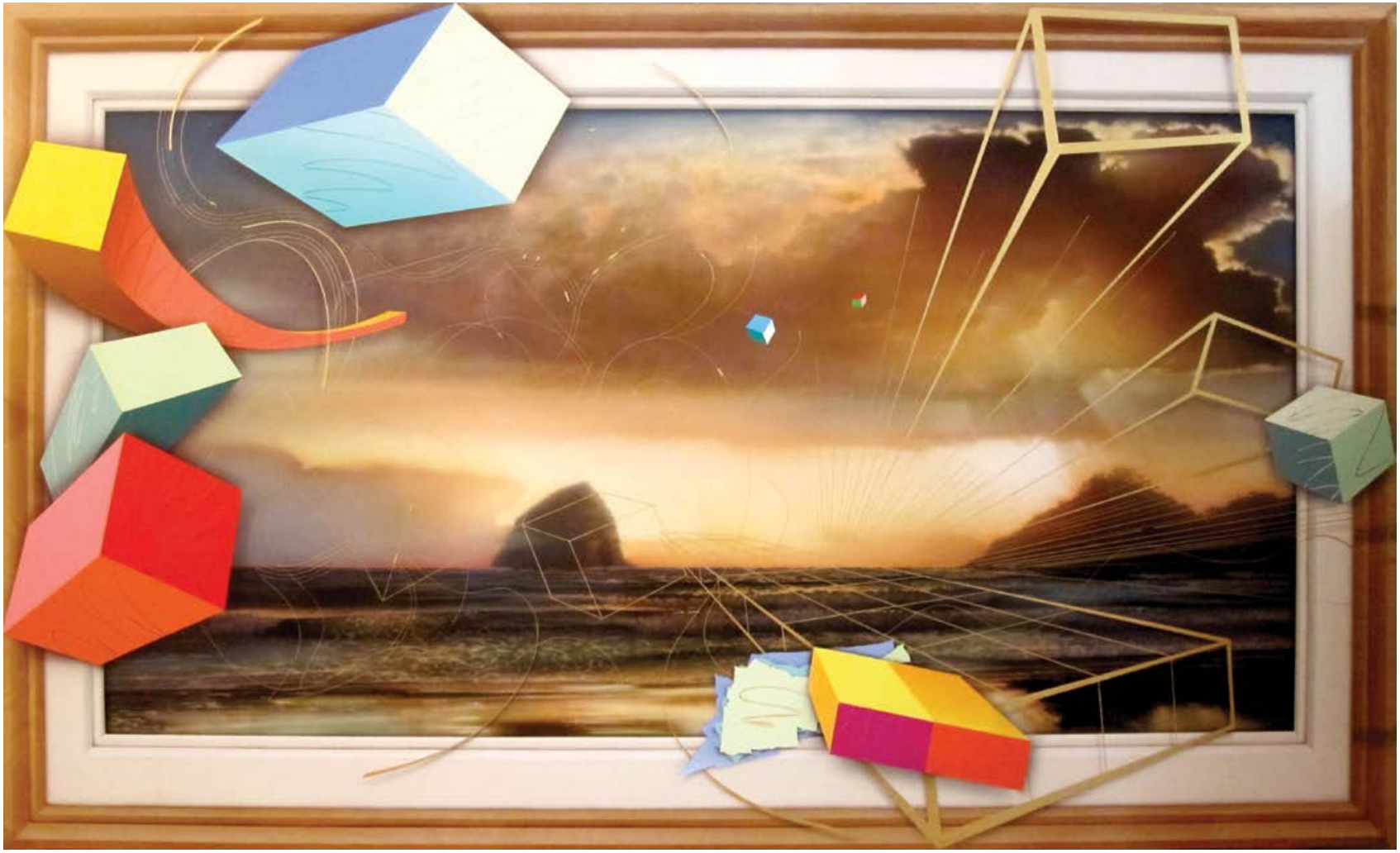
"a long watch: a discernable gleam" 24 x 54 inches acrylic on panel 2015

Giants of Everything 48 x 80 inches acrylic on panel 2016

Age Old and Instantaneous Hours 24 x 80 inches acrylic on panel 2016

Song for First Time Things 12 x 16 inches metal multiple 2016

The Architect and the Bishop Learn to Fly 11.5 x 17.25 inches metal multiple 2016



Haystack Rock: The Architecture of Life Everlasting 48 x 80 inches acrlic on panel 2016

Infinity Machine: Four Horizons | 24 x 48 inches | acrylic on panel | 2016

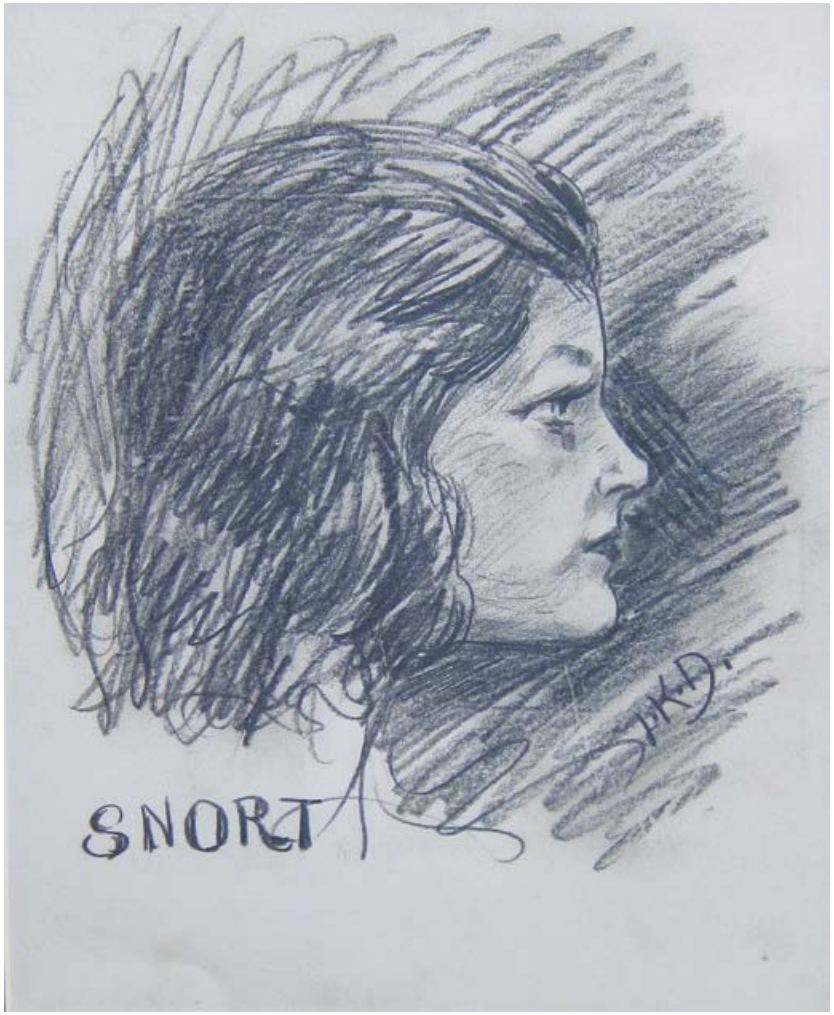
Infinity Machine: Winter Sun 48 x 80 inches acrylic on panel 2015/2016

trillions and trillions | 12 x 17.55 inches | acrylic on panel | 2016

a great stillness 12 x 17.5 inches acrylic on panel 2016

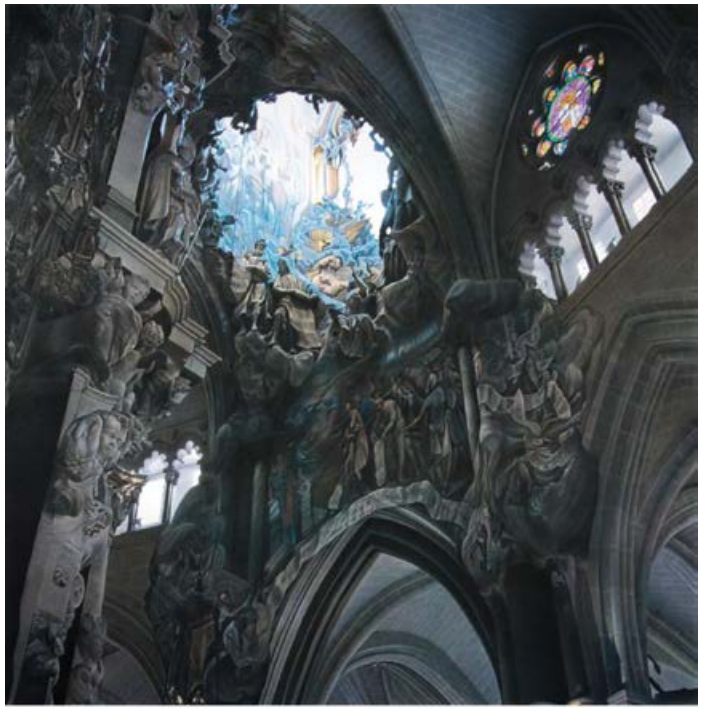
The Invention of Forever Things: The Science of the Angels | 48 x 80 inches | acrylic on panel | 2017

Four people important to my work.



Snort pencil/paper Lucien Kenneth Davidson, c. 1932

The Road Show III 8.5 x 11 inches digital photo Jerry Foster Brown, 2005



Two Realms IV: Revelation and Risk 73 x 36 inches Don Eddy, 2016

Center of Gravity 32 x 18 x 1.5 inches mixed-media Jeri Hise, 2015

In 1974 George Green, with his wife and daughter, moved into SoHo, which was soon to become the art center of the world. Following is his daughter Amber's first hand account.

You can't always see how special an era is when you are living it, but even at the time SoHo in the summer of 1974 felt magical. All those beautiful, now famous gleaming cast iron facades were still gritty with the industry and purpose they were built for. A few artists, drawn as much by the character of the neighborhood as by the light and raw square footage, had moved into empty industrial spaces, and some galleries and cooperatives opened in storefronts. It was a diverse, harmonious community. Everyone, workers from the neighborhood's industries, artists, dealers, went to Millie's–Millie called everyone "doll"–for coffee and eggs. Fanelli's, now a landmark, was then just a place for the delivery truck drivers to get a beer after work. There were no visitors yet–no one from the outside. SoHo was a community, not a destination, and it was above all a working community, made up of truck drivers and painters, bakers and sculptors, electricians and gallery owners, performance artists, and the few people serving them all a beer after work. Everyone was contributing to the culture. There was no one just hanging around, going to wine bars and such–that was still years away.

My dad had secured a summer at Artists' Space. It turned out to be just for work, so we slept there on the sly on some foam cushions. We got up with the delivery trucks from the commercial bakery in the morning, and made instant coffee from the tap in the bathroom. There was an electric fan to move the thick New York heat around a little. The door downstairs was locked at night since no one lived in the building, so if we wanted anything, my dad would climb down the fire escape. It sounds spare, but it really was sumptuous–the streets were filled with the scent of rolls baking in the commercial ovens, and down by Broome St. your throat would tingle with the warmth of black pepper from the spice factory. It was like Frank Lloyd Wright said–the luxuries of life without the necessities–and we were having too much fun to miss those. The bartender at Fanelli's always made me a plate of sliced Italian bread with little pats of butter–there were very few children in the neighborhood, and we were always treated like something special. We ate cannoli from Bruno's, just above Houston (Houston like "house," not like the city in Texas) where it still is now, and carrot cake from Food–this cafeteria on Wooster and Prince that some artists had. Food was an art project as much as a canteen–I since heard there was performance art aspect to the place, but everyone talks about that carrot cake still.

This intersection of art and the neighborhood's indigenous commercial texture made for projects that captured the moment, like Stefan Eins' 3 Mercer Street–not so much a gallery as a store for art, in the approachable spirit of the bric-a-brac stores on nearby Canal St. The neighborhood swelled with energy and purpose. My mother, Cie Goulet, had come to paint also, but she ended up borrowing an 8mm camera from the Young Filmmakers Foundation on Rivington Street instead, interviewing people like Eins, Chuck Close, art dealer Ivan Karp and Millie from the diner–some of the people who were making SoHo what it was.

Popular culture has caked a layer of glamour onto SoHo. When the neighborhood took on its identity, glamour was irrelevant; this was a working neighborhood. There was plenty of ambition, but it was ambition for the work itself–the art. The success that could come with that was still years away, and then it was always just a by-product, not the goal. The neighborhood had a purity–there was no one inauthentic in SoHo. In fact, after dark there was almost no one at all. It was just us–the people who were invested in the community–artists and performers–and some people of vision to perceive the revolutionary. Art dealers–like my dad's dealer Louis Meisel–one of SoHo's first–made spaces for ideas to thrive. Galleries were communities. Susan Meisel put on grand and boisterous artists' brunches–simultaneously the social event of the year, and an intimate family gathering. It was partly her warm, dynamic way, but it was also just the truth of things.

Although this was big city life by any measure, it's hard to imagine how provincial we were–literally. In the outer boroughs, Manhattan may be called "the city," but the implied worldliness is generous and unearned. The borders of our own little province were a few blocks below Canal–to White St., where the Mudd club was, up to the Grand Union supermarket on Bleecker–not even to Washington Square Park really. On the other side of West Broadway was the South Village–the Italian–American neighborhood around Thomson and Sullivan streets. Joe's Dairy with the fresh mozzarella and Vesuvio Bakery were here. To the east, the neighborhood stopped at Broadway or at the very most to pre-modeling agency Lafayette St., which was really dicey back then with lots of kind of aggressive homeless guys anachronistically called "panhandlers." Chinatown and Little Italy were near, and very occasionally people would travel as far north as Union Square to go to Max's Kansas City, all the way up by 17th St. I had a $2 coke there when I was six–the minimum at a table. That was a lot then. I felt very cosmopolitan.

Early SoHo's frontier conditions required some flexibility–there were things you learned to do without, like legality. Some buildings had AIR (artist in residence) signs, indicating a legalized conversion and to let the firefighters know someone might be inside after hours. We had some quaint practices that have been lost to time, like how to visit our neighbors-we rang the doorbell, or just yelled, then took a couple of steps back and looked up to see a block of foam or a tiny parachute pitching its way back and forth through the air, keys attached. The enormous elevators–ideal for huge paintings–were designed for freight, and you needed keys for them too.

The roughness of these live/work spaces has come to define a contemporary urban aesthetic–that raw brick, those industrial sized windows are now part of an essential vocabulary of style. But in the beginning, it was not an aesthetic at all–it just was. These were factories for making art, chosen for the light those big sweatshop windows let in, the high ceilings and unobstructed space. Amenity free, they were also affordable; that meant more time for making art, and more money for art supplies. The hotplates and mattresses were a necessary afterthought; the cliché of the industrial cable spool as chic table was then just a solution, more homestead than dream house.

Interesting things were, for lack of means, often happening in the very rawest of spaces. Spareness came to be equated with legitimacy–there was no surer sign of a dilettante than, say, a sofa. This quickly gave rise to a puritanical anti-aesthetic-most hilariously embraced by the secretly wealthy, whose lofts were often nearly unlivable by even the most meager standards. The faux aesthetics of hardship flourished as an art form in themselves. A favorite ostentation was the sheet rock wall that was left naked but for tape–paint, at least, being usually plentiful. But you've got to hand it to them–they may have been pretending to be poor, but they weren't pretending to be tough–those places were really cold in the winter.

It was 1979 when we moved to the city permanently. We were the last to move into 45 Lispenard Street, and the first to live in our space. TriBeCa was an inhospitable wilderness–cabs didn't circulate; the subway at Canal was rough after dark; there was no place to buy a newspaper or milk, and rust ran from the taps. This weeded out the riff-raff, and the rewards were high–besides having neighbors of substance, there were raw open spaces, and the wrought iron staircases and tiny hexagon tiles of the sweatshops and tenements of old New York.

There was nothing faux about the roughing it in our case–we had little, and when we finally managed to get a loft of our own it was as nice as we could afford to make it–which is to say, not really very nice by most standards, but it had a way about it. True, at first, our electricity was pirated in by an extension cord from the hall, but the place was gorgeous, with an undulating ceiling covering the beams in broad swells. It had been a textile workshop until right before we moved in–there were sewing needles, thousands of them, impossible to pick up. My dad rented a sander and did the floor, the glint of the remaining needles sanded into the wood adding sparkle. It took little to make it beautiful. But the industrial elegance-high ceilings, outsized windows–had its price. These were never meant to be lived in–it was like we were squatting, and the mice, at least, knew it and boldly held their ground. The heating system was whimsical, and the metal-framed windowpanes iced over from the inside in winter. A water heater was not yet within our reach. Until then, to bathe, we would take the chill off by heating a pot of water–not on a stove, but on an electric hot plate, and not our own hot plate either, but a borrowed one. Those first hot baths, finally possible in the bite of winter, were wonderful.

There were other luxuries too–it was a beautiful bathtub, claw-footed cast iron, set by tall windows looking out onto the silhouettes of water towers. My dad had traded a painting with Gil Shapiro of Urban Archaeology for the bathtub, plus some beautiful Belle Epoque doors for our small (but painted) sheet rock bedrooms, and the Corinthian capital of a column from a demolished bank–that was our table. A wooden icebox served as a liquor cabinet. There was no sofa–just canvas director's chairs in the studio spaces–we spent our evenings there, looking at paintings, much like people will watch tv.

Like the SoHo of the previous decade, 1980's TriBeCa was pioneer territory–not just in that we were the first to settle the region; the individuals were pioneers themselves, in their work. Our building was richly varied-there were several painters, fashion designer Willi Smith, Lynn and Robert Bianchi–photographers both, Kim Hastreiter of fabulous Paper–still a fold-out then, Ingo Maurer the lighting designer, and some very low-key European royalty–artists too. There was a deep camaraderie among everyone at 45 Lispenard. There was also high tolerance for the behavioral excesses that sometimes accompany a creative life–many of these exceeding the boldest imaginings. That gentle, indulgent attitude sweetened the whole of SoHo and TriBeCa.

Community was everything. New York City was a lawless place in the early '80's. All kids carried mug money. The Guardian Angels kept us safe-ish on the subway, and keeping us safe at home was, well, dad–dad and our neighbor, the artist Brooke Larsen–the largest guys in the building. There was no police presence in the neighborhood; I don't think they even knew anyone lived there. Most of the buildings on our street were not occupied after dark. When we had blackouts–that happened more often back then–the city became even more menacing. Dad and Brooke would hook up a single light bulb to a gasoline generator, and sit all night in the open doorway, each with a baseball bat, surveying the street, guarding the homestead.

In the meantime though, SoHo had started to change. There were a lot more galleries, and more people coming down to see them and buy art. Businesses catering to this new crowd opened up. The first Dean and Deluca–that one in the Woody Allen movie Manhattan with the skylights at the back–embodied the rough luxury that the neighborhood invented. It was an idyllic period–collectors came, careers advanced, and many of us still managed to keep the original romance–but with hot water, and there were new restaurants and cafes. Only working artists could live in the neighborhood–city zoning recognized SoHo's identity.

TriBeCa, geographically only 100 yards away, was a decade from the kind of smartening up that was going on north of the border (that being Canal–TriBeCa is the Triangle Below Canal). The border itself had an apocalyptic marker–the church of St. Alphonsus Liguori, on West Broadway just north of Canal, was sinking into an underground marsh. It was slowly being demolished, along with it the quaint way of life that pre-gentrification SoHo made possible. But we would still have it in TriBeCa, and later Dumbo, then Williamsburg, then Berlin, or Portland–anywhere people could still afford to live a creative life.

– *Amber Charmei* *2017*

Amber Charmei divides her time between Thessaloniki and Athens, writing on culture and art internationally, and sharing the richness of urban Mediterranean lifestyle.

CATALOG COURTESY OF

Louis K. Meisel

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PHOTOS

Aaron Johanson

CATALOG

Tim Liszt, LisZt Design

The artist with his 1983 drawing from the Cité Flores, Paris, France
photographed by Aaron Johanson

detail of 50 x 50 inch drawing, charcoal on paper

George D Green 1983

GEORGE D GREEN
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