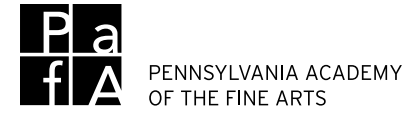


OBSERVATION AND INVENTION: THE SPACE OF DESIRE



PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY  
OF THE FINE ARTS



## OBSERVATION AND INVENTION: THE SPACE OF DESIRE

Curated by Scott Noel

January 21–April 6, 2014

Reception: Wednesday, February 12, 5–7 p.m.

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Samuel M. V. Hamilton Building

The School of Fine Arts Gallery, Gift of the Women's Board

128 N. Broad Street

Philadelphia, PA 19102

PAFA.EDU

## OBSERVATION AND INVENTION: THE SPACE OF DESIRE

Works of art are sometimes worthy to be recommended as beautiful. If I like the painting, the lyric, or the music, I try to describe its qualities in ways that make my pleasure sharable and concrete. Here, my description reaches for analogies in other fields of experience: the picture is vivid like noontday sunlight; the language flows or dances; the music evokes the emotion of lost love. If I'm especially sensitive to an art form, my enthusiasm for a work challenges me to address qualities which make the prose or choreography exemplary within the medium itself. So our responsiveness to beauty in art seems to point in at least two directions: toward an experience of the world and toward the world of artistic precedent.

When visual art became conscious of itself as an enterprise in ancient Greece it was first described as mimesis--the imitation of nature. At some point, what the Greeks called the phenomena--the fleeting realm of appearances--became the stimulus for works of sculpture and painting. The phenomenon most favored was the human body. Greek sculptors and painters set out to get as close to the appearance and presence of a specific human physique as their evolving analytic tools would permit. The study of the body as a coherent anatomical structure, traditions of proportion and visual organization derived from architecture and a deep awareness of sculptural precedent from Egypt, Persia, and Assyria all fed the effort to rescue a beautiful male or female body from the solvent of time in the ark of a work of art.

Human beings have always found beauty in the world like the beauty the Greeks located in the human body. But when beauty and mimesis are linked, the making of art plunges into history, becomes competitive and challenges practitioners to wrestle with questions of change and progress. Egypt produced isolated works which rivaled Greek naturalism, but without the teleological engine of mimesis, Egyptian art remained for millennia an unchanging vocabulary of forms. The dialectical tendency in Greek thought set in motion the perennial tides of change we experience in the contrast between Renaissance and Baroque, classical and romantic, modern and post-modern; a dynamic established between 450 and 250 BCE.

The artists in this exhibition are connected by their commitment to direct observation as a threshold to making paintings. The act of observation generates challenges and scruples in the making of pictures which connect the artists to the earliest practitioners engaged in the contest of mimesis. Appearances can be assessed and measured and the rightness of an assertion of color or proportion judged

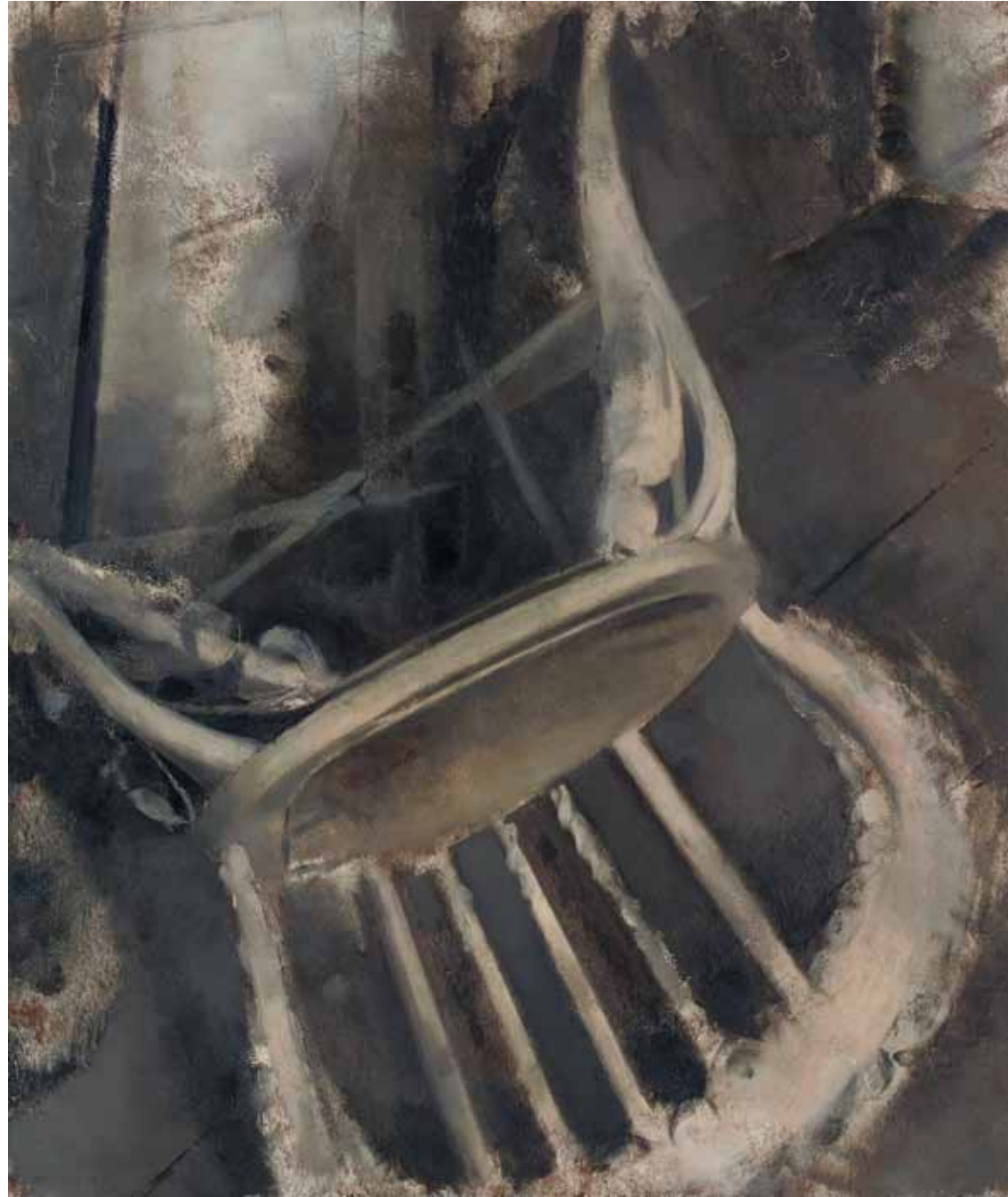
because the phenomena are infinite in their variety but not arbitrary. Somehow we recognize rightness and one of the attractions of observational painting is the way visual truth is experienced as surprise.

But what are the particular truths or beauties observation releases into art? A painter's insights awakened through observation and making are never general, but highly specific. A good picture specifies something about the conditions of relationship that prevail in an appearance and embodies these discoveries in the physical terms of the painting itself. A felt beauty in the world has to discover an equivalent beauty in terms of the medium. From the outset, mimesis couldn't be copying, but a reconfiguring of experience in terms of sculpture, painting, or drama. In this sense, observation--a close attention to the phenomena--has been necessarily imaginative.

One of America's greatest artists, Edwin Dickinson, devoted most of his practice to observational painting, but his work is rarely described as realist. Realism implies a set of expectations about the look of the world which Dickinson was at pains to challenge. *Chair, Skowhegan I* is scrupulous in its use of perspective and tonal modeling to picture an upside-down chair, but the outcome of the painting is not the rehearsal of a visual fact but release into an upside-down world with its own delightful and unforeseen physics. Dickinson was a generous, open-minded man, but he described realism as a "bum aim." He also speculated, at bottom, we all see the same information on our collective retinas. The variety and challenge which potentially exists in observational painting depends, in Dickinson's words, on "what a thought had done to the sight."

Edwin Dickinson is a unifying passion among the artists in the exhibition. George Nick and Lennart Anderson studied with Dickinson in the 1950's and a number of other artists in the show learned about Dickinson through these influential masters. The younger painters in the show might humorously be thought the great-grandchildren of Dickinson's influence. Influence in art is an elusive thing because no one in the show really paints like Edwin Dickinson. The more obvious influences might be Degas, Morandi, Vuillard, Lopez-Garcia or Fairfield Porter. Dickinson's real influence is the poetic space his work discovers within the strange rigors of observational painting. This space was something the Greeks first glimpsed when they enshrined mimesis as an aspiration while recognizing the interpretation of nature as entangled with the contingency of an individual point of view and fraught with the longing for beauty. In art, I've come to call this intersection of self and world the space of desire.

Scott Noel



Edwin Walter Dickinson, *Chair, Skowhegan I*, 1956, oil on board, 15 1/2 × 12 1/2 in.

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia



George Nick, *Folded Avenger*, 2006, oil on linen, 40 × 50 in.

Collection of the artist



Lennart Anderson, *Portrait of Barbara S*, 1976–77, oil on canvas, 72 1/8 × 60 1/4 in.

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia



David Campbell, *2nd Attempt at My Future Brain*, 2013, oil on linen, 26 × 34 in.

Collection of the artist





Neil Riley, *Winter Grey*, 2010, oil on panel, 8 × 8 in.

Private collection



Brian Rego, *Millwood Field*, 2013, oil on board, 14 × 20 in.

Collection of the artist



Ben Kamihira, *Fantasy II*, 1976–85, oil on canvas, 50 × 36 in.

Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia



Carolyn Pyfrom, *Blue Self-portrait*, 2012, oil on linen, 22 × 18 in.

Collection of the artist





Michael Ananian, *Presto!*, 2010, casein on paper, 22 × 26 ½ in.

Collection of the artist



Victoria Barnes, *Circus*, 2013, oil on canvas, 24 × 30 in.

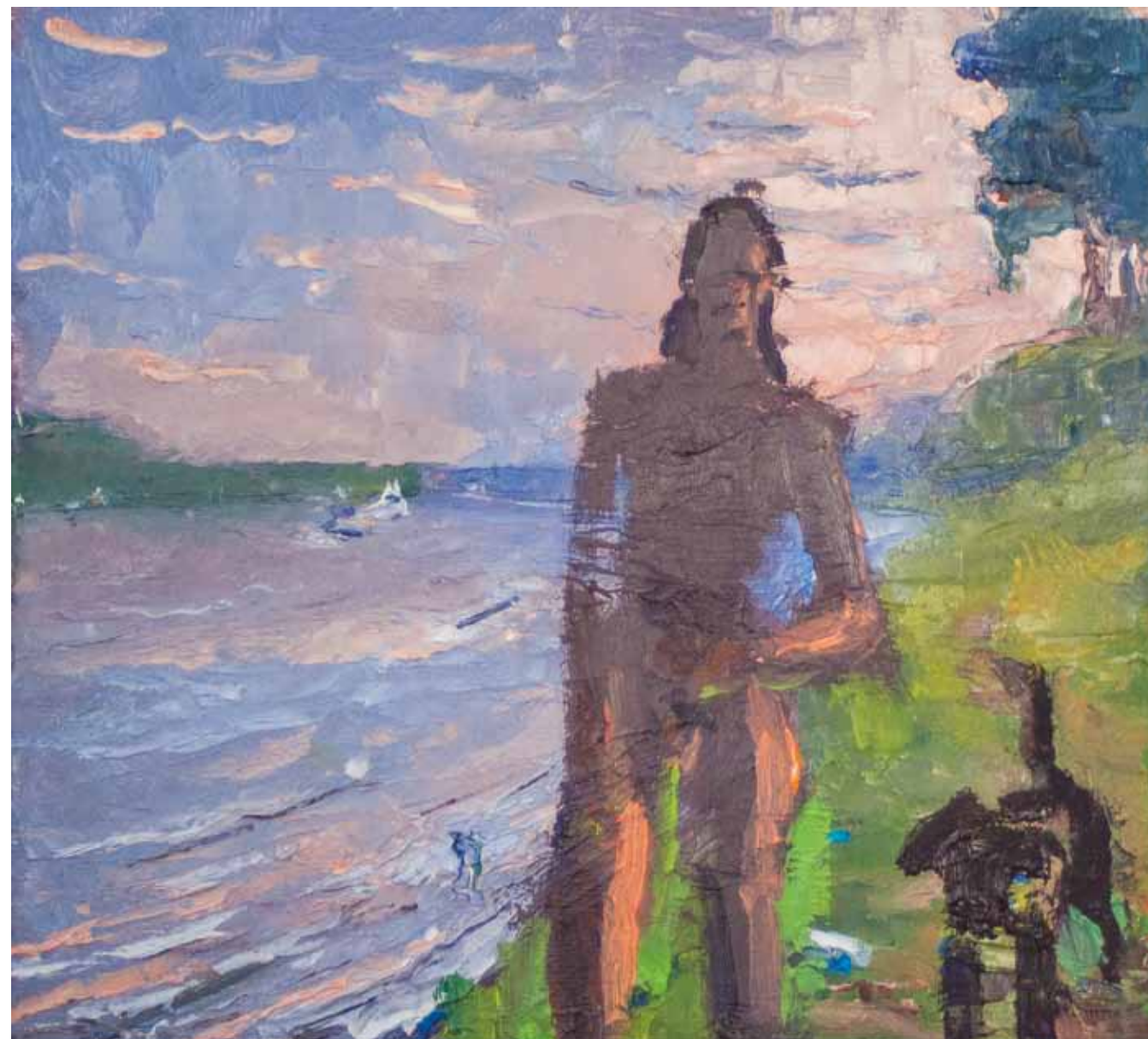
Collection of the artist





Frank Galuszka, *Untitled (Santa Cruz Coast)*, 2003, oil on canvas, 18 × 24 in.

Collection of the artist



Aaron Lubrick, *Dan Walking His Dog*, 2013, oil on panel, 14 × 15 in.

Collection of the artist





Philip Geiger, *Noa Asleep*, 2012, oil on board, 18 × 24 in.

Collection of the artist



Peter Van Dyck, *Cotton Street at Night*, 2013, oil on linen, 24 × 30 in.

Collection of the artist





Elizabeth Geiger, *Night Music*, 2012, oil on linen, 40 × 28 in.

Collection of the artist



Thomas Walton, *A Look Back*, 2013, oil on linen, 22 × 25 in.

Collection of the artist





Mark Green, *Figure (Icebergs)*, 2012, oil on linen, 60 × 72 in.

Collection of the artist



David Jewell, *Social Media Failure (This isn't the Zack you are looking for so stop taking cell phone pictures of me)*, 2013, oil on linen, 16 × 22 in. (work in progress)

Collection of the artist



Scott Noel, *Telemachus and the Sirens*, 2011, oil on linen, 78 × 90 in.

Courtesy of Gross McCleaf Gallery, Philadelphia, PA



John Lee, *Woodshop*, 2013, oil on linen, 16 × 12 in.

Collection of the artist





Tim Kennedy, *July*, 2007, oil on linen, 48 × 56 in.

Collection of the artist



Erin Raedeke, *The Party is Over*, 2013, oil on board, 24 × 24 in.

Collection of the artist





Matt Klos, *120 Vessels*, 2012–13, oil on panel, 30 × 48 in.

Collection of the artist



Andrew Patterson-Tutschka, *Bus Stop Near Ruhstaller Building*, 2014, oil on canvas, 24 × 14 in.

Collection of the artist





Eve Mansdorf, *Crouch*, 2007, oil on linen, 48 × 60 in.

Collection of the artist



Tim Conte, *Tender Line, After the Rain*, 2010, oil on linen, 19 × 22 in.

Collection of the artist

Edwin Dickinson (1891-1978) is a unique figure in American art. His avowed passion for El Greco manifests in the dream-like meetings of figures and objects in his large compositions and suggest an authentic feeling for the grand manner in baroque painting. Dickinson's faster paintings of landscapes inspired a later generation of romantics, the abstract expressionists, and his work has been admired by perceptive sensibilities as diverse as Lloyd Goodrich, Willem de Kooning, Fairfield Porter and John Ashberry. Jack Tworkov thought him the greatest American painter.

George Nick (b 1927) was a student of Edwin Dickinson and a friend of Fairfield Porter. Nick has painted out-of-doors in cities around the world for more than fifty years, pushing the possibilities of direct painting in contemporary art to a level equalled only in the work of Lucian Freud and Antonio Lopez-Garcia.

Lennart Anderson (b. 1928), an immensely influential painter and teacher, has made the achievements of Poussin, Ingres, Degas and Dickinson resonate with those of Gorky and de Kooning in the complex project of synthesizing observation and invention in his figure paintings and still lifes.

David Campbell (b. 1974) received his Certificate and MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and teaches at Arcadia University, Glenside, PA. He lives in Media, PA.

Neil Riley (b. 1957 ) was educated at The Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD, and Boston University. He exhibits with Keny Galleries in Columbus, OH.

Brian Rego (b.1980) received his MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and lives in Columbia, SC, and teaches at the University of South Carolina and Benedict College.

Ben Kamihira (1925-2004), born in Yakima, Washington, painted and taught for his working life in Philadelphia becoming one of the very few convincing figure painters in the United States. He produced a body of work which illuminates the strangeness of his forebear, Eakins, and the empiricism of Dickinson.

Carolyn Pyfrom (b.1971) divides her time between rural Alabama and Philadelphia, teaching at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts as an adjunct faculty member.

Michael Ananian (b.1964) has lived in Greensboro, NC, since 1994, where he is an Associate Professor of Painting at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Victoria Barnes (b.1978) has an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. She lives with her husband and two children in Philadelphia, PA, and teaches at Drexel University.

Frank Galuszka (b. 1947) studied at Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA, and is a professor of painting at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He exhibits at the Winfield Gallery, Carmel, CA.

Aaron Lubrick (b. 1982) received his MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and now lives in Louisville, KY, and teaches painting and drawing at the Kentucky School of Art.

Philip Geiger (b.1956) resides in Charlottesville, VA. He is represented by Tibor De Nagy, NYC.

Peter Van Dyck (b.1978) lives in Philadelphia, PA, and is an assistant professor of drawing and painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Elizabeth Geiger (b.1967) lives and works at her home in Charlottesville, VA, with her husband Philip, their two children, and three chickens.

Thomas Walton (b.1980) has an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He resides in Philadelphia, PA, works in the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, and maintains an active studio practice.

Mark Green (b.1958) resides in Tarrytown, NY, teaches at the Hackley School, and is represented by the Rosenfeld Gallery, Philadelphia.

David Jewell (b.1976) resides in Athens, Ohio.

Scott Noel (b. 1955), has painted and taught in Philadelphia since 1978, and currently teaches at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts where he finds pleasure in the pictures of Eakins and a portrait of David by one of the Peales.

John Lee (b. 1969) is a graduate of the PAFA Certificate Program who received his BFA from UPenn and MFA from Indiana University. He currently lives and teaches in Williamsburg, VA.

Tim Kennedy (b. 1954) received his BFA from Carnegie Mellon University, an MFA from Brooklyn College and has attended the Skowhegan School. He is a Senior Lecturer for Painting at Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, and exhibits his work at First Street Gallery, NYC.

Erin Raedeke (b.1977) received her MFA from American University, her BFA from Indiana University, and currently resides in Gaithersburg, MD.

Matt Klos (b.1979) currently lives in Baltimore, MD, where he paints and teaches at Anne Arundel Community College.

Andrew Patterson-Tutschka (b. 1979) has an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He teaches at Shasta College, Redding, CA and lives in Sacramento, CA.

Eve Mansdorf (b.1955) received her BA from Cornell University and her MFA in Painting from Brooklyn College. She is an Associate Professor of Painting at Indiana University, in Bloomington, IN, and has shown her work at Gallery Henschel and First Street Gallery, NYC.

Tim Conte (b.1977) has an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and lives with his wife and two children in Philadelphia, PA.



Perceptual Painters is a group of painters who share a common core of sensibilities. The group was formed by Brian Rego with David Campbell in 2008. These two Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts educated painters created the initial nucleus of the group among fellow MFA graduates at PAFA including Andrew Patterson Tutschka, husband and wife Tim Conte and Victoria Barnes, Aaron Lubrick, and John Lee. All of these painters worked closely with painter and PAFA professor Scott Noel. Scott Noel joined the group in 2009, along with fellow PAFA professors (and married couple) Carolyn Pyfrom and Peter VanDyck in 2011. Another segment of the group includes Neil Riley, a professor hailing from Columbus College of Art and Design and his students, Aaron Lubrick, David Jewell, and Matt Klos. The most recent additions to the group include Tom Walton and Erin Raedeke who were invited to join in 2012. Tom was a student of Scott Noel's at PAFA and Erin was a fellow undergraduate student with Victoria Barnes and Tim Conte at Indiana University. Since the formation of Perceptual Painters, the group has been dedicated to painting, exhibiting, and teaching.

