

BASED ON A TRUE STORY
An Exhibition of Painting

by

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Abstract

The paintings in *Based on a True Story* are at once illogical and concrete – implying both failure and the hope of figurative and architectural construction. Developed as a kind of psychological landscape, they suggest a depiction of contemporary societal / political, and environmental instability.

Neither true nor false: the paintings are spaces in which one may become dislocated, anxious, and unsettled. Inclusion of architectural fenestration suggests one's fractured location and continually shifting ground. Furthermore, literary and cinematic fiction plays an important role to the work in that they both suggest landscapes that may never exist literally. Fiction is also indicative of the close relationship between the utopia and dystopia as environments for escape. This sense of balance or lack thereof, becomes important to the development of the theatrically absurd, so that an audience may be implicated as the tragic and comic active participant.

While investigating the work of Peter Doig, Stephen Bush, and Dana Schutz, for example, I suggest that the trail of the painter's hand becomes a necessary mode of entrance into the work, offering a closer relationship to the act of painting as another form of escape. This gestural mark-making runs counter to current pushes toward technology, and suggests the re-emergence of painting as a primary approach in which to investigate the development of personal space and experience.

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Introduction

Our existence as individual human beings is defined, in part, by the personal choices we make. These can help describe the space around us, and how we interact within it. The people we meet, the strong relationships we choose to keep, and the ones we choose not to keep – all are part of the human condition. Personal difficulties within society are approached with differing degrees of caution, and ultimately, our endurance is determined by how we invent our lives. It will always be crucial to survive within our fictions, regardless of how uncertain the present or future may be. We live in a time of global instability in the social, political, and financial spheres. It is this tumultuous and continuous shift that allows for personal introspection if we are alert to its significance.

If the current global situation is full of uncertainty, many will suffer under the emotional or financial stress until they make considerable change to their lives. Often this change materializes far too late to make any difference. Despite this, there are also those who thrive in dire situations and are able to retain ease and normalcy. The majority, however, might find their solace in flight via the cinema, literature, or the internet. “What we have established ... are systems of communal cohabitation that tend to isolate the individual. The car, the telephone, radio and television, the Internet, even modern dance, make it possible for the individual to remain ever more within his own space”¹. These routes reflect a utopian ideal where people are allowed diversion. Mitchell Kapor, the current chairman of *Second Life*², stated that people with a large social investment online were “people who feel they don't fit ... or who were impelled by

¹ Bachmann, Gideon. *The Quest For Cultural Identity*. Kinema, Fall 1997. pg. 4

² *Second Life* is a leading virtual reality where one may develop an alternative personality.

some kind of dream, who may be outsiders to whatever mainstream they are coming from”³. Modes such as this have become a very individual means of fulfillment. Perhaps a social or emotional disparity loses significance when one is immersed into a utopian environment. It could very well be that it is quite the opposite: compounding the problems the longer they are not attended to. However, every utopian ideal is, by its escapist nature, evading the very reality it needs to confront.

My work is influenced by fiction and paint, and one that describes moments of an alternative reality. Often, a novel will contain subject matter that transports a reader emotionally so that one is able experience what is written. In 1975 Jeffery Meyer wrote: “By looking at paintings with the same attention and intensity ... we can attempt to see what they saw and make that ideal correspondence between their visual images while writing and those in our minds while reading.”⁴ It is vital to experience painting, albeit visually, in similar ways: by immersing oneself into a moment of time and space.

I am influenced by contemporary visual artists such as Peter Doig, Stephen Bush, and Dana Schutz who create work with the hope to produce some kind of experiential displacement: something strange, disorderly, or unfamiliar. The work of these artists implies dislocation, yet paradoxically remains representative of human nature. Alternative realities facilitate a kind of

³ *Second Life Wikipedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Life

⁴ Meyers, Jeffrey. *Painting and the Novel*. Manchester, UK. Manchester University Press, 1975, pg. 1.

personal displacement. It is my interest to depict, through paint, a mirrored representation of the anxiety and uncertainty of this dislocation.

The paintings included in *Based on a True Story*⁵ focus on presenting theatrical environments. Each work describes, simultaneously, a utopian and dystopian space in which balance is suggested yet cannot occur in reality. In all of my works I include a technological and human presence, while alluding to a surrealist aesthetic. Situations within each canvas often include materials that represent thin flat walls like cardboard cut-outs or false dividers or two dimensional planes where matter logically cannot exist. Within my compositions I use devices such as open gaps in structures to imply collapse, as well as areas that may seem to imitate a kind of glitch: those which can be applied to “all types of systems including human organisms and nature.”⁶ Correspondingly, similar constructions within the work suggest growth and a kind of biological ingredient with painterly illusions of water, plant-life, and living flesh. The two, in relation, create material conflict and convergence: an encounter between the living and the dead.

The paintings included in this exhibition speak of both the illogical and the logical in terms of constructed space. Objects simultaneously lay within a foreground, middle ground, and background. Depth is often represented by atmospheric lighting such as glowing patches of light yellow or white and spatial considerations are emphasized through use of colour and architectural structures. Horizons are frequently decipherable by change of colour, and it

⁵ *Based on a True Story* is derived from the opening credits often seen in film; as a form of disclaimer or preparation before viewing or reading, and thus affirms the influence of cinematic and literary fiction.

⁶ *Glitch*, Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glitch>

becomes obvious that what is viewed is a type of simultaneous interior / exterior landscape. All of this occurs within an ambiguous, puzzling location that suggests mystery of place through unstable or shifting ground. This dislocation is further implied by the way in which the works are rendered. Passages in my works carry a hint of Philip Guston's later paintings, in that his paintings "were ... cartoon-like ... but [he] rephrases them in a type of caricature dating to his childhood imitations of comic strips" and which also "have a strange baroque grandeur."⁷ For example, in *Goodness Gracious* (fig. 1), I use an ambiguous central shape that carries with it a kind of black humour of defeat or surrender and proposes: why is it a part of this situation and what will happen to it? In many of the works, there is a struggle, yet some may seem resigned to death.

⁷ Museum of Modern Art, *350 Works from MoMA*, Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 2004. pg. 265.



(fig. 1) *Goodness Gracious*, 2009. 40" x 40", oil on canvas

I consider my paintings as representative of contemporary landscapes of the uncertain environment in which we live as well as the struggle to find a sense of calm amidst moments of confusion. I align my practice with Jed Perl's critical interpretation as being "a realist account of surrealist possibility"⁸. It is familiar and disfunctional territory that is at once seductive, agitated, and which ultimately becomes an experiment with both the limitations and possibility of painting itself.

A parallel exploration of paint is seen in the works' illogical space and architectural structure through washes of geometric forms that are in competition with shadows, perspective, impasto brushwork, and areas that are scraped away. Furthermore, gestural mark-making is combined with life-like mechanics in which gravity and mass are depicted as logical and concrete. A comparable degree of pictorial gravity mimics the world in which we live. Colour (which is discussed in greater detail later) becomes a necessary mode to represent the environment's artificiality. The combination of unnatural colours in a natural landscape helps define the fictive interior and exterior scenes, not to mention contradict it. The paradox this creates has immediate links to surrealism where objects and forms exist in disjointed and atypical geography. Each of my paintings speaks of certain truths while eliminating reason through colour, architecture, and in the poet Louis Aragon's words, the "irrational side of existence."⁹

⁸ Perl, Jed. "Formalism and Its Discontents", *The New Republic*, September 12, 2005, pg. 33

⁹ Aragon, Louis. *Surrealist Manifesto*. Pg. 215, 1924

Foundation

The traditions of landscape and figuration are increasingly important to my work as it offers a dense history and vocabulary enabling me to stage and invent my own painted scenarios. Francis Bacon, for example, has given me an awareness of paint handling to create psychological tension within a landscape. Nathan Redwood has amplified my ability to paint tragic and comic events within an environment while suggesting the viewer is also a participant. The inclusion of the impossible, such as a false sense of scale between the objects rendered within a work – a horizon pushed forward or the use of colour as a direct contradiction to atmospheric lighting – I use these painterly devices to insinuate a form of contemporary psychological landscape. The introduction of figures adds to the painting's psychological tension, further complicating these landscapes and implicating an audience through association. I interpret, rather than translate, imaginative spaces and the characters that inhabit the paintings as I work.

Painting is a process of active improvisation that becomes more and more demanding as the work evolves, “requiring the full cooperation of the participating ego, even when the ego does not understand immediately.”¹⁰ With this in mind, intuition and invention become vital in establishing the groundwork of a painting. Each work is as spontaneous as the drawings that initiate it. It is a working methodology that begins and does not finish until I feel the painting will describe what I believe to be the moments that define an apex of anxiety and uncertainty. These moments eventually appear as results of inventive painterly choices.

¹⁰ Weaver, Rix. *The Old Wise Woman: A Study of Active Imagination*. Boston: Shambhala, 1973, pg. 3

Contradiction is an important aspect to my painting practice. The notion of deep space is truncated by its very opposite: areas of paint flatten the space to create a visual paradox. Areas that are expected to recede in space are compressed evoking visual uncertainty. These flat planes are frequently painted with a blending of two or more colours that mimic a landscape at dawn or a dusk sunset or the flattened expanse of a body of water. Within the boundary of what is considered illusory or abstract, inventiveness is able to take place. A coloured wash may only be decided upon because of a previous layer, or an impasto figure may not appear until the final stages of the work. Thus, as mentioned above, my ego does not participate immediately, waiting for the moment it is forced into action. In this case the moment is the spontaneity of performing in a studio.

In the painting *Giving Love to the Finest* (fig. 2), the bottom half of the work is painted in gestural blues, greens, and yellows. At the beginning stages of this work, this section of paint was the sky. The choice to convert this area to mimic a sea rather than a sky, simply by flipping the canvas vertically, demonstrates a shift in choice and the impulsive nature of my practice. The strokes themselves then oppose the space they are meant to depict. The lighter yellow strokes at the edge of the horizon are on top of the darker green strokes near the bottom, causing an illogical disparity in the depth. In *Giving Love to the Finest*, I have placed on a table or pedestal an ambiguous form that may represent food, earth, or trash. The trophy-like presentation literally elevates the subject for an audience to admire or chastise.



(fig. 2) *Giving Love to the Finest*, 2009. 30" x 30", oil on canvas

Similarly, the object/figure/food item that is placed atop the small dining table or pedestal began as a considerably thick area of painting. Thick globs of Payne's Grey and Burnt Umber were dragged over copious amounts of Titanium White straight from the tube; the succeeding decision was its removal while retaining the residue of what was previously painted. The hybridization of many objects in a painting also comes from a working and reworking of a particular area so that only small remnants of the original object remain upon completion of a work. In the same sense, legs that once hung from the central shape soon became support structures to the 'ground' so that the depths of the environment would flatten forward to the pedestal. This was simply because of a choice to end the hanging limbs at one level horizon rather than four. I understand my destination as a painter with particular interests, however, each character, experience, and landscape changes en route. Getting from point A – a white blank field – to point B – the story, settings, and characters that emerge on the painted surface are the detours that are negotiated en route to completion. These changes occur more frequently directly on the painting surface than in preliminary drawings.

On fresh coats of smooth gesso, the painting begins with a single colour; evoking the vastness of a farm landscape, the reaches of an immense ocean, or even the darkened enormity of the sky. The horizontal or vertical orientation situates itself during the process. This first base colour on a section of the canvas serves as the skeleton on which all succeeding strokes hang. It is as though the landscape and the architectural elements within it are slowly built in sections by a team of individuals rather than a single architect; constructing items that both "teem with life

and expire simultaneously”¹¹ within a contradictory space. In addition, the mark of my brush and hand becomes evident in each stroke so that an audience can follow the same trajectory in the construction of a painting as I do. This suggests that one is able to enter into the work by two methods: the literal entry and exit points of the environment, and the personal association with painting’s visceral nature.

¹¹ Brown, Sarah. (Editor, *Ottawa Magazine*) *Subtle Bodies*, Scott Everingham review in *Ottawa Magazine* 'Best of Fall Issue', October 2008

Rhizomes and the Ambiguous

All these paintings include imagery that sits within a rich language between abstraction and representation. Dore Ashton wrote that Philip Guston's paintings "were unstrung by the stacks of dismembered bodies and odd shoes strewn in a bleak no-man's land, the dread visions offered in a style heavily inflected with caricature,"¹² proclaiming that an apparent randomness was at hand in the choice of his content. There is no obstacle to using banal subject matter such as sleeping, hiking, sailing, sitting, reading, dying, or digesting. All of the aforementioned become valid subject matter for work in that all are culled from experiences, both in reality and alternative spaces. This allows for an inexhaustible source of imagery from which I can base inventive worlds that flirt with a balance involving the real and the fictitious.

In *Nominated* (fig. 3), a central form teeters on two linguini-thin rods that are both part of a grill below and the wrappings of the form beneath a plastic/denim sheet (I mention two materials for this particular area because the materials and textures are ambiguous: I am not partial to either). It stirs with activity, restlessness, and perpetual movement. Uneasiness and discomfort are better terms to suit something that could possibly be a horse on a carousel, an animal on a slow rotisserie, or a plastic snow-globe. It holds specific qualities in its shape, form, and specificity as something at once living and dead.

¹² Ashton, Dore. *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*. University of California Press, 1990, pg. 6



(fig. 3) *Nominated*, 2009. 44" x 40", oil on canvas

Post-structuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari used the term ‘rhizome’ to describe “theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation.”¹³ This notion of the rhizome helps give access to the painterly information offered in this work. When, for example, an image so specific as a pineapple is broken down to its most fundamental shape, then placed out of context, it acquires an alternative significance: another entry point if you will. Similar signs of entry and exit points exist in the work that suggests fenestration in the structures themselves. Walls and beams assume the role of the organic; that may unfurl, expand, or collapse in an attempt to extend the notion of the rhizome to all of the structures described in the work.

Stephen Bush, an Australian painter, commits to describing a similar strategy in his abstracted architectural paintings. In his work, tents, cabins, and summer get-a-ways evoke fear and anxiety, simply by colour and application alone. These structures act as metaphors for the solitary so that they represent “nature as an expression of the psyche,” and that they “stake out patches of human territory. The windowless cabins feel not like symbols of contemplative consciousness but rude hideaways for the asocial.”¹⁴ The lushness of his work attracts viewers into his painterly process. Suddenly, fear replaces admiration of the work, then back again, and again in a fascinating cycle of reversals. The extendibility of interpretation, suggested by the notion of rhizome, becomes a very important aspect in my work in that it is crucial to not depict specifically much of anything, so much as to retain the ‘suspension of disbelief’ as a

¹³ Cousin, G. 2005. "Learning in Cyberspace." In Land, R. and Bayne, S. (eds.), *Education in Cyberspace* (London: Routledge Falmer), pp. 117-129

¹⁴ McLister, Nell. *ArtForum*, January 2006

means to preserve mystery and variability. This sanctions endless reading into the intrinsic meaning of particular objects.

Judith Nesbitt wrote of Peter Doig's work as "a disorienting experience of perpetual scene-shifting; we find ourselves circling across different terrains and domains, where locations and situations seem to recur, at once familiar and strange."¹⁵ An invented world dislocates and generates curiosity. It is fascinating how an image or environment can obtain opposite experiential qualities through application, colour, and context within a work. In Doig's 2001 work *100 Years Ago* a man with a rock-band tank-top sits within a red canoe on a large expanse of fetid water. We "become lost in his paintings because of their many incidents, which introduce material tensions and ambiguities to a general theme otherwise common-place – a suburban house, a fisherman in the wilderness, a pedestrian in the city."¹⁶

In my work, the ambiguous forms suggest a disturbance of memory as if the remnants of a time and place were pieced together, yet never materialized. The lack of information allows the work to take on forms of abstraction, and can be likened to the work of Nicola Tyson whose figures are both "visceral and immediate ... as if they were born directly from her

¹⁵ Nesbitt, Judith. *Peter Doig*. Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 2008, pg. 9

¹⁶ Nesbitt, Judith. *Peter Doig*. Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 2008, pg. 35

unconscious.”¹⁷ Non-specificity in painting assumes an open-ended freshness when paired with the imagination, given that both support and sustain interpretation.

In the work for this exhibition I wanted to play on a sense of experiential shifting. Many of the works include rigid linear forms of architecture, simplified mountains, roadways, or waterways that are based on interpretations of some reality. Furthermore, some constructed shapes blend into the organic, and vice-versa through often contradictory use of paint. Many of the paintings include washes painted as walls holding up what seems like a heavier, denser structure. The notion of the rhizome is also inherent in the architectural structures of my work: the inert assumes the same characteristics as the organic. The fenestration within the work offers a literal point of departure from reality, and also suggests an entry and exit point through the use of structural gaps, windows, flaps, and passageways.

In *Comfort Precipice* (fig. 4) for example, between long strands of dark brushstroke, is an open gap of pink – simultaneously pushing and pulling space, yet offering an entrance or exit. It takes on the description of a landscape, skyscape, and seascape, which are continuously in flux with each other, each seeming to visually define the other. The gap reads as a sky, yet looks like the icing from a wedding cake. It sits behind dark curtains, but is also a hovering pink blanket. As an accumulation of varied scales and spaces, confusion acts to intensify the visual experience, and again refers to the idea of the rhizome in both the natural and the artificial.

¹⁷ Brooks, Amra. “Nicola Tyson at Marc Foxx Gallery”, *ArtForum International*, Summer 2007. Vol. 45, Issue 10, pg. 505.



(fig. 4) *Comfort Precipice*, 2008. 68" x 50", oil on canvas

Creating layering within a work “is a much more real way of looking at things, because it is the way the eye looks; you are constantly looking through things, seeing the foreground and the background at the same time.”¹⁸ Likewise, Clayton Merrell, using figurative hybridism, states that his paintings of 1997 “focus attention on the contexts in which they took place: hybrid worlds with extreme spatial disjuncture, with visionary holes – with sudden rifts and warping ... spaces that vacillate between worlds, between earth and heaven, between symbolic orders.”¹⁹ In essence, there need not be a defining formula for the environments that are created. All matter should act as elements that define the experiential. The landscapes in this body of work allow for an exploration of illusion, lack of logic, and the extent of imagination; they investigate the faux realities and modes of escape.

¹⁸ Doig, Peter. *The Times*, 5 February 1996, pg. 14.

¹⁹ Merrell, Clayton. *Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Painting*. Liverpool University Press + Tate Liverpool, 2003, pg 216.

The Stage

A stage set, or theatre, is a space of performance and an alternative place for one to adopt another persona or character. It also puts one under a spotlight as a presentation of oneself. This platform could also evoke feelings of anxiousness linked to performing before an audience. The use of the stage, spotlights, and curtains – yet through their very deconstruction as mentioned in the previous chapter – is suggestive of the paradox that the audience may be both audience to a performance while becoming implicated in the event simultaneously.

The existence of a back stage is also implied through broken spaces and open breaches through curtains. As well, I mean to use a device known as the *fourth wall*, a theatrical term meaning an imaginary wall that separates the actor and the audience of a stage play. It acts as an imaginary invisible plane between the audience and the performer through which the audience views the action, and “it signifies the ‘suspension of disbelief’ in the audience, who pretends that the characters in the story are real ‘living’ beings in their own world, and not merely performers on a stage.”²⁰ It not only relates to the scenario at hand, but by forcing a relationship between viewer and painterly mark. As the artist, I become equally a significant part of this theatre since they are investigations of the autonomy of paint; their creation being a form of drama in itself.

²⁰ Keil, Connie. *The Fourth Wall*, Pg. 1, October 2004



(fig. 5) *Fourth Life Steady Simmer*, 2009. 38" x 33", oil on canvas

In *Fourth Life Steady Simmer* (fig. 5) a strong staging technique is implied with the use of lighting, perspective lines, and platforms that flank a central pool. Above it, lit by a strange beam from the top of the painting, is a construction not unlike goal-posts or a tightrope. On it stands the form of an animal, an icon, a number, a pork chop, or perhaps suggestive of an *avatar*²¹ (the digital replacement for one's physical presence as though it is participating in a performance or act). Along the sides are four sections: two that are dark red, and two that are a glowing orange. Each section is meant to mimic the elements of a stage.

I use a recurring form, in my paintings, that makes an architectural reference to the highest point of a theatre or stage. The draped curtain commonly known, and somewhat suitably termed, as a 'teaser' or a 'tormentor', is placed behind the 'grand drape'. Likewise, the 'teaser' is seen in *Use Your Inside Voice* (fig. 6): two pale orange curtains hang to segment space, but which also suggest that the bottom area of aquatic green is much flatter than the colour implies. On the left side, the curtain meets at the horizon. On the right side, it hangs higher from the lower half of the painting, implying the lack of attachment. The 'teaser' is not the front or rear drape, but hangs conspicuously at the sides in the middle areas of a theatrical stage. In effect, they are used as framing techniques to separate not only the foreground and background of the work, but the audience and the stage itself.

²¹ Defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (and a contribution in December 2008) as a graphical representation of a person or character in a computer-generated environment, *esp.* one which represents a user in an interactive game or other setting, and which can move about in its surroundings and interact with other characters.



(fig. 6) *Use Your Inside Voice*, 2009. 30" x 32", oil on canvas

The construction of apparently real imagery is a direct paradox to how illustrative and painterly the elements are. Each work includes a manipulation of a physical place: choosing between sheen washes against gestural waterways, or linear forms against thick impasto strokes. An audience is invited to experience differences in application meant to amplify the importance of the paint itself. This choice is an integral part of my image-making process, and is an elemental way for me to produce a unique, and uncertain, scenario. Furthermore, the inventive and impulsive paint application takes on a leading role in terms of materiality and variety: the experience becomes sensual and a part of the painting that does not divide the audience with 'teasers' or 'grand drapes'.

The Paint

Painting, above all, remains an act of discovery and it informs so much of the way I work. While I rely on the history of painting to inform my skills, I also rely on my experiences and surroundings to inform how I am able to manipulate the content. It seems that, even as my environment breaks apart under political and social stress, I find a constant in the production of these alternative environments. The act of performing in a studio to mix colours, to stretch canvas by hand, and to sign the back as a final motion in the completion of a work, to me, is also a way to escape the reality in which I live. As the artist, each of my works becomes an experiment in suggesting unique utopias, not only as my personal flight, but as an experience for the audience.

Colour is arrived at by experimentation within sketchbooks and in the act of mixing on a large sheet of glass. All colours are chosen to create a balance of the natural and artificial using an equal amount of florescent oranges and calm earthy browns. Altering environments with unnatural colour schemes becomes essential in establishing mood throughout the works. I use artificial colours of the sky, sea, and earth to both extend space beyond the painting frame and push it forward towards the viewer. Deep space thus converses with the flatness and ambiguousness of the language of abstraction.

Paint is descriptive in its application in that the solid structures of a heavy form are painted in thick swathes while weightless lengths of ribbon are nearly insubstantial. These

choices suggest formal consideration during the process of a work. The colour is often contradictory to this description in that its unnaturalness frequently implies a form of fakery. In my work, distant skyscapes contain pale peaches, peppermint greens, and faded yellows that resemble the oranges of cheddar cheese or pudding. Additionally, landscapes may include toxic cobalt blues, darkened blood reds, and the silvery grey of a water reflection. They are colours that are inherent in life, yet are also linked to a heightened reality.

As well, movement is elemental to my painting process as it can often become a meditative act, and one which extends the life of the paint on the brush. Extended lengths of gestural brushwork suggest impulse and immediacy as seen in the upper sections of *Comfort Precipice*, and the drapes of *The Easy Way Out of Collapse* (fig. 7). In *The Working Thermometer Gamma Crown* (fig. 8) for example, dirty oranges cozy up to clean pinks, browns suffocate browns, and baby blues are gingerly dragged over by thick swathes of black. The result articulates the importance of movement not only during the application, but in the resulting image. The real and the artificial; the true and the false, increasingly push the works towards the realm of painterly abstraction. It is ever more important for me to depict an unconventional environment as seductively as possible while trying to reflect the reality of global uncertainty. While there may be an avoidance of this uncertainty, it is my hope that my imaginative environments take the place of one's utopia, yet simultaneously acts as a mirror to one's anxieties.



(fig. 7) *The Easy Way Out of Collapse*, 2009. 30" x 35", oil on canvas



(fig. 8) *The Working Thermometer Gamma Crown*, 2009. 34" x 31", oil on canvas

Conclusion

It seems continuously necessary to search for a means of personal dislocation so that we can be afforded the time to escape. A dislocation should not always be considered such an unpleasant or unsettling experience, yet often carries with it that reading. I believe my paintings are mirrors of the signifiers within our current social, political, and cultural realm that ultimately suggest perpetual shift, reconstruction, and regeneration.

Individuals participate in personalized fictions, yet it is infrequent they commit energy to appreciate the strangeness that surrounds them. Life remains so normal that they forget to imagine; they forget that they're a part of a personal theatre. As someone who puts great faith in imagination, I feel as though those who are unable to find enjoyment in fiction, even through a photograph or a strange predicament, have not looked hard enough, and simply may lack the imagination to do so.

What I construct in my paintings, I've discovered, came from early sources. The bookmarks of my youth can be described by the creation of fictional environments: indoor and outdoor constructions that I was afforded by living on the doorstep of nature. I surrounded myself with literary and physical modes that allowed for easy escape from the reality of my childhood. Adolescence was similar in that frequent travel and introspection became methods of escape. Only now, having reached the apex of my practice thus far, have I realized that a reliance on fictional situations and predicaments, as well as imagination, remain a crucial part of

my being. I find that my painting practice has become the ultimate method to contribute to one's lack of imaginative process and I feel it is significant, as a painter, to possess the opportunity to do so.

Peter Doig stated that, "by making a painting, or by looking at a painting, we [try] to get away from the ordinary,"²² and entering into my studio each day remains, to me, part of the extraordinariness of life.

²² Doig, in Bonaventura, 'Peter Doig: A Hunter in the Snow', p.14. Here, Doig drew an analogy between the use of hallucinogens and the experience of painting as means to leave the ordinary behind.

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