

**WE ARE SEVEN ARTISTS
(SOMETIMES MORE)
WHO LIVE AND PAINT IN
NEW YORK.**

PAINTING IN NEW YORK

May 19th – 29th 2011

Jason Eisner

Mariangela Fremura

Joren Lindholm

Tyler Loftis

Ben Pritchard

Chris Protas

Dov Talpaz

Jason Williamson

CURATORS: Lori Bookstein, Lauren Bakoian

ESSAY: Jennifer Samet

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ECCENTRIC FIGURATION: THE PAINTING IN NY GROUP

BY JENNIFER SAMET

In 1978, Marcia Tucker defined “Bad Painting” for a group exhibition she curated at the New Museum of fourteen artists. She wrote:

The freedom with which these artists mix classical and popular art-historical sources, kitsch and traditional images, archetypal and personal fantasies, constitutes a rejection of the concept of progress per se. . . . Bypassing the idea of progress implies an extraordinary freedom to do and to be whatever you want. In part, this is one of the most appealing aspects of "bad" painting - that the ideas of good and bad are flexible and subject to both the immediate and the larger context in which the work is seen.

Tucker also stressed that Bad Painting was “an ironic title for ‘good painting.’”

Her definition applies to many in the Painting in NY group, who, over the years, have allowed themselves to freely draw from a range of sources and styles from Renaissance art to comic book imagery, and to use non-naturalistic scale, space, and anatomical form, even though they were steeped in a studio, drawing-based education. This is done, primarily, in the service of emotional resonance.

The Painting in NY group - seven artists who exhibit together, and who all come, originally, from somewhere other than New York - met at the New York Studio School in the 1990s. They freely admit the impact that their dynamic teachers had on them: Rosemarie Beck, Mercedes Matter, Graham Nickson, and Stanley Lewis. The Studio School philosophy rested firmly in formal values. Founded in 1963 by Matter with a group of activist students, it was completely rooted in the teaching of Hans Hofmann. The focus of Matter’s teaching was locating and marking intervals in space through an active drawing process from elaborate still-life set ups. Although students were working from life, it was all about abstraction. Graham Nickson has been Dean of the School since 1989. Nickson’s teaching and example is more concretely figurative. He brought to the School an empirical British system of composition and solving painting problems that was rooted in his own education at the Camberwell School of Art, where he had studied with Euan Uglow, who in turn had worked under William Coldstream at the Slade. Nickson, too, created elaborate set-ups: landscape-like environments in which several figures pose. But where Matter’s set-ups were

designed to provoke an awareness of spatial problems, Nickson's set-ups were more referential, suggesting a psychological theatricality.

When the Painting in NY artists were in attendance, such differences felt marked and polarizing, and students took sides. Dov Talpaz found himself more allied with the "abstract" camp of Matter, while Chris Protas was a protégé of Nickson.

Many of the Studio School teachers underplayed the relevance of content and narrative, preferring to keep the focus on formal, compositional issues. In considering the Painting in NY Group, I am reminded of a story Rosemarie Beck has told. At a panel discussion, she asked her contemporary, Leland Bell, if his paintings were about "the loss of innocence." Bell was furious. Beck was met with "total, rejecting silence." Discussion of content was verboten.

But the Painting in NY group would answer Beck's question quite differently, with no offense taken. Their painting embraces emotional, spiritual and narrative content unapologetically. They are unafraid to be romantics.

After the Studio School, Talpaz and Protas came together by sharing a studio. Since then members of the group have collaborated on any number of projects, traveled together, and shared jobs and working spaces around the world. The studio shared by Talpaz and Protas in East Williamsburg is a hub of this collaborative activity, and other members of the group have periodically worked there as well. They jointly painted murals for a restaurant in Grand Haven, Michigan, where Loftis grew up and where members of the group have migrated for periods to live and work. Talpaz and Protas made a comic book together, and collaborated, along with Loftis, on massive paintings for the set of a ballet at St. Mark's Playhouse.

Talking about painting is a hallmark of the group; they gather to look at their own work and in the museum, wrestling with formal painting problems and listening to one another's goals and intentions. This kind of continued empathy and collaboration seems somewhat rare in the art world and also, in its own way, a rebellion against their teachers' generation, who valued ideological debate more than communal support. We just have to think of the fistfights at the Cedar Bar and Fanelli's and the impossibly contentious atmosphere that ruled the Figurative Artists' Alliance. Loftis acknowledges that the struggles with which his teachers wrestled ultimately left him feeling free to "just paint."

They indeed seem comfortable drawing from a wide range of art history, both

historical and contemporary, and popular sources, for inspiration. Jason Eisner's more abstract, irregularly shaped panels reference the quirky-personal imagery and painting style of Philip Guston and Howard Hodgkin. He uses brick-work imagery and riffs on this as a metaphor for painting: the "cubist facets" of his composition are an aggregation of stylistic elements involved in the process. Comic books have been important to Eisner, and also to Protas, as Eisner's fluid shorthand makes clear. They also don't shy away from deliberate awkwardness and exaggeration. Protas uses these qualities to tune up the charge between figures, like those reacting to a butterfly in mock horror, surprise, or disgust. Still, we feel his formal training at work in the virtuosic brushwork that animates the landscape behind, creates a convincing sense of space, and links him to a tradition of British painting, in particular.

Talpaz, too, harnesses awkwardness and anatomical exaggeration, and he floats his figures in dark metaphysical landscapes. His paintings are characterized by a pathos and mystical narrative. This kind of intentional awkwardness is a hallmark of contemporary figurative painting, but it also has historical roots - for example, in the figures of early Cézanne, Ensor, and American painter Louis Eilshemius.

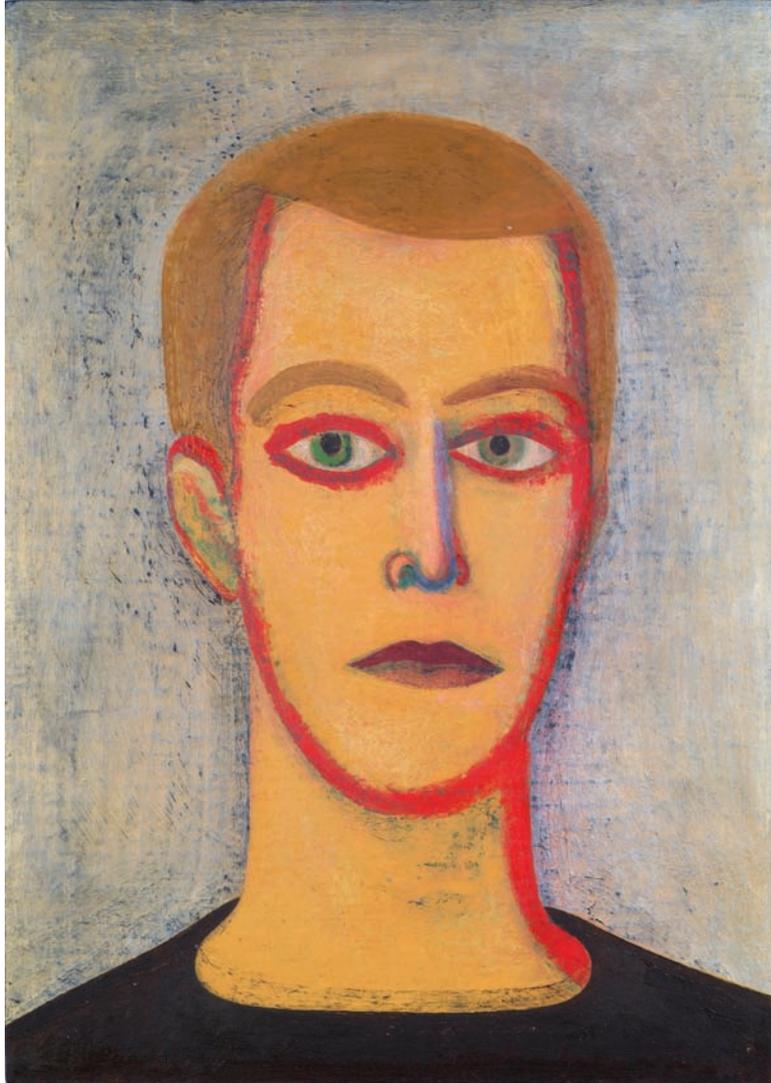
Many in the Painting in NY Group have this quirky mix of modernist and contemporary style. Jason Williamson's intense and direct self-portrait head gathers force from his use of simplified strokes of non-local color. In this it relates to a strain of German figuration that extends from Gabriele Münter to the contemporary Leipzig painter Christoph Ruckhäberle. Mariangela Fremura's paintings are more purely rooted in early Matisse and Nabi painting, although there is something in the imagery that can be compared to the gothic girl-nymph subjects of Rita Ackermann and others. Joren Lindholm juxtaposes different stylistic elements within the same painting to create emotionally charged and carefully composed tableaux. His figures and color remind us of Serusier, but the analytic, strange, sweeping panoramas and the social displacement they suggest are related to the work of Peter Doig. Loftis's lyrical, abstracted spaces simultaneously play on Matisse, and Italian fresco painting, as well as its appropriation by the Transavanguardia painters Cucchi, Chia, and the bizarre contemporary mythology they forged.

The Painting in NY group artists are fluent in the ways form creates meaning; it is their common vocabulary, but it is also the basis for an eccentric figuration that speaks to their time, generation, and a multiplicity of visual referents.

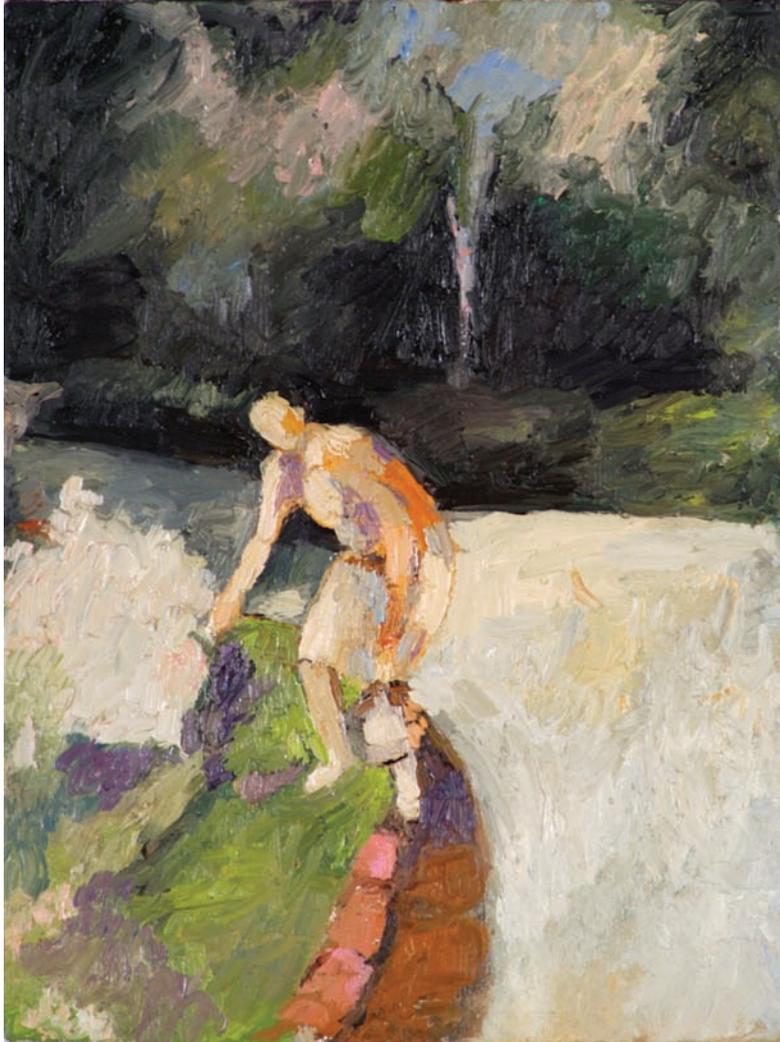
LIST OF WORKS

- 1 TYLER LOFTIS
Italian Landscape with Figures, 2008-10
Oil on canvas, 42 X 50 inches
- 2 JASON WILLIAMSON
Self Portrait, 2008
Oil on wood, 13 X 9 inches
- 3 JASON EISNER
Cold Clouds, 2011
Latex enamel on panel, 10 X 15 inches
- 4 MARIANGELA FREMURA
Napoli, 2009
Oil on canvas, 8 X 6 inches
- 5 JOREN LINDHOLM
Vertical Latitude, 2010
Oil on canvas, 16 X 20 inches
- 6 CHRIS PROTAS
Butterfly, 2010
Oil on canvas, 67 X 68 inches
- 7 DOV TALPAZ
Lev, 2010
Oil on wood, 20 X 16 inches
- 8 BEN PRITCHARD
Barrel, 2010
Oil on linen, 17.5 X 17.5 inches
- 9 TYLER LOFTIS
The Shell, 2008-10
Oil on canvas, 24 X 36 inches
- 10 JASON EISNER
Remains, 2010
Latex enamel on panel, 8 X 11.5 inches
- 11 CHRIS PROTAS
Open House, 2011
Oil on canvas, 35 X 45.5 inches
- 12 JASON WILLIAMSON
Mihalis the Guitar Player, 2010
Oil on canvas, 14 X 11 inches
- 13 MARIANGELA FREMURA
Girl with a Cat, 2010
Oil on canvas, 24 X 18 inches
- 14 BEN PRITCHARD
Passage, 2009
Oil on kevlar on panel, 14 X 12 inches
- 15 JOREN LINDHOLM
The Traveler and the Travel, 2010
Oil on canvas, 22 X 28 inches
- 16 DOV TALPAZ
Guitar Player, 2010
Oil on wood, 20 X 16 inches



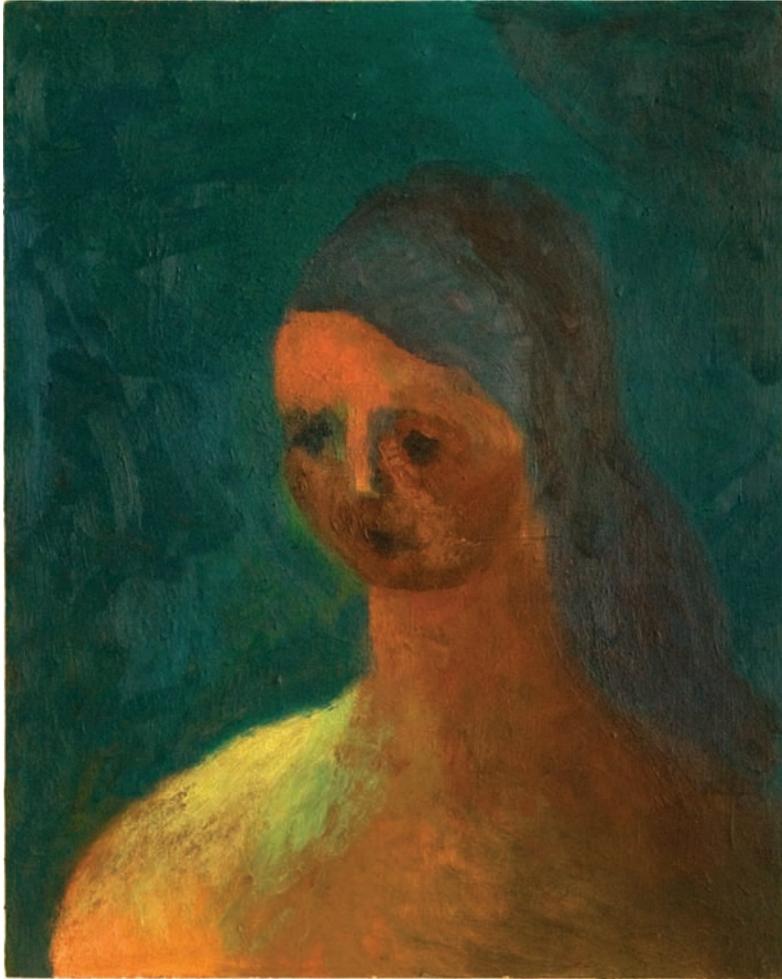


















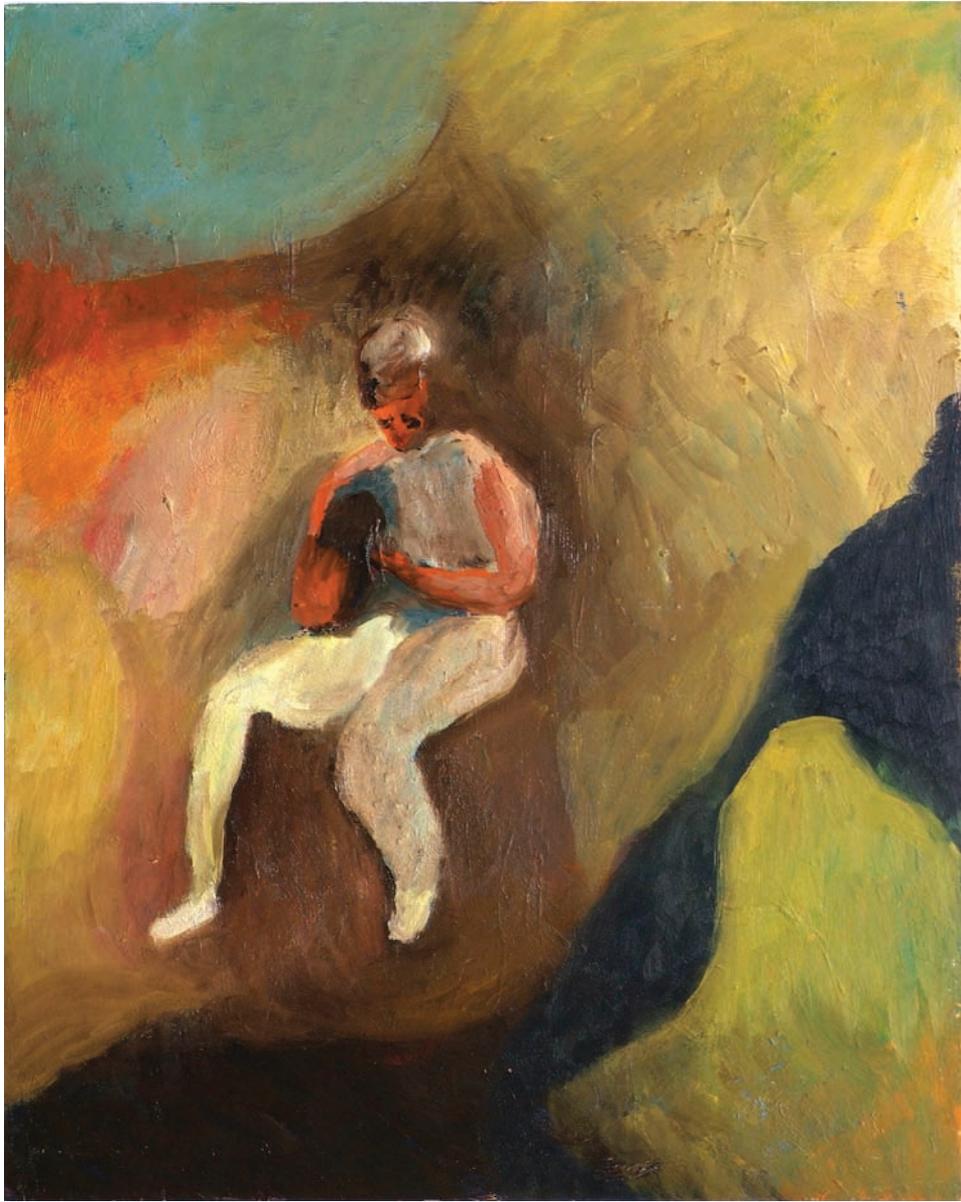












JASON EISNER, a native son of Illinois, migrated to NYC to study art at the New York Studio School (1996-1998.) He lives in Brooklyn NY, where he continues his image making. His exhibitions include: *FOUNDATION* BS Gallery, Iowa City, Iowa, 2011; *Students of Matter* Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa, 2010; *J&J: Five Alive (On the Backs of Animals)* Jack the Pelican, Brooklyn, NY, 2009; *Knuckle Head Blues* Bushwick NY, 2007. Visit www.paintinginny.com.

MARIANGELA FREMURA, born and raised in Livorno, Italy, now lives in Brooklyn, NY. Her studies have taken her to the American Academy in Florence (1999), The University of Rome (Masters Degree in Art History, 2000) and to the New York Studio School (2000-2002.) While a student in Italy, she was an assistant to the painter Paul Harbutt, and painted the set design for a production of "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" at the Coliseum Theatre in Rome. Her shows in NYC include: *Bowery Gallery Annual Juried Show*, 2009 and *In Spiritus* RKL Gallery, Brooklyn, 2005. Visit www.paintinginny.com.

JOREN LINDHOLM is from Chicago, Illinois, and has lived in Washington DC for the past ten years. A student of Knox College (class of 1995) and The New York Studio School (1996-98), he earned his MFA in Painting from American University (2004.) A selection of his shows includes: *Image and Object: Five Young DC/VA Painters* DC Arts Center, 2011; *Only What You Can Carry With You* The Studio Gallery, Washington DC, 2010; *Open City* New York Studio School Alumni Show, 2009; *Color Position* solo show at Willow Street Gallery, Washington DC, 2008. Visit his website: www.jorenlindholm.com.

TYLER LOFTIS was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He moved to New York City to attend the New York Studio School (1996-98, 2000-02.) He then studied anatomy at The New York Academy of Art in Tribeca, NYC. He has spent several years in Italy and now resides in the East Village. His recent shows include: *There and Back Again* traveling show: Holland, Grand Haven, and Grand Rapids, MI, 2009-2010; *Bowery Gallery Annual Juried Show* NY, NY, 2009; *Winter Invitational Show* The Painting Center, NY, NY, 2006. Visit www.paintinginny.com.

BEN PRITCHARD now lives in London, UK. Originally from Detroit, MI, he studied at The School of The Art Institute of Chicago where he was awarded his BFA (1992.) His further education includes The New York Studio School (1994-96) and The Royal Academy of Arts, London (2006-2009.) A selection of shows in the US and UK includes: *London Art Fair* Wiebke Morgan Gallery, 2011; *Six Abstract Painters* DC Moore Gallery, 2010; *Drawing* Perimeter Space, Belfast, ME, 2010; *Days* solo show at Repetti Gallery, Long Island City, NY, 2010. This is his first show with Painting in New York. *For more info visit www.repetti.org.*

CHRIS PROTAS, originally from Norwich, Vermont, has lived in New York City for fourteen years. He went to Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle for a year in the early 90's, then moved back to the east coast to attend The New York Studio School (1996-2000) on the recommendation of a friend. In recent years he has divided his time between NYC and Grand Haven, MI. Selected shows: *Solo Show* The Fire Barn Gallery, Grand Haven, MI, 2010; *Group Art Show* C3 Exchange, Spring Lake, MI, 2010; *Bowery Gallery Annual Juried Show* NY, NY, 2009; *Group Show* Iron Fish Gallery, Beacon, NY, 08. *Visit paintingginny.com.*

DOV TALPAZ was born in College Station, Texas, and grew up in Herzliya, Israel. He studied at The New York Studio School from 1999-2002, and worked as an assistant to the painter Paul Resika from 2003 to 2010. He currently continues his work as a painter in Brooklyn, NY. Recent exhibits include: *There and Back Again* traveling show: Holland, Grand Haven, and Grand Rapids, MI, 2009-10; *Bowery Gallery Annual Juried Show* NY, NY, 2009; *Solo Show* Manhattan World Culture Open Center, NY, NY, 09. *Visit his website: www.dovtalpaz.com.*

JASON WILLIAMSON studied at The New York Studio School from 1999-2002, and currently lives in his home state of Illinois. He has had studios in several different cities in the US. His interest in painting has also taken him to Europe and India. Some of his recent shows: *There and Back Again* traveling show: Holland, Grand Haven, and Grand Rapids, MI, 2009-10; *American Paintings* solo show at Brooklyn Artists Gym, Brooklyn, NY, 2008; *Group Show* Iron Fish Gallery, Beacon, NY, 2008. *Visit www.paintingginny.com.*