

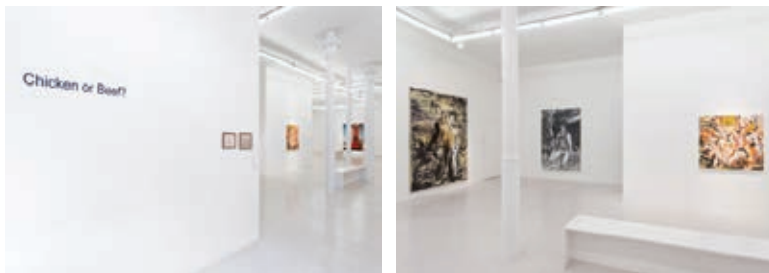
CHICKEN OR BEEF?

CURATED BY JESPER ELG

DAN ATTOE
JULES DE BALINCOURT
KATHERINE BERNHARDT
ANNA BJERGER
MAYA BLOCH
CECILY BROWN
PETER LINDE BUSK
MIRIAM CAHN
TROELS CARLSEN
JOHN COPELAND
ROSSON CROW
BARNABY FURNAS
JOCELYN HOBBIE
HUSKMITNAVN
TODD JAMES
MISAKI KAWAI
MARGARET KILGALLEN

JEMIMA KIRKE
JOHN KØRNER
ELLA KRUGLYANSKAYA
EDDIE MARTINEZ
GEOFF MCFETRIDGE
KEEGAN MCHARGUE
TAYLOR MCKIMENS
ANDERS OINONEN
BJARNE MELGAARD
ANTONIO BALLESTER MORENO
ERIK PARKER
TAL R
LOLA MONTES SCHNABEL
RYAN SCHNEIDER
ALLISON SCHULNIK
DEVIN TROY STROTHER
JANNIS VARELAS





CHICKEN OR BEEF?

A transcontinental survey of figurative painting

The urge to communicate, not in words, but in images: the need to relate experience and emotion, beyond written and spoken language: from the Chauvet cave in Ardèche, France, to Instagram, we feel an impulse to record and share the human condition.

We all experience and view the world differently. In figurative painting we can report these experiences across the boundaries of language, geography and time. Figurative painting offers a form of personal semiotics: a way of communicating internal emotion in images, without the precise—and necessary—constraints of written language.



Perhaps that is why it is so difficult to write and talk about a figurative painting, as we can only describe the components and the combination of elements that we already have words for: the figures, situations, textures and colors we recognize.

We experience and interpret figurative painting subjectively, and are influenced by the context of the painting. It is a very different interaction to view *Le Radeau de la Méduse* on Google or in the Musée du Louvre. That is why we keep visiting museums and galleries to encounter the original artwork and feel a spiritual and sometimes physical connection: some things are lost in translation.



This exhibition is in no way intended as a definitive survey. It is a personal compilation of a diverse group of figurative painters from Europe and North America. It is a stab at presenting a variety of contemporary figurative styles, which are independent and inter-linked at the same time. It is a survey of figurative expressions and gestures—a beautiful, broken language.



Chicken or Beef? Was compiled in close collaboration with Kathy Grayson and conducted via transcontinental visits, excessive amounts of emails and virtual and very real studio visits. It has been a privilege to work with such a talented and engaged group of artists and The Hole gallery.

Figurative painting is dead: long live figurative painting.

Jesper Elg
April 2013



Top of the mountain, 2013, Oil on canvas, 96 x 96 inches
Courtesy Peres Projects

Dan Attoe

b. 1975 Washington - Lives and works in Portland

Dan Attoe is an internationally exhibited artist from the Pacific Northwest whose neons and meticulous miniatures feature a strong dose of the natural world and the flawed contemporary man or woman attempting to connect with it. In imaginary scenes, invented people come together in lushly painted landscapes to be apart: tiny texts often floating through the ether appear and tell a story of the absurdity of the human condition.

This work *Top of the Mountain* depicts a celebration on a summit of seemingly disabled—but ecstatic—individuals who have overcome at least one large, rocky obstacle.



Untitled, 2006, Oil on wood panel, 26 x 26 inches

Jules de Balincourt

b. 1972 France - Lives and works in Brooklyn

Whether in his lushly hued paintings or diverse sculptural installations, Jules de Balincourt builds worlds of strange occurrence and serious commentary. From an aurora borealis in a shopping mall's food court, to a news conference of elegantly extended boom mic tangle, Jules' wit and elegance are never far from a pointed critique of the cultural; remaining very of the earth while seeking the transcendental.

This work from 2006 was the beginning of his 2011 series of radiant faces, based on the well-known optical illusion that tests whether you see two faces or a candlestick in the negative space.



Untitled, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 72 inches,
Courtesy Canada Gallery



Untitled, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 72 inches
Courtesy Canada Gallery

Katherine Bernhardt

b. 1975 - Lives and works in New York

Katherine Bernhardt's crushed-out fashion fanaticism is taken to extremely angular degrees in her loose, worn copies of her favorite models', singers', and celebrities' portraits. As a woman who devours glossies, her large canvases are charged with orgiastic energy that the artist calls "very painterly, very drippy, wet looking, sexy, fun to make, pop art, and abstract expressionism."

These two works are so expressionistically rendered as to exacerbate the already ridiculous body types of high fashion models into collapsible angles and flattened planes of juicy paint.



*Vocal, 2013, Oil on aluminum, 16 x 12 inches
Courtesy David Risley Gallery*



Belly, 2013, oil on aluminum, 16 x 12 inches

Anna Bjerger

b. 1973, Sweden - *Lives and works in Småland, Sweden.*

Based on extracts from books and manuals bought at thrift shops and yard sales, Anna Bjerger's paintings re-figure familiar imagery in a transformed context. She is drawn to images and vignettes that blend the anonymous and the familiar, allowing countless narratives to be imagined and configured. Through painting Bjerger is able to shift the hierarchy in the image and bring forward a different version of the recorded instant. The physicality of the paint, the variable structure of the surface and the focus on dimension serves to intensify the experience of looking.



*Untitled (Bella), 2012, Acrylic and oil on canvas, 59 x 47 inches
 Courtesy Thierry Goldberg Gallery*

Maya Bloch

b. 1978, Israel - *Lives and works in Tel Aviv*

Maya Bloch is painter who makes it appear the liquid paints she applies to her works are still flowing. Her colors pool around the eyes, and drip around the forms of arms or legs, thin out or flow away from the knuckles and joints, and are gaseous planets of commingling color. Thick outlines channeling these flows give the appearance of stained glass windows and the most rendered area are always the eyes, that aqueous and planetary part of our bodies that penetrates.



*Chestnut and Snowball, 2013, Oil on linen, 41 x 45 inches
 Courtesy Gagosian gallery*

Cecily Brown

b. 1968, New York - *Lives and works in New York*

Cecily Brown has been one of the premier figurative painters since the mid 90s when she emerged in New York at the nascent Deitch Projects, and went on to present solo shows at the museums around the world, keeping abstracted and active oil painting alive through what could sometimes be called trying times. Her work has always been and continues to be playful and feminine with the clichés of abstract expressionism—has a better sense than many of them of “when to stop”—and now in 2013 she approaches the figure as close as she ever has with her forthcoming exhibition at Gagosian New York this May. All the shapes so suggestive of breasts and butts and frenzied coupling take decisive shape in massive tableau of repeated figures.

This painting is from her new series of works that look back and re-open some of her older themes, like her ever-present and hypersexual bunnies to her masterful use of depth and form, playfully extracting a carrot here, a phallus there, a paw, perhaps; and making what might be called “figurative gestures” that never become a human form.



The Hack, 2012, Acrylics and crayon on linen, 28.5 x 20 inches
 Courtesy Galleri Bo Bjerggard

Peter Linde Busk

b. 1973, Denmark - *Lives and works in Berlin*

Peter Linde Busk is a generous artist. His tableaux are packed with patterns, layers and references that keep the viewer engaged from the outset. His work and palette has a timeless and yet very contemporary air. His narrative is dynamic and seems to capture situations in flux, mastering various textures and hues. This work is inspired by 60s Danish painting that draws on “native arts” and true to that primitivist impulse, resembles a Picasso profile, a thin-lipped figure draped in a floppy veil of eyeballs.



Versehrt, 1998, Oil on canvas, 67 x 35 inches
 Courtesy Elizabeth Dee

Miriam Cahn

b. 1949 Basel - *Lives and works in Switzerland*

Miriam Cahn is a well-known Swiss painter of the spectral form and the ethereal body. Making oil paint look like so many layers of white silk, her bodies emerge slowly and indistinctly from the void. Gaining notoriety in America later in life, and having been making art through both these periods, her work can evoke both expressionistic Eighties art and Seventies feminist urges especially in her works that deal with the female figure.

Versehrt, or “maimed” presents a female nude in traditional contrapposto with a wry grin on his misplaced mouth and the dense center of the painting the void of her black crotch.



Life is Not Lost By Dying, 2013, Acrylics on antique anatomy chart, 47 x 35 inches
 Courtesy V1 Gallery

Troels Carlsen

b. 1973, Denmark - Lives and works in Copenhagen

Troels Carlsen's visual language is diverse. Many of the works are created on, and in interaction with, vintage anatomical charts, maps and antique book pages. Carlsen's style is untimely figurative, sublimely precise and intimately surreal. In his work there is an ongoing melting process between the biologically charted and the human consciousness. It does not feel like a contradiction, rather like a curious question.

This work seems to juxtapose the human impulse to map our bodies for science with the urge to map our imaginaries for the sake of expression.



Wrong Was Always Right, 2013, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 76 x 64 inches
 Courtesy V1 Gallery

John Copeland

b. 1978, USA - Lives and works in New York

There is tension in Copeland's works; the paintings vibrate between figuration and abstraction, putting your eye and mind to work at first glance. In juxtaposition to the suspense in the single work, there is a timelessness in the subject matter and general imagery. This contrast is also emphasized by the style of painting, that effortlessly draws from neo-expressionism, bad painting (as defined by Marcia Tucker) and abstract expressionism.

This work features a sloppy, slippery dinner party where the main dish served is the paint, melting like a hot fudge sundae left out on the table.



JFK Funeral Flowers, 2011, Oil, acrylic and enamel on canvas, 96 x 72 inches

Rosson Crow

b. 1982 Texas - Lives and works in Los Angeles

Rosson Crow is a bright, brash, bold young painter from L.A. via Dallas, Texas. Her super-scale history paintings superimpose theatrical tableau from suggestively paired periods: whether the garden of Versailles, a Vegas Casino, a Jason Rhodes neon installation, a honky tonk bar, or an equestrian dressage field, her clever pairings have a hallucinatory relationship to their sources and deal in design and power.

This painting is a radially symmetric bouquet of deliquescing funeral flowers topped with the repeated bars of Washingtonian Corinthian columns and heated up with her signature pink.



*The Gutter #1, 2012, Water dispersed pigments, dye and acrylic on linen, 84 x 60 inches
Courtesy Marianne Boesky*

Barnaby Furnas

b. 1973, Pennsylvania - Lives and works in NYC

Barnaby Furnas emerged during the early 2000s during a burst of interest and a burst of talent in the realm of figurative painting; from a Quaker commune through SVA and Columbia into an artist of repeated forms and action, spurting blood and intersecting transversals through his figures and scenes. His recurrent figure in a stovepipe hat, whether Lincoln or John Brown or, here, perhaps Ahab, appears throughout his work, often wielding something terrifying and shredding anything in his way.

This work is from a recent body of work exploring *Jonah and the Whale* and *Moby Dick*, from "If Wishes Were Fishes" at Marianne Boesky. *The Gutter* strips the skin from the whale in preparation for its butchering, in this case an anonymously visaged and be-aproned stick man whose machinations create a fountain of syringe-squirted red paint that slops the sun and the sky, bleeding into the background and cascading down the carcass.



Entre Nous, 2010, Oil on canvas, 72 x 72 inches

Jocelyn Hobbie

Lives and works in Brooklyn

Studying in Rhode Island and Florence, Jocelyn Hobbie makes psychological and hyper-articulated paintings of women in an old master style of disappearing brushstrokes and over-articulated hair and eyes, pearls and patterns. She loves supersaturated colors, see-through underwear, hooded eyes and tiny red pouting lips. Her women are always looking off into the distance, focusing on something else we can only deduce from the choices made in the painting, as they are more marble than sweaty flesh and blood.

Entre Nous, 2010 features three blasé show girls, bored and bent over, behind an oddly flat and shadowed red curtain. The beading is so real it looks like you could pick them off the painting, while their glazed faces let no one in or out.



Honey I'm Listing, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 39.5 x 39.5 inches
Courtesy V1 Gallery

HuskMitNavn

b. 1975, Denmark - *Lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.*

HuskMitNavn's continuous examinations of the details of everyday life are poetic, banal, tragic, personal and humorous – quite often a mixture. Many of his new works thematically revolve around being present in the moment. In bright colors and a composition that just balances, his round orange characters register a personal diary of experiences and humour.



Press or say one, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 22 inches

Todd James

b. 1969, USA. - Lives and works in New York, USA.

Luminous colored Somali pirates, smoking cigarettes as the sun sets, drinking tea, making hostage demands on satellite phones, brandishing AK 47's and rocket propelled grenades populate Todd James new body of work. The paintings have an alluring innocence at first glance. Under the seductive colors and smooth compositions a darker truth lurks. These are portraits of modern pirates, as men at work. The duality of the work is typical for Todd James, not passing judgment, rather illuminating contradictions in contemporary society. His work is informed by the images we know from the constant stream of media we are swimming in. He distills these images, giving the viewer a chance for brief contemplation, in a time that rarely offers that.



Noodle Music, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 52 inches

Misaki Kawai

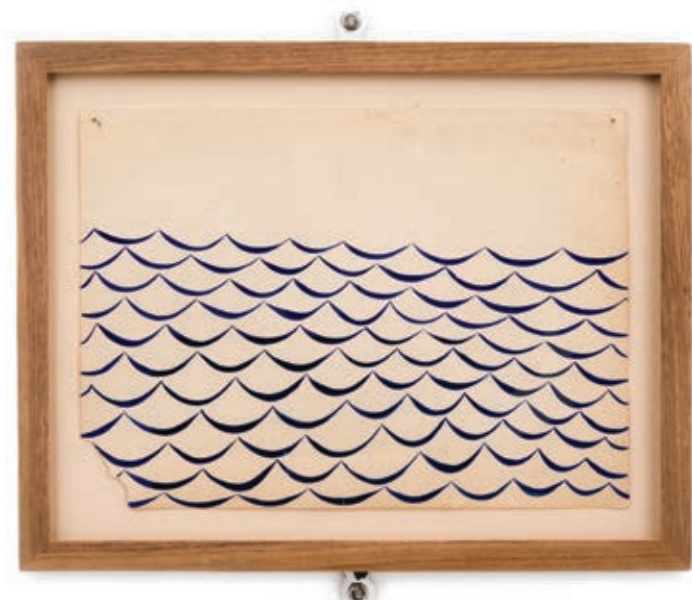
b. 1978 Osaka - Lives and works globally

Misaki Kawai is an artist and a trickster who fools with painterly traditions and pop culture and often fart jokes to make painting, drawing and sculpture. With a de-skilled approach to rendering that captures the Japanese tradition of *Heta-Uma* or "Good-Bad" she makes works so bad they are good, so ham fisted that she can ham it up with her animals and figures and colors.

This painting *Noodle Music* features a longhaired pup on the guitar with a friend playing piano accompaniment, as the shapes and colors dance around the canvas in a state of pure play.



*Untitled, 2000, Acrylic on paper, 6 x 8 inches · 15.2 x 20.3 cm
Courtesy the Estate of Margaret Kilgallen and Ratio 3*



Untitled, 2000, Acrylic on paper, 6.5 x 9 inches

Margaret Kilgallen

1967 – 2001 San Francisco, CA

Margaret Kilgallen was the founder and perhaps most gifted member of what is retroactively named the Mission School of artists who emerged from San Francisco's Mission area in the 1990s. Along with Chris Johanson and Barry McGee whom she was married to, Margaret brought into art the overlooked and downtrodden droves from the streets and the gutters, the train tracks and the beaches. Her inimitably graceful line in capturing people and objects and letters influenced a generation of artists after her and continues to inspire as works from her estate are shown around the world.



Beata, 2010, Oil on linen, 30 x 46 inches

Jemima Kirke

b. 1985 London - Lives and works in Brooklyn

Jemima Kirke is a painter with a very public day job as Jessa Johansson on the hit TV show “Girls” who despite the success of the show has focused on and will continue to primarily be a young painter in the city. After graduating from RISD she moved to Brooklyn to practice her craft and get going in the art community. Reaching out to friends and acquaintances and even strangers on the street, Kirke paints portraits of her milieu in the tradition of Chuck Close or with the almond eyes of a Francesco Clemente, colored edges and flatness of an Alice Neel—one of her heroes—towards a psychological type of portrait less about the interior person and more about a universal feeling.

Like this piece, titled *Beata*, Kirke paints subjects in an unidealized and often unflattering way, looking for awkwardness more than perfection, and getting gritty without necessarily doing aesthetic violence to her sitter. The uncomfortableness of her very pregnant friend finds resonance in the rumpled grumpy pillows, cramped pose, and contrast in the smoothness of her protruding stomach, the only calm moment in the painting.



Boy Without Bottle, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 47.25 x 59 inches
Courtesy Vi Gallery

John Kørner

b. 1967, Denmark - Lives and works in Copenhagen

John Kørner's paintings are playful explorations of the medium's fundamental duality - its physical presence and its descriptive powers - and the potential for communication or miscommunication that ensues. Kørner has referred to these apparently cheerful paintings as 'Problems'. The “Problems” are often tied directly to current societal issues; war, inequality, prostitution and displacement. A boy has used a bottle to secure that the window is open, in *Boy Without Bottle*, is he breaking and entering or escaping in the moonlight?



Anna Banana, 2011, Egg tempera on panel, 17.75 x 23.5 inches
Courtesy Gavin Brown's Enterprise

Ella Kruglyanskaya

b. 1982, Latvia - Lives and works in Brooklyn

Ella Kruglyanskaya is a Brooklyn-based painter from Latvia via Cooper Union and Yale who has emerged as a vital new voice in painting the female figure. With a breakout show at White Columns two years ago and her first big solo at Gavin Brown last summer, Kruglyanskaya has also outfitted the Barney's department store windows with her bodacious babes and proliferating prints. Circulating and transforming styles from Matisse to Lichtenstein, Leger and de St Phalle, her women may be caricatures of femininity but bold and honest and celebrated instead of burlesqued.

Lips & Legs plays with the faces on the clothing as they are both worn by and devouring of their host bodies, with a vibrancy of line throughout that runs like an electric shock through the piece, while *Anna Banana* is made with the oldest technique of painting the figure, egg tempera, as used back in the time of Botticelli and just as muted, waxy and subtle a surface that the artist builds up with multiple brushstrokes over the chunky volumes these zaftig women demand.



Lips & Legs 2, 2012, Oil and oil bar on linen, 80 x 65 inches



Untitled, 2013, Oil and spray paint on canvas, 30 x 24 inches

Eddie Martinez

b. 1977 - Lives and works in Brooklyn

With an agile, muscular brush, Eddie Martinez paints a world of forms and shapes, arrangements, groupings, and until recently, strange people, plants and animals. Over the past few years his work has approached the brink of abstraction and in this show perhaps, he comes the closest yet. All his works, regardless of the level of form desired, have a thickly grooved surface from brushstrokes and oil sticks, spatters of low-pressure spray and scrapes of removed medium. His intuition guides the entire process as each mark made creates a new painting to respond to and move forward with. These two works are figurative in gesture and suggest a form of some kind, without symbolically triggering any referent in the viewer's mind to close down the dialogue.



Untitled, 2013, Oil and spray paint on canvas, 48 x 36 inches



12 Dots, 2013, Acrylic on canvas, 39 x 39 inches

Geoff McPetridge

b. 1971 - Lives and works in Los Angeles

Geoff McPetridge's figurative style is unmistakable. It's a tightrope between figuration and abstraction. Remove one line, and the composition collapses. McPetridge has invented his own visual language creating characters that are poetic logos instead of flesh and blood. The lack of visual information enables the viewer's mind to compensate and stimulates a personal narrative.

This painting features a bird's eye view of a group of subtly discernable people, who, with only small alteration, would appear to be geometric abstraction, or merely *12 Dots*.



Slapstick, 2013, Oil on canvas, 32 x 26 inches

Keegan McHargue

b. 1982 - Lives and works in Brooklyn

Keegan is a conceptual painter with a strong background in pattern and design. With a reduced palette and very odd cast of characters, Keegan makes paintings dictated by form and color rather than any narrative that clearly revel in the variety of decoration and adornment paint makes possible. His muted colors and perplexed perspective are dominant, but not quite a match for Keegan's wild imagination, whose seemingly endless parade of weird is the real joy of his work.

This piece is transected by the long extended leg of an R Crumb kinda dude that is determined to "keep on truckin'", and a perplexed room of harlequins and their ghosts.



Turmin' Night into Dayt 2013, Acrylic, flashe an, gouache on paper, 84 x 60 inches

Taylor McKimens

b. 1976 - Lives and works in Brooklyn

Taylor McKimens presents a vision of the American wilderness that dominates so much of the continent: the wild of deserts, burnt out technology and toxic dust. McKimens's hallucinatory visions are rooted deep in America's dirty, scratched up underbelly, way out West, past where cowboys and Dodge trucks have long since ceased to tread.

This work is one of his first monochrome painting—that are indeed not actually monochrome but various warm and cool shades—emphasizing his line and composition instead of his familiar super saturated style.



Upsopposite, 2012, oil on canvas, 72 x 60 inches

Anders Oinonen

b. 1977, Ontario Canada - Lives and works in Toronto

Anders Oinonen makes conceptual figures and landscaped faces, while it seems he is more interested in paint and light and form, almost in the most pared down way possible. A cone, a rectangle, a cube; orange or pink or blue: two eyes and a mouth seem to Anders the best substrate with which he explores them, as a face is the most suggestive possible thing to the human brain, a trigger for the hyperawareness of form and color, as any slight shift in the shape of a face evokes a universe of suggestion.

This work, *Upsopposite*, features a geometric painting that has a face emerging out of the blocks and a protruding nose that casts a shadow over the work, highlighting it's superflat surface of a surface, kicking us back out of the window and into the gallery; with hot, thick edges like a Thibaud and forms like a sunset over a summer field.



Subventions that went wrong, 2012, Oil on canvas, 47 x 40 inches

Bjarne Melgaard

b. 1967, Sydney Australia - *Lives and works in New York*

Curator, writer and painter Bjarne Melgaard is an expressionistic artist who is crucial to the revival and explosion of expressionism of the past decade across media. Melgaard seems to enjoy the effrontery of his aesthetics, whether in controversial group exhibitions he has put together, his unreadably erotic and violent texts (examples to be found on the backs of these two works) or within each painting's aesthetic amalgamation.



Belief in fiction and fiction as wallpaper breeding, 2012, Oil on canvas, 47 x 40 inches

These two paintings feature his unique way of applying oil paint, thick as sauce and tangled like yarn, with crimped lines of a vibrating hand and compositions that challenge our urges to form recognizable referents.



*Flowers, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 64 x 77 inches
Courtesy Peres Projects*

Antonio Ballester Moreno

b. 1977, Spain. - Lives and works in Madrid, Spain.

The seemingly naive world of Antonio Ballester Moreno's colorful and folk-art inspired paintings may seem at first glance retrogressive; his works portray classical subject matter boldly and quickly executed in vibrant and thickly applied acrylics reminiscent at times of art brut. His frequent use of flora and fauna in patterns is reminiscent of the Arts & Crafts movement of the late 19th century; in fact the writings of William Morris, who proclaimed a return to manual labor and artisanship as a counterweight to the industrialized forms of machine-made objects serve as inspiration for this new series of paintings.



Bathers, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 77 x 64 inches



*New Downstate, 2012, Acrylic paint and phosphoric pigment on Canvas, 72 x 54 inches
 Courtesy Paul Kasmin*

Erik Parker

b. 1968 Stuttgart, Germany - *Lives and works in Brooklyn*

Erik Parker is an expressionistic painter with an extremely slow and detailed approach to paint exuberant and vibrating tableau. Layers and layers of perfectly edged acrylic come together in his paint-by-numbers canvasses where myriad colors—more than meets the eye—go into every element. Each of these plastic paint containers he labels with irreverent phrases to keep track of the million shades that are layered into each.

This painting is from a series of riffs on Matisse, a colorist the artist admires and emulates, and here Parker takes the still life and window into an alien world of inverted skies and foreign fruits.



*Bubble, 2012, Rabbit glue and pigment on canvas, 40 x 34 inches
 Courtesy of Cheim & Read NYC*

Tal R

Born 1967, Israel - *Lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.*

Tal R is very hard to pin down. His language is diverse, he shifts effortlessly, or so it seems, from media to media: different styles of figurative painting, sculpture, installation, collage and clothing. In his recent body of work the palette has become subdued and almost melancholic. The work has a patchwork quality to it, a mix of patterns and abstract spaces. The style is distinctly his while it pays homage to a variety of different figurative painters. In *Bubble*, reminiscent of Georges Rouault, the solitude of the clown is almost unbearable. We recognize the feeling of displacement, being lost in the comedy of our lives.

The medium is pigment mixed with rabbit skin glue. It dries quickly so the artist must keep a fast pace and there is little room for mishaps as it's hard to revise, conceal or remove.



Moonlight 2012, Oil, asphalt and wax on linen, 96 x 60 inches

Lola Montes Schnabel

b. 1981 - Lives and works in New York

Lola Montes Schnabel is a young figurative painter who approaches the canvas bare and brings to it only her imagination, facility with diverse materials, and compositional instincts. Her works are composed of materials as unexpected as iodine, copper plating solution, pink plasterweld and resin, besides the oils that form both the colorful grounds and the lyrically lined figures that populate her world. Allegorical inspiration, art historical sources, and people from her personal circle shape her imaginary.

Starlight is a recent painting of a past love passing out of her life, perhaps, a figure unnaturally poised both forwards and backwards. The scraped-out cherub curls meet the seeping bog of brown ochre and iodine where brushstrokes turn into pools, in a painting that is exemplary of her reduced palette and diverse paint handling.



How Long Have You Known?, 2013, oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches

Ryan Schneider

b. 1980, USA - Lives and works in Brooklyn, USA.

Ryan Schneider's bold, expressive and bright paintings, confronts the viewer at first glance. Elements of classic still life and portraiture merge with passion and restless energy. In recent works Schneider has loosened his grip, giving space to a dynamic figurative style and composition. The motif relates to both Matisse and Gauguin, but is devoid of the latter's tropic fascination. The men and woman in Schneider's work are mundane, made of flesh, full of blood and sentiment.



Orange Bow Tie, 2010, Oil on canvas over panel, 10 x 10 inches

Allison Schulnik

b. 1978 - Lives and works in Los Angeles

Allison Schulnik is a pastry chef of painting, slathering the thick oils up into tasty peaks, smoothing it into slick valleys, decorating the details with colorful tidbits. She knows just which parts of the composition demand a succulent protrusion and which need to be scraped clean. Like Wayne Thibaud's tasty treats, Allison focuses on the directionality of the brush, the texture and the relief, and her paintings are as much intricate sculpture as paintings.

Allison favors trolls, gnomes, hobos, clowns, zombies and other sorts of outsiders, itinerants, and outcasts. This haunted little clown strives toward and almost achieves incarnation in three dimensions.



*"Bitch sit still, I'm trying to render right" from: The life and time of a nigga named Tyrone, 2013
Acrylic and paper on wood, 11 x 14 inches*

Devin Troy Strother

b. 1986 Los Angeles - Lives and works in Los Angeles

Devin Troy Strother is a young artist from Los Angeles who makes artworks that look at identity and play around with cultural expectations and prejudices while focusing on an irreverently literal use of materials and self-consciousness about "making art". Fresh out of the tube blobs and squirts of acrylic shape into rudely rendered figures, his main character "Tyrone" barely more than blue eyes on an unnaturally jet-black body and enormous Afro.

This work *Sit Still Bitch I'm Trying to Render* features Tyrone trying to get a good figure painting going while two exuberant models bounce boisterously off the chair. A pink lady and a jet-black lady kick up their heels and scarves like a Fragonard while Tyrone looks helplessly on with his paper collaged arms and fixed red grin. The human impulse to paint the figure, and the human impulse to have too much time to sit around and wait for art are themes that run through the entire exhibition as well.

Jannis Varelas

b. 1977 Athens, Greece - *Lives and works in Athens and Vienna*

Jannis is a large-scale talent from Athens via Vienna who makes heroic scaled anti-heroes. His works range from sculpture to drawings, painting and installation but his most well known and perhaps most central work are his towering figures on paper, whose oddly composed and collaged bodies show aspects of the social performed on the person. Often hermaphroditic or even cyborg, these figures are both shocking and tragic, and globally pantheistic.

This piece is from a series of demons and cannibals, with what look like full body tattoos, striated tits and palm fronds, pubes, wheat, and a face both radiant and absorbing of all light around it.



The Cannibal, 2013, Drawing on paper, 102.5 x 59 inches
Courtesy The Breeder

The show is a museum-style transatlantic survey of figurative painting in Europe and America, named after the ubiquitous question posed on transatlantic flights, presented at The Hole from March 5 – April 20th, 2013.

As opposed to creating two camps at odds, the show instead highlights the many similarities of approach, not just between the two regions but also between the more prominent artists in the group and their more emerging counterparts. The comic outlines and slapstick nudity of a Todd James painting appear in a Misaki Kawai work as well; Cecily Brown's joyous brushstrokes find a counterpart in the abstracted opulence in Rosson Crow's funerary flowers; Tal R's circus figures and reduced palette resonate with young artist Keegan McHargue's pastel acrobats and with Allison Schulnik's impastoed icing-on-the-cake of her clown painting as well; even such opposites as Taylor McKimens and Lola Schnabel share a yellowed ground with a dark and stormy figure that emerges in shades of grey on top of it; Israeli painter Maya Bloch creates liquidated figural sections in her canvasses that closely resonate with the lava-like "problems" that appear in the work by Copenhagen's John Kørner; indeed there are many more complementary themes that the reader will enjoy discovering for themselves.

Despite how international the art world has become—not just art fairs, but internetting and institutional exchanging—the show hints at some regional differences in approach. Perhaps we confront the work with the stereotype that European painting is more conceptual or more academic; perhaps American painters are more iconoclastic and irreverent. After all, each region has their own gods in their own pantheons of figuration and certainly different teachers at their academies of higher learning: Daniel Richter guides grad students in Vienna while Cecily Brown and David Salle have consulted those at Yale, for example (including Rosson Crow and Ella Kruglyanskaya, actually). It would be hard to point out in words just what these regional differences might be, though such distinctions may emerge when experiencing these artworks throughout the same gallery space or here in the same book.

Figurative painting as a genre is celebrated here as well, whether or not this style of art is "on trend", and is celebrated in its myriad forms. The genre is as heterogeneous as the regions of "Europe" and "North America" are, and just as Spain, Greece, Denmark, Israel and Austria are represented alongside San Francisco, Ontario, New York and Los Angeles; so, too, are expressively drippy figures, hyper-realistic idealized figures, penetrating psychological figures, and occasionally no real "figure" at all. If figurative work has been unstylish in recent years within the micro-trending art world in favour of more lazy conceptual and minimal works, then let this show serve to reassert the things viewers could never really get rid of liking anyway, like skill and sincerity and immediate, emotional, gutsy work; thoughtful and intense and idiosyncratic works, rendering and likeness and oil paint, works that may even celebrate that very un-cool topic, beauty.

The Hole would like to thank the curator for his expansive generosity both with his ideas and artists, his collectors and colleagues; and thank his gallery V1 that includes Mikkel Grønnebak and Peter Funch who together installed the show and presented, in collaboration with The Hole, this exciting exhibition.

About the curator: Jesper Elg (b.1975) is the co-founder and director of V1 Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark. He also works as an independent curator and is serving as a member of The Danish Arts Councils Committee for International Art (2011 – 2014).

V1 Gallery was founded in 2002. The gallery represents a select group of emerging and established artists and is committed to introducing art, in all media, to an international audience. Seeing art as a profound and competent media for social and political discourse, the gallery aspires to serve as a platform for art that interacts with the surrounding society.



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