

BUREAU

OF ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE

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JUNE 2014

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BUREAU GUEST ARTIST: TOM GREGG THE PHOTO ESSAY: FAHEY/KLEIN GALLERY

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OF ARTS AND CULTURE

JUNE 2014



GUEST ARTIST TOM GREGG

TOM GREGG Appears as Guest Artist Courtesy of The George Billis Gallery in LA & NY
You will find an Interview & a Suite of Images Accompanying JUNE BUREAU Features



GUEST ARTIST Tom Gregg Flag Series Courtesy George Billis Gallery Los Angeles and New York City

Mr. Gregg's artworks tend to ask more questions rather than provide answers. The flag series when pondered, certainly suggests ideas through form and color. Ultimately, this art is a bit of a psyche test. Like all great art, your own projections, ideas, reflections and moods highly effect the viewing. We are very proud to have Tom Gregg as Guest Artist for June 2014 BUREAU of Arts and Culture.



THE TOM GREGG : INTERVIEW

KANSAS CITY PAINTER & GUEST ARTIST DISCUSSES HIS ART

TOM GREGG: INTERVIEW

THE BUREAU MAGAZINE GUEST ARTIST JUNE 2014

by Joshua TRILIEGI

Tom Gregg's paintings have a vibrancy, a super saturated presence that are difficult not to look at. Although based in realism, Gregg has taken the realist school of painting and cranked it up a bit. Sort of power popped it. Size is not really the issue here: style, color, shadow and light are. He's a very conscious painter with a clear understanding of what's happening on the canvas. As articulate on the page as off the page. Here at the Bureau of Arts and Culture, we talk a lot about craft. Tom Gregg is a master craftsman. Extremely dedicated to the personification of the object. Be it the American flag, a bottle full of candy, a crumpled piece of fabric, a Disney curio toy or his famous on - going hand grenade series.

American Realist painters through the years have often been attracted to the Americana of yesteryear and the new America of tomorrow, check out the works of Richard Estes and Ralph Goings. They took signage, chrome, cars, everyday commonplace objects and locales and hyper fascinated them into extremely lush and rich tapestries. Mr Gregg is doing just that, but within a kind of candy coated lens, he's taken the rose colored glasses and used them accordingly to look at objects that sometimes by their very nature carry a much more loaded symbology and made us simply look at how the color, light and vibrato relate to one another. The single object in a Tom Gregg painting becomes a sort of icon due to the amount of time, positioning, scale and fascination with tonal studies. More than one object becomes a strange interlude, an odd marriage, a pairing of the Sesame Street variety where the question was asked to the viewer, ' Which one of these objects doesn't belong ? ' But here, Mr Gregg does not differentiate that view. On the contrary, he makes them belong together and indeed, somehow they do. Through style, tone, association and placement his choices simply make us see the union and with his saturated palette, his uber craftsmanship, his outright exuberance that radiates from the actual object, we are mystified in some way.

Where Estes and Goings awed us with the fact that we could hardly believe it was a painting, Gregg takes us into a whole other ephemeral and wacked out hyper color experience that we need to see. Once focused on it, we may find it difficult to turn away, a kind of seduction of the visceral variety. An optical dessert of sorts, one bite leads to another and suddenly, we have gobbled it up. Not exactly eye candy, due to the sense of style and commitment to a serious painting, but possibly a rare delicacy. Once you have spent time with a Tom Gregg painting, the world itself may seem a bit heightened in reality, the way the light hits a color, the very sense of how colors will relate to one another, he is transferring a special experience that stays with the observer long after the viewing. It is Art.



TRILIEGI: *Your work is based in realism, what led you to pursue this style ?*

GREGG: As handy as it is, I hesitate to use the term realism because it tends to carry a set of limitations and might lead the viewer to be dismissive of the work before they get to what I think of as the most interesting part: the interplay of representation and thought. There is a conceptual impulse at the heart of all my paintings. They originate in an idea, a question, or a specific thought. This can be complex or ridiculously simple, perhaps even simple minded, hopefully Zen-like in some cases. In the most recent work it is as simple as a contemplation of symmetry and asymmetry, balance and imbalance. [continued]

" I almost always paint from observation ... "



GREGG: [continued here]

I guess in my head I have some Platonic ideal of a Realist painter, and it is someone who bravely jumps into the fray and takes on the world, raw, unfiltered, and messy, with their brushes and palette in hand, responding to the visual stimuli before them and trying to capture some bit of what they see out there. It seems to imply an outward stance, whereas my work is much more inwardly focused. I almost always paint from observation, but it is a highly edited, controlled and conceptualized situation that I set up, more like a laboratory or stage set than the natural world. It is a space for a thought to occupy. Ultimately, I want the finished paintings to exist in a place that is firmly tied to the “real” world in all its physicality and complexity, while at the same time solidly staking a claim to a place in the world of painting; a 2-dimensional, painted world of image and thought.



" I choose to keep the color as keyed up as I can ... "
- Tom Gregg Bureau Guest Artist

TRILIEGI: *Although it is realist work, there is a hyper saturated quality to the tones. Discuss your choice of color when painting.*

GREGG: I choose to keep the color as keyed up as I can without breaking the internal visual logic of the painting. I try to push it to an edge where it just starts to pop a bit. The flat, pigmented world of a painting will never really compete with raw experience and the full range of real visual stimuli, but I take a perverse pleasure in trying to get it to. On another level, color is incredibly sensual and expressive, as well as elusive and limitless. I never feel like I comprehend color in its fullness; it always gets away and I am left feeling futile, with a mere record of the attempt. I think any true knowledge of color comes from experience. Outside of simply painting a lot, there were two fundamental steps in my understanding of color. The first was studying with a man named Sy Sillman at RISD. He had been a student and collaborator of Josef Albers and had us spend enormous amounts of time, until our eyes were shot, looking and looking at color, doing all sorts of color experiments with color-aid papers. I couldn't tell you any one specific thing I learned, but I looked at and tried to understand a seemingly endless amount of color. The second step came in Saskatchewan, where I lived for a few years in an attempt to digest graduate school. It has a vast, empty, stunning landscape with a very specific light. I painted from this landscape, plein-air style, on an almost daily basis for most of the time I was there. I would do 2 or 3 or more small paintings a day, trying to capture the light, the atmosphere, the colors. I covered a lot of panels with a lot of paint, too fast to think much about it, relying on instincts and experience. Most were failures, but sometimes something happened, something was captured. I still have boxes of these paintings in my studio.

TRILIEGI: *Objects play a key role in your body of work, how do you choose what to paint ?*

GREGG: When people find out you're a painter they inevitably ask what sort of paintings you do. Early on I noticed the answer "still life" was often accompanied by a glazing over of the eyes, or an "oh", and a slow nod of their head, as if it were some sort of unfortunate news. I learned to enjoy this, and almost take it as some sort of challenge, to try to exceed the mundane and lowly expectations of the genre. I find that still life offers me almost total control of the visual situation, not just the objects, but also the lighting, the colors, the forms, the space. This makes it a great vehicle for a certain sort of experimentation and provides a great framework for conceptual pursuits. I have been painting still lives for decades now and my choices of what to paint and the role these objects will play has shifted many times based on the conceptual demands of the paintings. Simply put, sometimes I want the objects to make the initial impact and be seen first, at other times I want them to be more transparent and secondary to the visual orchestration of the painting. I think there is a stereotypical or classical idea of still life subject matter: fruit, glasses, drapery, flowers, etc. These objects don't ask many questions in and of themselves and therefore allow the formal choices and the mechanics of the painting to be the focus. The challenge here is to transcend the familiarity of the objects and arrive at something that will hold the viewer's attention, almost in spite of them. On the other hand if I choose to paint hand grenades, guns, pharmaceuticals, Big Macs or crumpled up American flags, the viewer is confronted by a whole different set of questions and has a different entry into the painting. In an odd way the challenge here is similar, but starts from the other side of the problem: to transcend the confrontational aspect of the objects and seduce the viewer into the sensuousness and beauty of the painting itself. At the heart of it all is my belief that even the humblest and most banal of objects has the possibility of being transformed in a painting, and given existence at the core of something profound and meaningful. Even the most mundane of objects seem to possess some sort of secret or a dignity that lies beyond my comprehension and seems worthy of contemplation.

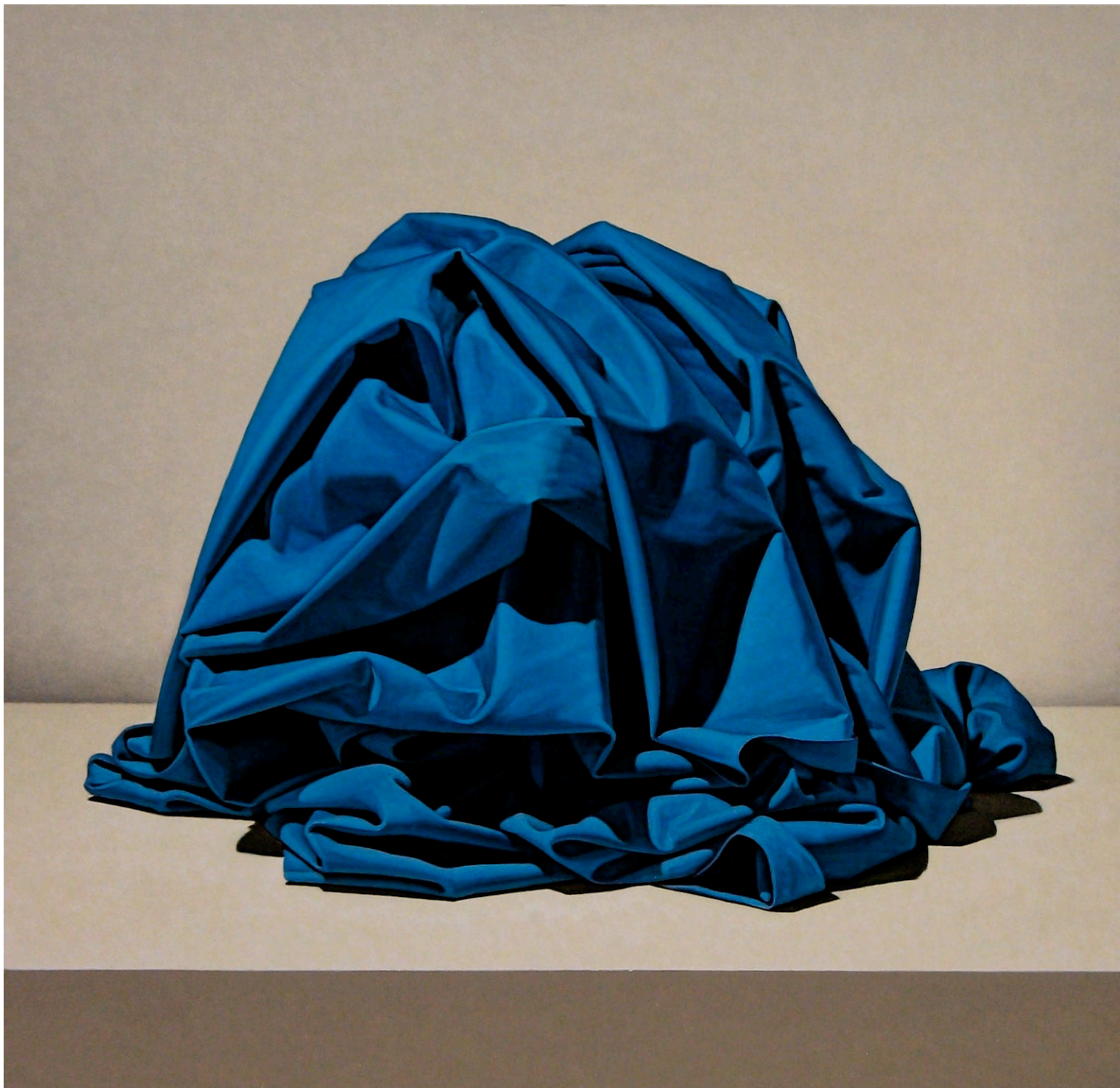


" The longer I try, the more chances I take, the more likely I am to hit on something. " - Tom Gregg Painter



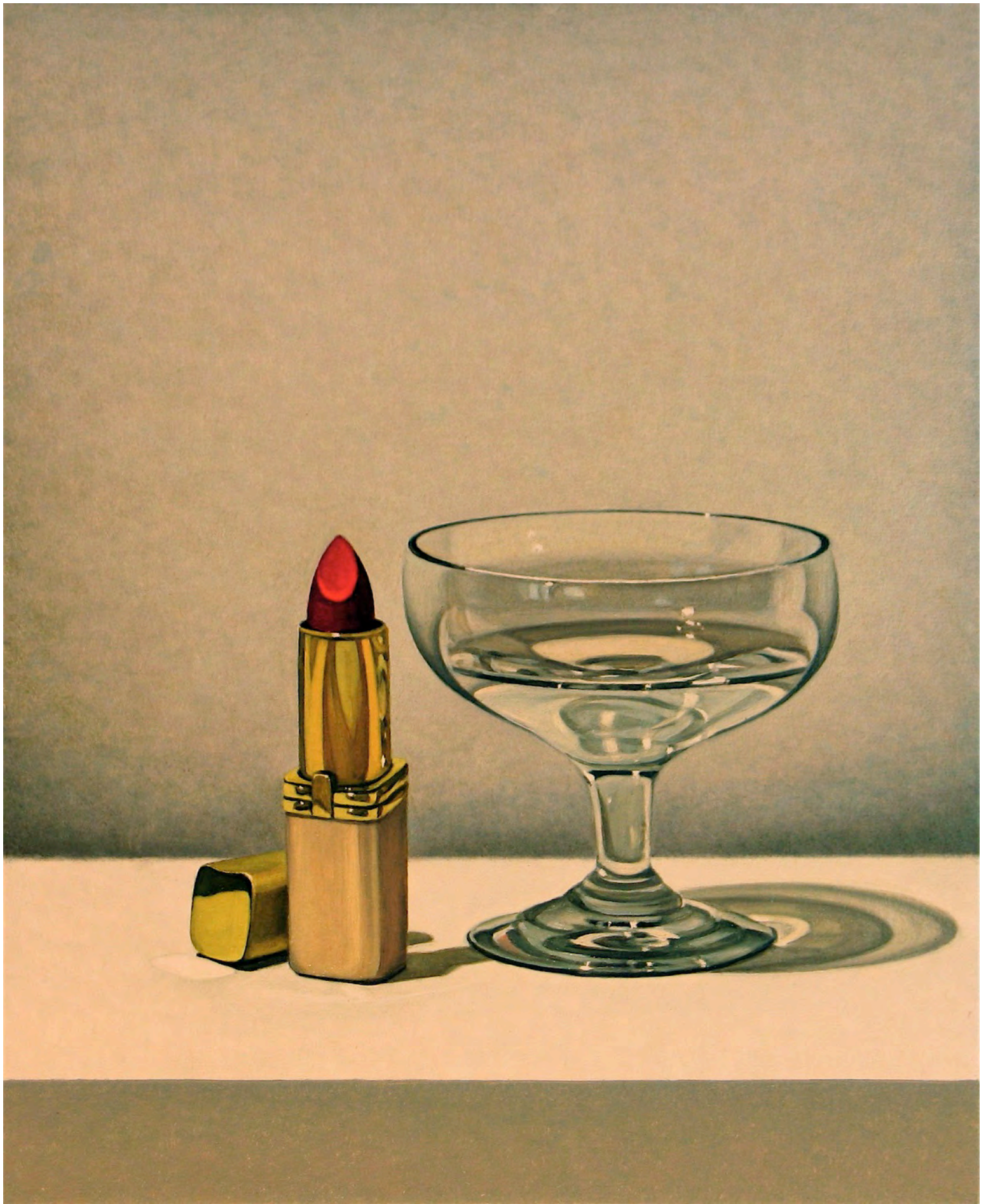
TRILIEGI: *Each painting seems like you invest a large amount of time into, without attempting to quantify a value point, how much time will you invest in a painting such as the new works: Cocktails, etc ...*

GREGG: My “work” does involve a lot of actual work, though work I enjoy. The number of hours invested in a painting seems to have little bearing on the ultimate success or failure of the piece. And paintings can get worse the longer you work on them. There is no equivalency between time invested and success, which makes the process more engaging and demanding of my full attention. My working process starts with a lot of drawing. In these drawings I figure out the scale, the composition and placement. I get to explore and work out a lot of decisions before getting into the actual painting. I find it a lot easier to change my mind in a drawing than in a painting. The drawings are very much working drawings, not finished pieces, and primarily serve as a step into the painting. I transfer the drawing to the panel, re-draw it, and rough in the painting with this as a guide. Then I try to make the whole thing come together. [continued]



GREGG: [continued here]

A lot of the process of painting for me is looking, and marking, and looking again, and marking again, adjusting and changing, repeating this process until I feel I have captured something meaningful or profound about what it is I am seeing. This seems to go beyond illusion and has more to do with the energy found in visual relationships. My guess is that a bit of life is given to the painting when a relationship or a set of relationships is observed and experienced openly and directly, (whether it be one color to another color, or one ellipse to another, one space to another, etc.), and then that relationship is reinvented and brought into the painting itself. Time has little to do with this in any direct sense, other than that if I keep the process open, then the longer I try, the more chances I take, the more likely I am to hit on something.



" I believe a great deal in the power of subliminal decisions "

- Tom Gregg Bureau Artist

TRILIEGI: *The shadows in the newer works appear to have eyes, were seeing a lot of reference to that lately, in much of the contemporary art scene, is this a conscious decision or just a happenstance ?*

GREGG: I am not aware of the profusion of eye references, so I can't claim to be a part of that as a trend or as a part of the contemporary scene. But I was definitely aware of the eye - like shadows in some of these recent paintings. So the effect was heightened, if only subtly. I enjoy the extra layer of visual reference that this gives to the piece. The viewer can flip their attention from "oh, it's two cocktails" to "there are two eyes staring out at me" and have these competing stimuli struggle a bit in your head, a bit like the classic optical illusion of the rabbit or the duck. I believe a great deal in the power of subliminal decisions and the role instincts play in how we go about things, and it is undeniably fun to discover things within things, so on some level I am responsible for those eye references in the paintings, and glad you noticed them. I will add that my father passed away, rather suddenly, about 5 years ago and ever since then I have had the tendency to fabricate faces, most often his face, in all sorts of patterns and situations, as if trying to find his presence in my world, bring him back or just ease the loss.

TRILIEGI: *Do you believe in a school of thought, or does the individual artist still have the power to express something alone ?*

GREGG: Tough question, it sort of goes in a lot of directions. I believe we are all so embedded in our time and world that we are more or less completely defined by it, especially in this supersaturated media culture. The world seems to be made smaller by technology but at the same time fragmented, shattered and without boundaries.

I believe we are all formed by our environment and can't escape our place and time. We all build on the work and accomplishments of others and operate in the context of our culture. Artists have always fed off of other artists; there is no avoiding it and no shame in it. I don't think any of us exist alone, as some sort of outsider. A favorite quote seems applicable here: "we are only as original as the obscurity of our sources". But I also believe that we each provide a slight shading or slight shift in perspective to the larger culture.

For about 5 years I helped coordinate and curate an artist run gallery here in Kansas City. There was a core group of artists who showed consistently over that time and occasionally you could see some direct lifting of ideas or stylistic crossing over, but for the most part the artists involved were distinctly defined in interests and direction. What did seem to be shared and what did get passed around was the energy, the ambition, and the desire to be a participant in what was happening, an impulse to step it up. So there was a sort of school of energy more than thought. At this point in our culture, which is so fragmented, and has unlimited options for expression, it seems almost impossible to narrow to a school of thought in any traditional sense, everything can and does co-exist simultaneously and it makes for a much more vibrant conversation. I trust that in a hundred years the art historians will put the labels on what is happening now and give the names to the schools of thought.



INTERVIEW: TOM GREGG GREEN CANDIES BUREAU GUEST ARTIST JUNE 2014

TRILIEGI: *The craftsmanship in your work is amazing, how long have you been painting and who were / are your influences as an artist ?*

GREGG: I always flinch at the use of the word craftsmanship in regards to painting. It seems that as an artist you just have to do what the painting demands and use the materials however they need to be used to get there. Any notion of craftsmanship is integral to the artwork as a whole. So it seems to be more a matter of necessity than craftsmanship. I guess in that way I would consider De Kooning a great craftsman, because the paint does exactly what it needs to do to get those paintings to work. Paint, as a material, can do so many things and be used in so many ways that I think all painters use it a bit differently. You have to find out not just how you can use it but also how you need to use it: it evolves with the vision of the work. My use of paint is always slowly evolving and changing and providing slightly different possibilities for the paintings. As for influences, I think I am generally voracious as an art and culture consumer and digester and like to think that, at least in terms of inspiration, that all these experiences get channeled into what I do. I get thrilled at a show of Tom Friedman or an Ingres retrospective. As I think it is with most artists, there is a big sort of soup that is always on the stove somewhere in my head and all kinds of stuff, everything, really, gets thrown in there and cooked together and then it gets ladled out in the form of my paintings. The influences more directly related to my paintings are most likely predictable for the sort of painter I am. From an early fascination with Giotto, Masaccio, and Piero della Francesca I worked my way up through art history on up to the present and Lucien Freud, Balthus, and Euan Uglow. But my heart keeps returning to the Seventeenth century where, for me, some sort of pinnacle was reached with Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Velasquez and Vermeer. I am always cruising through both the past and the present for inspiration, and easily falling in love with an artist's work, whether for a fleeting moment, a lifelong fascination or just a new spot on the map of my art experience.

TRILIEGI: *Does Music or Film or some special activity inform or inspire your work process, if so, please tell our readers a bit about that process.*

GREGG: Music has always had the ability to flood me with emotion, to overwhelm me, or bring tears to my eyes in a completely irrational, physical and emotionally rooted way. I have never studied music and never played an instrument and can't carry a tune, so there is no other way for me to experience music. It serves as a source of inspiration because it hits me directly and leaves me feeling defenseless in a manner that painting almost never does. Painting and visual art enters through my eyes and mind, music through my ears and gut. That said, I do have my own, uneducated ideas about music that filter into my paintings. I often think of color as musical tones, as having a pitch and harmonizing with other colors. I also use ideas of rhythm and movement that come from musical ideas. Sometimes I think of my paintings as small, minimalist symphonies, each "instrument" playing its' role in the whole piece. Haiku poetry is another form that I look to and hope to channel into my work. There is a stunning beauty in the sparseness and economy of conveying emotions and ideas and a stark use of the juxtaposition of image that I often think of in relation to my paintings. I have also been practicing Chi Gong and Tai Chi for almost 5 years now and have found it making its' way into my work, particularly the recent series of paintings. In both these practices there is a strong emphasis on subtle movements and repetition, and on balance and gravity, and on being grounded. It is all ultimately about focus, energy and awareness.



"My use of paint is always slowly evolving ..." - Tom Gregg Artist

TRILIEGI: *The backgrounds in the newer works are extremely worked over, when your dealing with a smaller object, like say a shot glass, is there a need to invest a certain amount of time into the background or is there simply a habit of entirely presenting a serious work on every square inch of the painting ?*

GREGG: The backgrounds, or what I think of as the wall, are always an integral part of the painting and often end up being what the success or failure of the piece rides on. It is the largest part of the painting and therefore the dominant color proportionally. It is a particular challenge to paint because in order to succeed it has to have a sense of light and atmosphere and it also has to create a space for the still life to exist in. And it has to do this with the barest of elements; it is flat, without detail, and has no definition beyond the play of light across its surface. Because of this I consider it to have a certain visual and conceptual purity. It is working with color and light, nothing else. To make it work is difficult, and most often leaves me with a sense of a long pursuit that comes to an end with me empty handed. That pulsing of life and light that I saw and experienced and seemed so palpable, and that I just spent all day chasing with paint, almost always gets away.

TRILIEGI: *Where do you live and work and how does that influence your work ?*

GREGG: I live and work in Kansas City, Missouri. I was born in California, in Long Beach, and at age seven moved to a town outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I went to RISD and lived in Rhode Island for eight years and Connecticut for two years while at Yale, then spent two years in Saskatchewan before landing in Missouri.

Kansas City has a lively art scene, and I think a true sense of community among artists across a range of disciplines. It provides an ease and a clear feeling of being connected, perhaps due to its size. It ebbs and flows, but at times there has been a vibrant dialogue between the art makers here, a feeling that there is something being shared, that the community is being pushed farther than any one individual could go on their own. A sense that there are other tuned-in voices right here that are listening, and responding: an audience of artists and other participants in the aesthetic cultural here and now. There is a lot going on here, a lot of opportunities for artist driven projects and a real commitment to the arts all across the spectrum.

Mr Gregg is This Months Guest Artist and you will find his work available at George Billis Gallery in Los Angeles at Culver City's Art Row on La Cienega and in New York City with a New Show scheduled this Fall 2014. Many of the Interviews throughout this Publication feature Mr Gregg's Paintings and we are very pleased to have his ART at BUREAU of ARTS and CULTURE Magazine.

George Billis Gallery LA 2716 S. La Cienega Blvd. Los Angeles CA 90034 T: 310-838-3685

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Moon tilted her head and quietly stared like a cat might look at a sparrow. She smiled and poured herself a shot, "Heres to you."



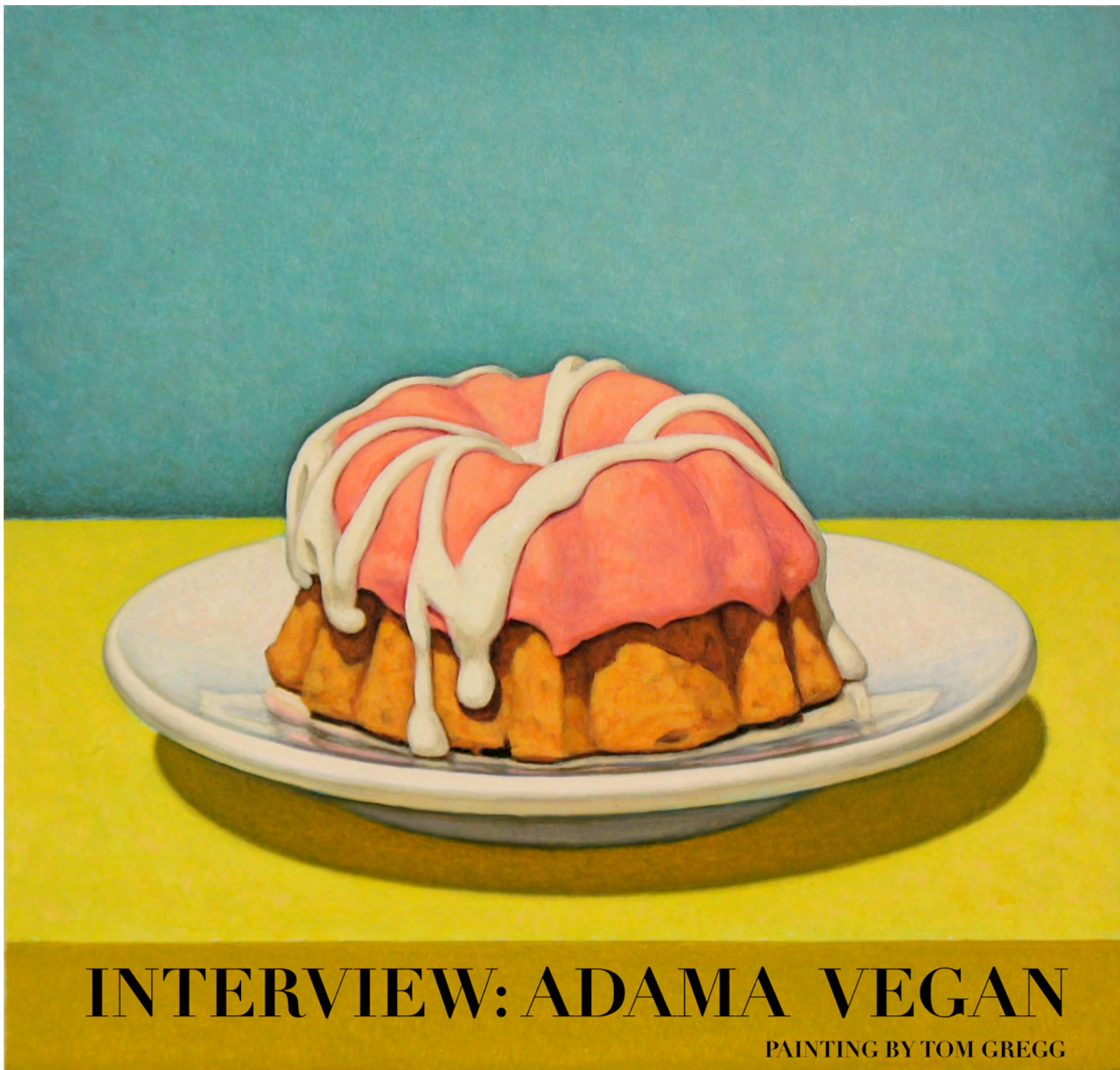
PAINTING TOM GREGG

GUEST ARTIST FOR JUNE EDITION



INTERVIEW: GARY CALAMAR

PAINTING BY TOM GREGG



INTERVIEW: ADAMA VEGAN

PAINTING BY TOM GREGG

BUREAU SPECIALTY CUISINE: ADAMA VEGAN

We take you inside one of the most forward thinking, healthy and delicious eateries in all of California. Here at The Bureau, we are always prepared to learn a few things along the way. In this case, we had no idea how intense, complicated and time intensive creating socially & ecologically responsible cuisine could be. Its safe to say we have never been so impressed as we were by the owners at Adama Vegan in Santa Barbara: Simply Incredible Kitchen. Visit The Site for Links, Images & a Full Audio Interview: BureauofArtsandCulture.com



INTERVIEW : WENDY McCOLM

PAINTING BY TOM GREGG

INTERVIEW: COMEDIENNE WENDY McCOLM



INTERVIEW : FEEL IT SAN DIEGO

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TAP HERE TO VISIT THE ENTIRE AUDIO INTERVIEW WITH MARK ALAN OF FEEL IT MUSIC , FASHION AND ART BOUTIQUE LOCATED IN SAN DIEGO CALIFORNIA U.S.A.



INTERVIEW: PATRICK LEE

PAINTING BY TOM GREGG

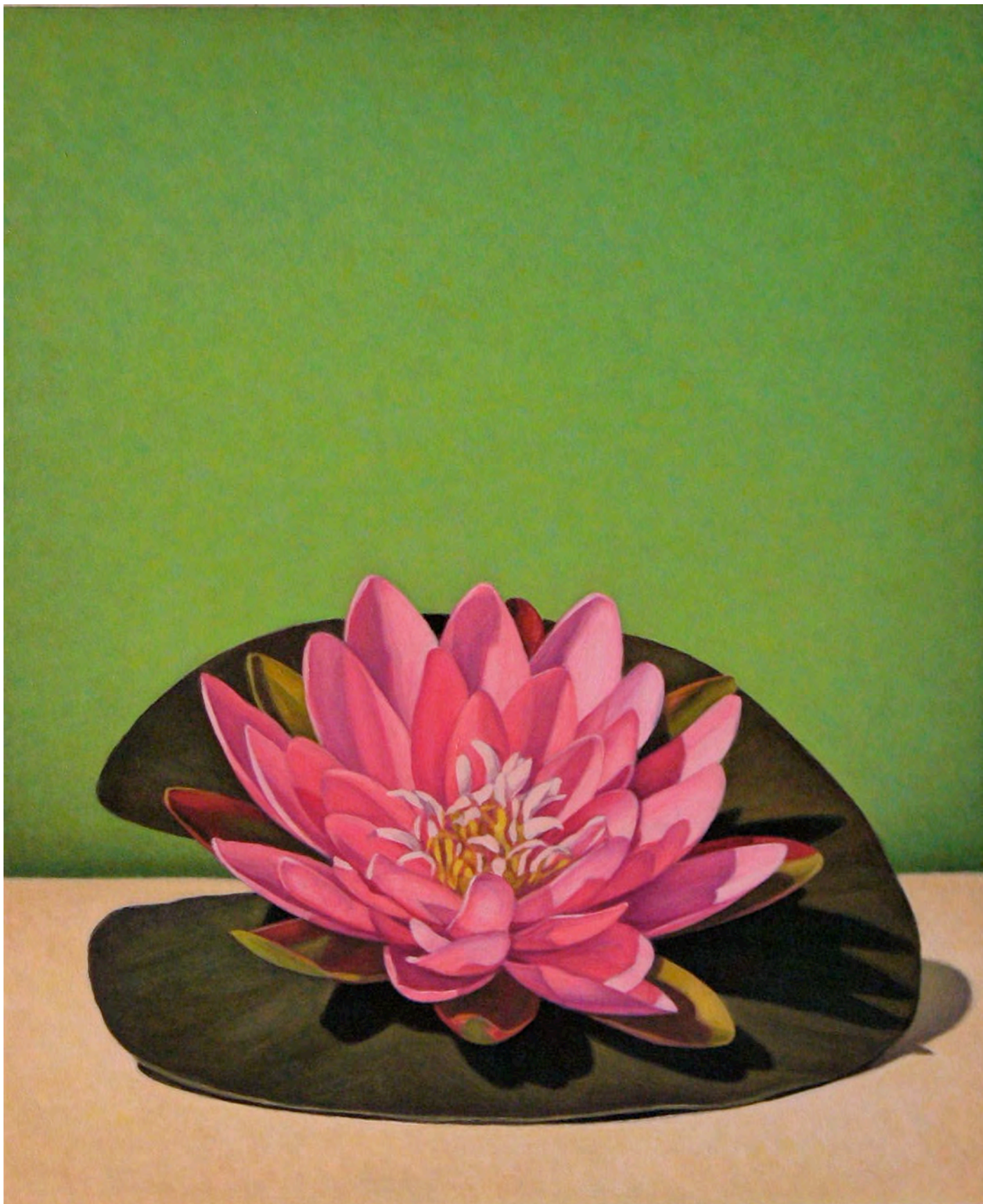
TAP HERE TO VISIT ENTIRE AUDIO INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST PATRICK LEE IN AN ENTIRE GALLERY WALK THROUGH ART EXHIBITION TOUR AT WESTERN PROJECT



INTERVIEW: JACEK LASKUS

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TAP HERE TO VISIT ENTIRE AUDIO INTERVIEW WITH CINEMATOGRAPHER AND FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHER JACEK LASKUS DISCUSSING HIS NEW BOOK AND FILM MAKING



INTERVIEW: MICHELLE ARBEAU

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SPECIAL THANKS TO GUEST ARTIST TOM GREGG
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EDITION WITH GUEST ARTIST: DAVID PALUMBO