

EMERGING ARTIST



"Royal Blue"

oil on linen

24" x 20"

Stephen Magsig

BIRTHPLACE

Toledo, Ohio

MAGSIG

CURRENT HOME

Stephen Magsig and his wife, Janet Hamrick, an abstract artist, live in a two-story Tudor in Ferndale, Michigan, one of Detroit's urban neighborhoods along the historic stretch of Woodward Avenue.

DESCRIPTION AND METHOD OF WORK

Magsig's moody, urban landscapes make you want to walk right into them. The way he handles light and shadow seems to capture every nuance of the ordinary street scene—down to the window reflections and texture of peeling paint. When your gaze first lands on one of Magsig's paintings of storefronts or factories, you think you're looking at a photograph because of his meticulous architectural detail. But upon closer inspection, you'll see the subtle rough edges of realism. "I'm not trying to recreate a photograph," says this self-taught artist. "I'm trying to paint a mood. This differentiates me from the photo-realist painters. Photographs are props or aids to me, but I'm not a slave to them."



"The Pale Dress"

oil on linen

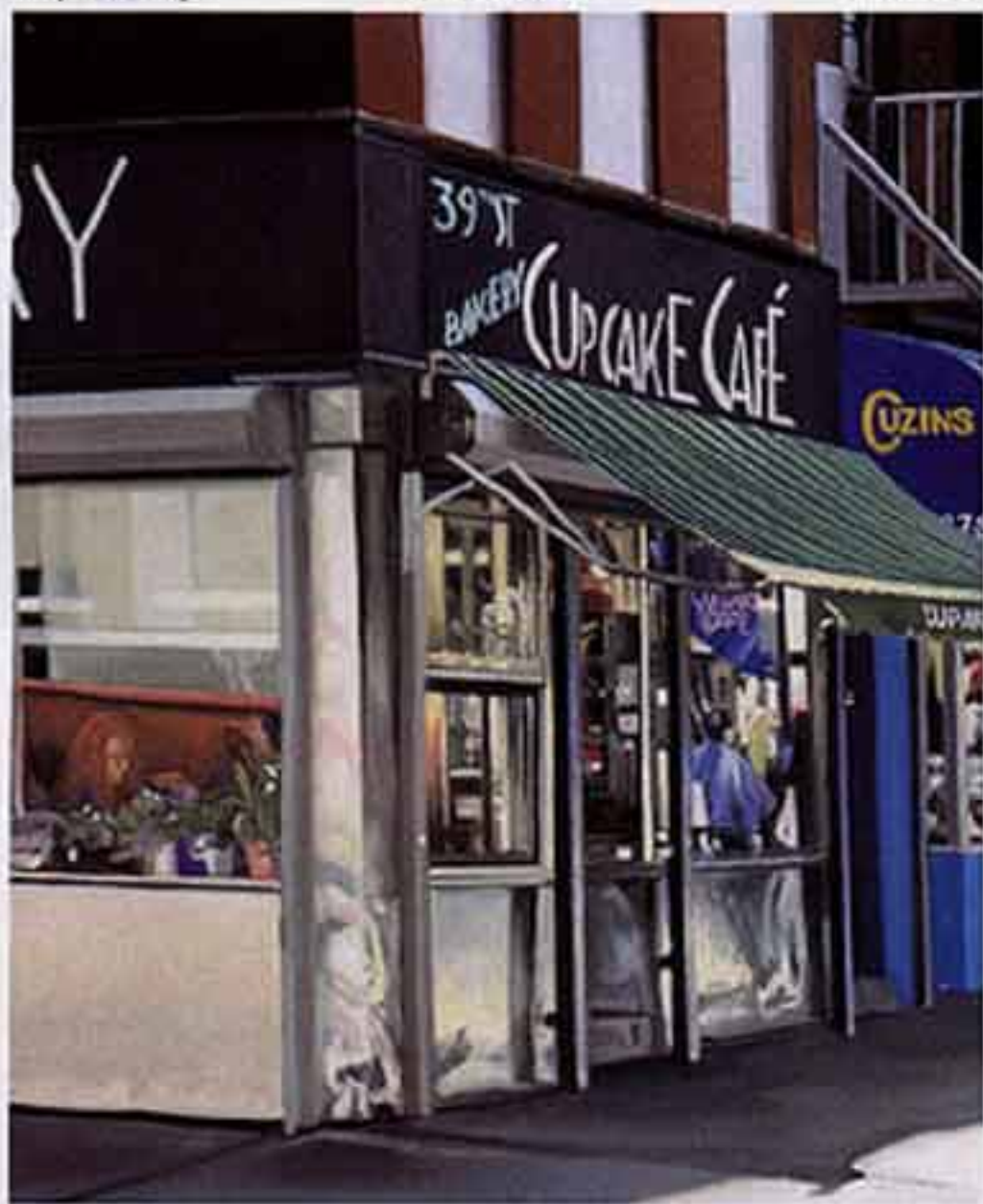
82" x 70"

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"31 Green" oil on linen 62" x 48"

"Cupcake Cafe" oil on linen 30" x 24"



"Franklin St. Reflections" oil on linen 70" x 60"

PAINTING METHOD

A painting begins after Magsig leafs through his catalog of slides shot during walking tours of Manhattan and Detroit. "I find one that really excites me at that time, depending on the mood I'm in," he says. Once he starts, he paints to completion rather than moving from one work to another. He completes the initial drawing in indigo and roughs in the composition with a paint brush. From there, he paints in the traditional dark-to-light method, referring to a color slide eyepiece view of the subject for greater clarity. "I have always been able to see and mix color realistically," notes Magsig, who works with hand-ground oil paints on lead-primed linen. "Each pigment is ground to a different coarseness, allowing for light to come through. The colors are very pure. I like working wet on wet, rather than letting a painting dry," he continues. "This allows me to control the edges and define shape, distance and value. The edge of a sunlit building is painted with hard edges. A shadow cast from a distant building, with reflected light, is painted with soft or blended edges."

PAINTING STYLE

Magsig bounces between two different styles of painting. One is more contemplative and moody, and the other is brighter with a more positive feel. "It's essentially the same subject, just handled in two different ways," he explains. "Most of my paintings are straight-on confrontations, but I also like to do hard perspectives, which are more abstract in composition."

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FIRST ARTISTIC INSPIRATION

In the second grade, Magsig created an elaborate mural on the chalkboard about a story the class was reading. "My teacher recognized that I had some talent and helped me to see this," he says.

BIGGEST BREAK

"My first solo show in New York in 1996 at the Chuck Levitan Gallery. Good things happened," Magsig says. "I sold all but two of my paintings, made contacts and got another show."

MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON

Magsig cites mentor Ed Fella, a former work associate and professor at the California Institute of Arts. "Ed was a pioneer in the application of deconstructive theory in graphic design. He created a piece of art every day and instilled in me what I needed to do to become a serious artist," he says. "From that point on I made a commitment to paint every day." He also recognizes his wife Janet as the "calming influence" in his life.

FAVORITE SUBJECT MATTER

One day in 1987, Magsig decided to go on a black-and-white photo shoot of Detroit—and found his calling. "I'd been painting abstracts for five years and was struggling for a subject that would work for me," he says. "I traveled all over the drudges of Detroit and shot all the factories—the desolation and destruction—with the hope that someone would notice that we were destroying our city. That was the turning point. Everything I wanted to say was in those buildings. My paintings are more about life—about empathy—than they are about buildings," he explains. "Buildings have enough humanity in them to convey that. They've been through so much."

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

Polk Competition Purchase Award, 2000.

PRICE RANGE OF WORK

Oils, \$1,000–12,000. Works on paper also are available.

GALLERY REPRESENTATION

George Billis Gallery,
526 W. 26th St., 9-F, New York, NY 10001,
(212) 645-2621, www.georgebillis.com.

—Barbara Wylan Sefton



"The Blue Column" oil on linen 50" x 24"

"Corner Broome & Mercer" oil on linen 50" x 24"

