ARTIST AND MODEL

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Maurice Guibert (1856-1913)
"Toulouse-Lautrec Painting Toulouse-Lautrec"
c. 1820
gelatin silver print image 7 6/8 x 8 7/8 inches
Collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

A Viewer's Invitation to the Voyage

by

Dr. Eva Seidner

In 2012, Mira Godard Gallery celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with *The Self-Portrait Show*, a curated exhibition which gathered the works of sixteen gallery artists around a central, unifying idea. This year's show, *Artist and Model*, expands the discourse from a dialogue between the artist-subject of the self-portrait and the viewer, to a three-way conversation involving the artist, the model and the viewer. It is to the viewer that I wish to draw your attention for a moment.

While there is no single correct way of seeing a given work, the participation of a collaborative viewer whose eyes and mind are resolutely open is indispensable to the enterprise of art. As the novelist Paul Auster has said, "It's the reader who writes the book and not the writer." John Cheever sees the relationship as not only crucial to the artist's act of creation but intimate, even erotic: "I can't write without a reader. It's precisely like a kiss– you can't do it alone." To enter and inhabit for a time the world of the artist's vision is to accept an invitation to a voyage, to travel with the consciousness that has given outward form and expression to a complex and sometimes shadowy interior landscape.

As a reader and collector, I have come over the years to believe in the value of "unlearning." Unlearning is letting go of a commitment to specific critical theories and judgments which one has in the past accepted as safe and reliable verities. Unlearning is not to be confused with forgetting, which diminishes us and makes us feel exposed or weakened. The opposite of forgetting is learning, which, as an act of acquiring and building knowledge, gives us a sense of empowerment and expertise. Yet unlearning, so much more difficult to achieve because of the psychological barriers we raise against it, is both liberating and enlightening. It allows you, as a viewer of art, to fully engage not only your deliberate but your intuitive capacities, to look fearlessly into a work and participate in its ambiguities, its mysteries, its often disturbing and subjective truths. At the same time you remain aware of—but do not superimpose—such information as historical context, artist's biography, art history, and so on.

Such viewing puts the work of art first, yielding in the end a more resonant and potentially transformative experience, not just in how you see a particular work but in how you feel about the everyday world around you. "To travel with the work and its ideas," argues the essayist and critic Rebecca Solnit, "is to open up an exchange that need never end."

I am not suggesting that it is possible, by some psychic sleight of hand, for a viewer to retrieve what the artist experienced in creating the work of art. The experience of making the object remains exclusively that of the artist. But what we can do as viewers is to travel to the borders of that experience and pay close attention to what we see, sense and understand. While it is different in kind from the artist's, the viewer's creative experience can be equally moving and revelatory. If we are patient enough and quiet enough, the artist's work will open to us.

One of the first assumptions I had to unlearn in approaching the seventeen works in the present exhibition was that the term "model" meant some variation on the idea of a naked or scantily-clad woman posing against a drape or spread languidly across a chaise. The words "muse" and "odalisque" came automatically to mind as well, as did the disjunctive, tearful face of Dora Maar. But like most words, "model" became slippery when I tried to grasp its extremities. For a model can also be an ideal, an exemplar, as in a "model home," or someone we wish to emulate, as in the phrase "role model." We also have model trains and model solar systems, which are exact miniaturized replicas of the real thing. "Model" is also used as a verb, meaning both "to pose" and "to shape," as in the phrase "to model in clay."

The "posing" aspect of its meaning is suggestive, implying that someone is projecting an identity which may or may not correspond to objective reality. In Michael Thompson's painting in

this show, for example, is the artist revealing that he is really a Catholic priest, or is his use of himself as a model in a priest's cassock metaphorical, an index to a life lived in accordance with the strict demands of his vocation as an artist? Modelling as posing also raises questions of who holds the balance of power. Is it the artist or the person holding the pose? Mary Pratt's model for the "Donna" paintings projects a wide range of attitudes toward the artist, and Pratt herself has said that much depended on whether she or Christopher Pratt took the original photograph on which her painting was based. In *The Undressed Art: Why We Draw*, Peter Steinhart tells us that a model's mood, attitude and personal "energy" have profound repercussions on the artistic process, sometimes to the extent of determining whether or not the session will produce a drawing which meets the artist's needs. "The body projects character, not just in the mere form, but in the way the model carries and displays it. . . . What you may see is the whole range of human possibility, depending on the model and depending on your own frame of mind. . . . It's the source, the beginning of everything."

In light of the number of works in this exhibition and the many ways in which the artists have responded to the theme, I have, as in *The Self-Portrait Show* catalogue essay, organized the artworks into groups. While the focus of each discussion is always on the individual work, a show of this kind is, by curatorial intention, more than the sum of its parts. It is my hope that the groupings will allow the viewer one possible overview of the exhibition as a whole.

I: Colours of the Spirit

"Nature," wrote the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, "always wears the colours of the spirit." It was his belief that immersion in nature freed human beings from the obstructive preoccupations of "mean egotism" (associated with urban society) and allowed them mystical insights into the workings of the universe, including their own place as integral parts of the harmonious whole. "In the woods . . . I become a transparent eye-ball," Emerson declared rhapsodically. "I am nothing, I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me."

Transcendentalism provides just one example in a long tradition of metaphysical thought in which rural landscapes are regarded as enchanted ground, places where the individual human spirit can merge with the infinite Over-Soul. Painted in the early 1930s, Frederick Varley's "Green and Gold, Portrait of Vera" and Lilias Torrance Newton's "The Guide, Millette" take very different approaches to the theme of the model situated amid a rural setting. What they have in common is their interest in depicting what each sees as a defining moment in which Nature and human nature come together.

Frederick H. Varley, "Green and Gold, Portrait of Vera" (page 79)

Who is this enigmatic beauty whose eyes seem to penetrate and know us, even as we gaze at her for the first time? If, as the saying goes, "the eyes are the windows of the soul," then surely these eyes are the windows of the Over-Soul. Varley was not a transcendentalist in the formal sense, but during his association with the Group of Seven in Toronto he had attended meetings of the Theosophical Society and retained strong convictions about Thought Forms and the ability of the spiritually enlightened to perceive them. In particular, he believed that each person, depending on his spiritual and emotional state at any given moment, emits vibrations which have their symbolic equivalents in the colour spectrum. In short, auras could be translated, through the medium of colour, into paintings.

Varley's model for this work was Vera Weatherbie, a student at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, where in 1926 Varley had come from Ontario to take up a teaching position. Twenty-nine years his junior, she became his lover and his muse, the subject of many of his drawings and paintings, as well as an artist in her own right who shared his views about the application of symbolic colours. By 1933, when he made this work, Varley had left his wife and children and was living with Vera in a cottage at Lynn Valley, on the outskirts of North Vancouver.

What always strikes me about this extraordinary painting is how completely the artist seems to have been held in thrall by his model, as if he were painting in a state of rapture. But while there is passion, even carnality, here, this work is clearly not the product of a spontaneous outpouring of uncontrolled emotion. Nor is it, strictly speaking, a portrait, despite Varley's subtitle for it. Rather it is the fully realized embodiment of an ideal: earthly Woman in a state of complete spiritual enlightenment.

Vera stands squarely and regally before us, her penetrating eyes focused on the mysteries of the natural world, which includes us as well as the artist, since we now occupy the position in which Varley stood when he painted her. Caught in a moment of mystical stillness, she easily embraces and unites contradictions: she is woman and goddess, Virgin and lover, innocence and experience, body and spirit, even masculinity and femininity. In order to communicate what he sees as Vera's complex dichotomies, Varley uses two styles of painting in dynamic contrast. He renders her face and neck more realistically and with more plasticity than he does her body, which looks stylized almost to the point of abstraction.

Brilliant sunlight illuminates the right side of Vera's face (the left side of the canvas, for us), touching her cheekbone with a bright pink highlight and creating shadows on the opposite side of her face and neck. We are given a strong indication of her facial contours, the sense of living flesh

and bone beneath the glowing skin, which looks warm and inviting to the touch. Her mouth is crimson and full-lipped, "bee-stung." Her long, smooth neck recalls the "tower of ivory" of the Old Testament's erotic "Song of Songs," and it, too, is warmed by the application of brown and purple hues. The area around her clavicle fairly pulses with heat, and the viewer's eye naturally follows the vertical line of her throat down to the spot where it disappears beneath her blouse.

Yet despite such highly charged expressions of femininity in her face and neck, the depiction of her body evokes masculinity. She is as broad-shouldered as a young man, and her arm, darkly outlined, looks strong and muscled. Her chest, covered by a shining golden drapery, looks flat under its "armour" of fabric. From the slope of her shoulder down to the bottom of the canvas, she has the look of a boy king, a youthful pharaoh, perhaps. The impression is further reinforced by the pattern at the neckline of her blouse, which recalls a golden necklace studded with gemstones.

According to Varley's system of symbolic colours, derived in part from Buddhist and other Eastern mystical traditions, greens, golds and blues (the last especially significant here, in Vera's luminous eyes) are the colours of pure spirit. Reds, pinks, mauves, purples, browns and ochres are the colours of corporeality and sexuality. It is worth noting that the golden blouse is complicated by a mauve, flame-shaped ornament: earthy heat rising amid celestial spirituality. Similarly her head-dress, painted primarily in blues and greens (though tinged in mauve near her temple and forehead), tumbles down like a cascade of pure, cleansing water.

In many religious traditions, the covering of a woman's hair is a symbol of her modesty and humility. Head coverings like those worn by nuns are part of the iconography associated with the Virgin Mary. In this regard, it is instructive to look at photographs from the nineteenth century, when photographers deliberately made their images look like paintings by employing the techniques of Pictorialism, devices such as staged settings and classical or biblical costumes. Julia Margaret Cameron's work, for example, abounds in madonnas and female martyrs, each a symbol of innocence. Her "Beatrice" is a representation not of Dante's beloved Beatrice, but of Beatrice Cenci, executed in 1599 for killing her father, who had raped her. She appears as the very epitome of virtue defiled, with her hair tumbling from beneath a twisted cloth and her eyes beneath their half-lowered lids gazing sadly at the ground which is soon to receive her. (See thumbnail, page 78.)

We have an even more striking comparison to Varley's "Portrait" in a photograph taken around the same time by his Vancouver colleague and friend John Vanderpant. His "Photograph of Vera Weatherbie" (see thumbnail, page 78) offers a thoroughly pictorial representation of Vera as the Madonna. Her head, slightly turned and bowed, is wrapped tightly in a scarf which completely covers her hair, and her eyes look modestly downward, completely hidden under their fringed lids.

There is a tightness at the corners of her mouth which makes the prospect of a man's kiss seem unthinkable. She is exquisite in her youth and beauty; and she is also unattainable– a paragon, the personification of immaculate virginity.

In his "Portrait of Vera," as we have seen, Varley both expands and subverts the conventions of the Madonna portrait, and so it is hardly surprising that he does the same with the conventions of background setting. Vera poses on the veranda of the cottage at Lynn Valley, yet we see nothing of the mountains and water and towering trees we associate with the rural British Columbia which moved Varley so deeply and inspired him to paint the mystical landscapes he produced during this period. Even the minimal suggestions of architecture he provides here– the dark green doorpost and lighter green overhang– seem intended only to reinforce, in their colours, the idea of his model's heightened spirituality, and to echo the vertical lines of her head covering and her dignified posture. Indeed, all particulars of the Lynn Valley landscape have been absorbed into a terracotta field of colour. It is as if she were standing in the shimmering heat of a New Mexico desert.

Varley may have decided that the inclusion of identifiable landscape elements would unnecessarily complicate his composition and draw the viewer's attention away from his model. Or he may have found it sufficient to convey, through colour, the essence of the landscape, its terrestrial "vibrations". He may even have painted his own aura of physical passion, transposing it into the colours of the earth, against which she shines all the more resplendently.

Vera stands, finally, in the colour-saturated radiance of her own being, the radiance which filled the artist's eyes and fills ours. As Emerson's colleague Thoreau said, "It is not what you look at that matters. It's what you see."

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Lilias Torrance Newton, "The Guide, Millette" (page 103)

We are fortunate to have in this exhibition two major paintings from the 1930s: "Vera," from a member of the Group of Seven and "The Guide, Millette," from a founder of the Beaver Hall Group. Both artists depict their models in landscape settings and identify them, largely through the use of colour, as visionaries. In addition, the works present examples of a male and a female gaze directed at a model of the opposite sex. The gender differences affect not only the artists' ways of seeing and projecting their subjects but also the viewer's perceptions of the relationship between artist and model.

As we have seen, Varley's masculine gaze produced an image of Vera which in its sensibility is both reverent and carnal. Lilias Torrance Newton's gaze is necessarily more circumspect and her portrayal of Millette less overtly sensual. Such indirection on her part was necessary in light of the societal strictures of the time, which defined a woman's modesty and domesticity as primary virtues. The Domestic Angel was a nineteenth-century stereotype which had crossed the all-too-permeable border from popular fiction into the real world, where it took hold and proved to be stubbornly enduring. Respectable women were seen mostly as Mistresses of the Hearth, raising their children and serving as spiritual helpmeets to their husbands, who each day returned wearily to the haven of home from the fallen, outside world of getting and spending. Even the rise of the self-assertive New Woman in the 1920s and '30s did little to mitigate the Domestic Angel fantasy in Canada, where the British North America Act would not designate women as "persons" until October of 1929. Torrance Newton herself ran afoul of this convention and suffered the consequences, when in 1933 the Art Gallery of Toronto refused to exhibit "Nude in a Studio," her painting of an athletic woman sporting pubic hair, a pair of strappy green sandals and an unapologetic expression. The committee decreed that the image was unsuitable, a picture of a specific, brazenly naked woman rather than that of an idealized nude.

Marriage to Frederick Newton in 1921 had conferred the financial means to expand Torrance Newton's career, but when after ten years the marriage collapsed and her husband abandoned her and their young child, she was faced with the necessity of maintaining a steady supply of portrait commissions in order to support herself and the boy, Forbes. (Her portrait of him, "My Son," also appears in the present show and is discussed in another part of this essay.) By this time her reputation as a painter was firmly established and she was mixing with moneyed patrons who could afford to commission portraits even during the Depression. A Montreal dealer describes them as mostly "men, robed and gowned . . . bankers, university presidents, judges, lawyers and captains of industry." An important part of Torrance Newton's process was chatting with her sitters, putting them at ease while she sketched and waited for, in her words, the most "attractive pose," the most favourable "impression." One assumes that the vast majority of her subjects would have held conservative and traditional views about women, even self-supporting artists, and the cordial conversations between artist and model would have conformed to such conventions.

"The impact of the sitter's personality on mine is what I paint," Torrance Newton told an interviewer, giving us a point of entry into the complex mix of idealization and intimacy we encounter in "The Guide, Millette." The impression she has caught is one of virile strength in body and character, self

reliance combined with tenderness and introspection. Here is a working man in his element, at home and at ease in himself and in Nature. In its composition and its use of colour Torrance Newton's painting presents the model and the landscape as natural extensions of each other. The blues and greens of his plain shirt and overalls, the brilliant yellow of his straw hat all echo the colours of water and trees and of the sunlight which touches and warms them all.

The organizational principle and recurring motif of the composition is the triangle. Millette's body is positioned at the forefront, so close to the viewer that its triangular form extends beyond both sides of the canvas, and the apex of the triangular straw hat continues past the uppermost edge to a vanishing point beyond our view. We find a similar composition in a painting by Torrance Newton's colleague and sometime mentor Edwin Holgate, whose "Fire Ranger" (1925-26) depicts a single solid figure in close-up, dressed in a toque and heavy jacket, his head turned to the side as he scrutinizes what may be a hazardous situation "offstage." The similar poses and triangular compositions of both paintings reinforce the idea of the central figure's strength and stability and impart a sense of calm, deriving from our perception of each man as competent and reliable. However, in mood and evocation of character, the paintings differ widely: Holgate's fire ranger is a burly man of action, while Torrance Newton's "guide," in addition to being able, is contemplative and introspective.

She uses the triangle as a motif throughout the painting. The lines of Millette's dark, arching eyebrows and deep-set eyes create smaller triangles, as do the wings of his collar and the three points of light which define the shiny brass fastenings of his overalls. The trees in the background are presented as massed triangles, which permit triangular patches of sky to reflect in the placid water. The style evokes Cézanne's landscapes so strongly that the entire background of Torrance Newton's painting is more European than Canadian in character, especially when considered alongside landscape paintings produced in the same period by the Group of Seven.

Each time I view "Millette" I feel how completely Torrance Newton has given herself over to the pleasure of painting it, how she luxuriates in the peacefulness of the setting and her own indulgence in rich colours, especially the dazzling brightness of the yellow hat as the sun strikes it. For most of her career she was accustomed, indeed confined, to cities, painting august personages in black robes. (Her delight in the colours of women's clothing was one of the reasons she cited for her enthusiasm for painting female subjects.) "Millette" would not have been a commission, and the model may have taken time out from his workday at Torrance Newton's own expense. Records indicate that he was a "game keeper" or "warden" near St. Adolphe D'Howard, on Lac Saint-Joseph in the Laurentians north of Montreal. Torrance Newton made the painting there, and presented it as

a gift to a lifelong friend who had long ago been engaged to the artist's brother, killed in World War I. In later life this friend extended the hospitality of her home and Torrance Newton gave her the painting in gratitude. It is not clear whether the artist created it specifically for her friend, but what is clear is that the painting is a labour of love.

Moreover, a subtle and carefully layered kind of attachment to the model– or for Torrance Newton's re-invention of him– radiates from the painting. She has transformed the game warden into a "guide," and she intends the word to convey a metaphysical meaning as well as its literal one. In his left hand he holds the barrel of a hunting rifle, but neither the gun nor the hand receive her customary attention. This she reserves for the depiction of Millette's handsome face.

The face has the contours of yet another triangle, softened by the curve of the chin. The heightened flesh tones, warmed and accentuated with deep reds and browns, reflect Millette's life as a seasoned outdoorsman, mature and vigorous. His complexion is weathered, yet there is nothing rough about him, quite the contrary. He has an air of natural refinement and self-assured nobility; he is Nature's gentleman. There is a delicacy in the planes of his cheeks and forehead to which Torrance Newton deliberately draws our attention by lightening the areas just above and below his eyes. The eyes themselves are as blue as water, a visionary's eyes. As a warden, he is entrusted with watching over the lake and its wildlife; as a guide, his territory is metaphysical. Torrance Newton makes her model's eyes appear introspective, even dreaming, and at the same time deliberately focused on something in the distance.

Yet the model's appeal is not exclusively spiritual. In the detailed attention she devotes to the lower portion of his face, especially to his mouth, there is evidence of her strong physical and emotional attraction to him. It is there in his full lower lip, brushed with a white highlight, in the delicate patch of grey in his moustache, in the dimple beside the corner of his mouth. Did the artist, an impassioned, self-reliant woman no longer in the flower of youth, making her own way in the world and raising a son alone, project onto her model a wish-fulfillment dream of the ideal man?

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II: Framing the Viewer: Bringing the Outsider In

Recently I eavesdropped as a docent led a group of schoolchildren through a room at the Art Gallery of Ontario. As they gathered around Waterhouse's "Lady of Shalott," peering closely at the lonely heroine imprisoned at her loom, the docent explained the theme of doomed love and the significance

to the narrative of various objects which Waterhouse had depicted in careful detail. Then, by way of conclusion, she said, "Now step back so that you can see the whole picture."

This is, of course, good, time-honoured advice. In order to get a full and satisfying experience of a painting, we must take in the forest as well as the trees. In representational works, and particularly in those with a strong narrative component, we may become so preoccupied with the details of the story that we fail to appreciate how other elements, aspects of the composition, for example, affect our perceptions and responses. Standing back from the picture plane, we are outsiders looking in at a world of the artist's invention.

Sometimes, however, artists deliberately withhold from us the option to step back. In this section I have grouped together works by Michael Thompson, Jeremy Smith and Alex Colville which seem to me to turn the tables on the viewer, by subverting this conventional approach to looking at art from a place safely outside the world of the painting. Through the construction of walls and frames, these artists deliberately draw us into the precincts of their confined settings, with the result that we find ourselves both inside and outside the enclosures. Though invisible, we are intimately present and integral to the relationship between artist and model.

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Michael Thompson, "Priest and Black Dog" (page 93)

Solitude is more than a theme in Michael Thompson's work. It is the country in which his models pursue their lives, even when they are in the presence of others. His signature compositions for the past three decades have featured lone central figures in ambiguous settings whose very atmospheres are permeated by the models' own sense of dislocation: ubiquitous threat without, existential distress within.

In the early 1980s, Thompson devoted a series of drawings and paintings to Mary Suha, an empress of punk culture who frequented the grungy Yonge Street strip. A reviewer at the time dubbed these works "leather realism." Kitted out in black and bristling with Goth accessories—spiked hair, piercings, chains, studded cuffs and dangling handcuffs—Thompson's model encountered on the street would have seemed the very embodiment of aggression and danger. Yet the artist posed and situated her so as to reveal her vulnerability and disillusionment, visible through the trappings of defiance and rebellion. She is wholly herself in these works, and she is also representative of something in each one of us. (See thumbnail, page 92.)

By the late 1980s, the solitary figure dressed in black had undergone a sea change. The profound disparity between "seeming" (superficial appearance) and "being" (emotional and psychological states) remained, but the artist introduced a startling variation. "Priests" (see page 92) presents what appear to be three Catholic priests leisurely walking and conversing in a park by the edge of a pond. The setting was based on the Grand Séminaire in Thompson's native Montreal. In the foreground, reflecting the sky, is a large expanse of shining black water, its banks shored up by walls of concrete. The implied reference is to baptism, the submersion of the body in order that the soul may be released into eternal life– Heaven, symbolized by the reflected sky.

However, certain details are discordant and disturbing. The retaining walls of the pond are crumbling, suggesting an erosion of faith, in particular faith in formal religious institutions. Thompson's treatment of the dark water, bracketed by reeds and water lilies, reminds me of the brook in which John Everett Millais placed his drowned Ophelia, whose suicide would have automatically barred her soul's entry into eternity, according to Church law. Certainly the black pond in Thompson's painting appears treacherous and sinister, evoking not the waters of life but the oblivion of death.

Thompson places his trio of figures on the far side of this threatening divide, high up in the composition. They appear remote, indeed inaccessible, as we look up at them from the lower ground which is our vantage point. But most important are the position and gesture of the young priest. Hanging back from the others, he is excluded from their conversation. His posture is one of apparent humility and deference to the older men, but what is most conspicuous is his separation from them and his acknowledgement of us, the viewers. Looking directly at us, he seems to issue some kind of warning or caution. Have we, perhaps, intruded into territory where we are not welcome? Or does his glance signify something altogether different? Is it a kind of ironic aside?

This work is, indeed, something quite other than a straightforward depiction of religious devotion and brotherhood, just as the imagery of dissolution suggests. Thompson has said that his models for the aging priests were two of his friends who were not practising Catholics. The model for the young priest was Thompson himself, who had abandoned formal religion years earlier, "when [he] reached the age of reason." All three men donned their cassocks purely in the pursuit of a secular work of art which deftly rejects codified religion, and the irony of this situation imbues the painting.

"Priests" is a forerunner of "Priest and Black Dog," the work in the present exhibition. Once again, Thompson is his own model, dressed as a Catholic priest. However here the imagery has been pared down to a few salient elements and the model-viewer relationship is more intimate and sharply

focused, unmitigated by the presence of other figures or by an elaborated landscape setting. What we see is the unembellished totality of a cloistered world. The black cassock is no longer an ironic disguise but a metaphor in which the idea of strict adherence to one's calling is central. Catholic priests, unlike their Anglican counterparts, may not marry and they must remain separate from worldly entanglements which deflect their attention from their service to God. Thompson transposes the concept of complete religious devotion into his secular world, where it is art which is his true vocation. This subtle work conveys the monastic intensity with which the artist lives his life.

He walks a straight and narrow path which is studded with stones. To his immediate right is a high and apparently endless wall, extending beyond the top and both sides of the canvas. The wall has a ledge, but it is too low to enable anyone to climb over. It has a gap underneath, but the gap is too narrow for anyone to crawl through. The infinite expanse of Thompson's wall reminds me of the infinite nature of the divine Spirit in the gospel song, "Rock my Soul in the Bosom of Abraham": "So high, can't get over it / So low, can't get under it / So wide, can't get around it."

Implied but not shown is the opposite wall which completes the enclosure where the priest will dedicate his days to fulfilling the demands of his calling. And it is inside this other wall where we too stand, observing him as he glances momentarily back at us. We stand at his level, on common ground and quite close to him, uncomfortably close, both for him and for ourselves. His preoccupied expression as he stops in mid-stride signals the fact that we have interrupted his meditation on a troubling problem or his pursuit of an elusive idea. We are intruders and outsiders, in his world for a time, but not of it.

He does, however, have a companion. The priest's dog walks so closely by his side that their shadows merge, and in terms of the painting's palette and composition, the two function as almost a single, central figure. (The image strongly evokes Alex Colville's "Dog and Priest.") Many of us automatically associate dogs with loyalty and friendship, and sometimes with obedience. Certainly the animal in this painting seems content in the priest's company, keeping pace with him or stopping, as the man decides, and doing so willingly, without being tethered to a leash. Thompson's ironic cast of mind seems playful here, as the viewer notices that it is the man, not the beast, who is wearing the dog collar.

But as always in this artist's work, outward appearances are misleading. Black dogs appear throughout Western literature and visual arts as symbols of depression and self-doubt, and as harbingers of death. Robert Burton makes extensive metaphorical reference to black dogs in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), for example, and William Styron uses the same image to describe

his nearly fatal depression in *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness* (1990). These dark symbolic associations counterbalance our first impression of the priest's dog as a simple embodiment of man's best friend. And they are key to our understanding of the ambiguous relationship in this painting between man and beast, and between seeming and being. For what we may be tempted to see as a sentimental attachment is in fact a kind of existential acceptance, an acknowledgement on the part of the priest of the unalterable fact that life and death always travel together. However conscientiously the priest follows his path, he is a mortal man. Someday he will reach the end of his road, and the black dog, eternally in its prime, will become someone else's companion. This is perhaps why the animal takes no notice of the viewer's intrusion but continues to look forward, alert to something that lies ahead– something the priest may not yet see, or may not wish to.

Thompson does not flinch from showing us his alter ego as a man well into his middle age. In conversation, he acknowledges that he is now about the same age as his friends were, when they posed for "Priests," and since that time both men have died. While his pose in "Priest and Black Dog" is identical to the one in "Priests," the effect on the viewer of the later painting is entirely different. Whereas the young man was coolly ironic, his grey-haired incarnation, with his clenched jaw and furrowed brow, looks severe and impatient. He projects a sense of urgency, an eagerness to resume his thoughts and work, which the viewer has interrupted. Even his hands do not seem comfortable, clasped in idleness behind his back. The fierce brightness of the sun on his forehead reminds him that every moment is luminous with possibility, and so every moment demands his complete attention and engagement.

There is much to admire in this painting, and much I have not explored in detail here, such as Thompson's meticulous brushwork and intricate layering of colours and glazes. From a distance the palette has a restrained and muted look, appropriate to the theme of the artist's controlled life and contained world. Beiges, browns and blacks predominate, the lighter colours proceeding downward from the top of the wall, (enlivened by the strong vertical lines of its planks) and gradually darkening until they meet the horizontal band which defines the shadow cast by the ledge near the wall's base. A second dark horizontal band indicates the gap beneath the wall, below which stretches the path. Tonally, the painting becomes increasingly "heavy" as it moves downward toward the earth. The centrally placed priest and dog are mostly black (except for the priest's skin tones), with the single strong exception of his narrow white collar, a thematic and visual focal point of the work.

But stand up close and you see various yellows, blues, greens, oranges and other colours delicately shining through myriad layers of transparent glaze. We may not consciously register all this from a distance, but we do see it, and it subtly plays on our perceptions. The black of the dog, for example, is not the black of the priest's cassock. Looking closely at the dog's back, we see that the sun illuminates all kinds of warm colours, which have been applied in brushstrokes as fine as individual hairs and in the direction in which the dog's coat would naturally grow. We can almost feel how warm and soft the animal would be to the touch, how strong and full of life—a life which is, ironically, preternatural. The black of the priest's cassock is, by way of contrast, flatter and less vibrant, partly because Thompson is rendering cloth rather than an oily coat of dog hair, and partly because the priest's life of sustained habit is finite and earthbound.

Thompson's painting has the intensity and concentration of a poem. There is nothing extra here, no dissembling or embellishment. The artist offers us the distilled experience of his personal confession, along with a sharp moment of insight into how it feels to inhabit his life. This bravely candid work frames the question which confronts us all: In the time I have been granted, will I succeed in saying all I have to say?

~

Jeremy Smith, "Artist and Model" (page 109)

Quietly, authoritatively, the model enjoins us to focus. Her injunction is part challenge and part invitation. The challenge comes from the direct, even confrontational gaze of her eyes, the straight line of her mouth, the strong set of her jaw. The invitation is softer, more seductive, more oblique; it employs but is not limited to her physical beauty. In the loose, open folds of her scarf and especially in the portal created by the positioning of her hands and wrists, the muse invites us in, offering access to the world she and the artist create together. What we will learn when we have entered is that we, the viewers, are integral to that world of art-making, as necessary to it as the artist and model themselves.

Smith brings us to this knowledge using a series of frames, beginning with the physical object which surrounds the painting and which he himself constructs by hand. As in his painting, "Mechanic," included in 2012's *The Self-Portrait Show*, the frame does more than enhance the appearance of the painting. It carries part of the thematic weight of the work. As we visually step into this first, outer frame, we begin to take in just how many internal frames the artist has incorporated into his image: the carved frame of the chair; the frame of the mirror, whose profile

includes outer and inner frames (touched with golden highlights); the pocket-door frame, with its vertical, frame-like mouldings; the frame (again with an inner, gilded frame) around the painting on the wall behind the artist; the window frame with its closed blinds; the frame of the leaded, stained glass lunette above. At every stage of our journey into the depths of the room, we encounter yet another frame, another layer of time and space.

It is the frame around the mirror which first leads us to suspect that we may not be seeing what we thought we were seeing. If everything compositionally behind the model is a reflection, then the artist must be in front of her. This realization, in turn, sets off in the viewer a process of progressive and at first disorienting refocusing. And so we begin again: if the artist is sitting in front of the model, then it follows that he is sitting behind us. We occupy the space between artist and model, despite the fact that our reflection does not appear in the mirror.

No wonder the model wears a challenging expression. She knows that she beckons us into a world in which the laws of physical space contradict those we take for granted in our everyday lives. This "through the looking glass" convention is common in literature, especially in speculative, psychological and all forms of genre fiction. Lewis Carroll's Alice tumbles into a world wholly unpredictable. The Lady of Shalott looks directly at Sir Lancelot and the magic mirror cracks from side to side. The madman gazes impassively at his reflection in the mirror, and his double salutes him with a wink.

Such stories tell us that surfaces are deceiving, not because they lie (though they sometimes deliberately do so) but because they show us the most superficial layer of reality and leave us to conclude that this one part stands for the whole. For some characters the mirror's reflection is sufficient. They see themselves and only themselves, and so for them there can be no adventure, no journey of self-discovery. The true protagonist delves beneath the surface into unfamiliar territory, both physical and psychological. For him the reflection is only the beginning of the journey, and his reward for facing its hardships is enlightenment and an expansion of his own identity.

By placing us in front of a mirror which both confuses our spatial orientation and fails– or refuses– to reflect us, Smith demonstrates that reality, far from being obvious and simple, is mysterious and multi-layered. Its possibilities are as open as the model's splayed fingers. The table top seems to offer stability, but it, too, has a reflecting surface. It remains to us to undertake the journey of discovery. And Smith relies on us to make the effort, for he sees the roles of artist and viewer as complementary and interdependent. To capture and hold truth is the work of the artist. To open all our faculties to the communication of that truth is the work, and the privilege, of the viewer. Without this connection, without our willingness to explore the "interior" world of the mirror, even the greatest art is mute.

The artist gives us a kind of map in which time and space are conflated. Behind the half-open pocket-door is the past, represented by his first painting, made thirty years ago, of his wife Meg ("Head of a Woman," 1984), and also by the antique stained glass window. In front of the door is Smith's muse and our guide. In his depiction of the model, he has much to say about the nature of time, particularly with respect to the relationship between the artist and his subject. Like Colville, Smith has for decades used his wife as his primary, indeed nearly exclusive, model, and like Colville, he continues to paint her as she ages. Delicate wrinkles appear around her eyes, and the lines around her mouth are gently deepening.

Yet her hands and flesh seem eternally youthful, impervious to time, and her skin rivals her silk scarf in its fine, smooth texture and softness. Her sensuality is almost palpable in the glowing palette and brushwork and in the rendering of light and shadow. Time seems almost to stand still.

Here is the quintessence of the model as muse, timeless and inexhaustible as the subject and inspiration of art, and at the same time compellingly erotic and present. The carefully draped scarf covers part of her upper body, yet sends out an even more erotic message by suggesting the parts beneath the table. Her wrists frame an inner space, an opening through which are visible the seductive folds of silk. All such details provide visual links between the ideal and the real, and between Eros and the impulse to create.

The artist appears in a self-portrait. Whereas the model commands the foreground of the painting, he consigns himself to the background (in compositional terms only; we recall that physically he is in front of the model). His eyes are averted, focused like his mind on his drawing. His posture is one of humility and service as he bends to his task. His air of devotion is unmistakable. Concentration wrinkles his brow, but so, too, does age. There is no suggestion here that he partakes of the model's idealized status, her ability as muse to transcend time. For Smith it is the daily practice and honing of human skills, the tireless refinement of a personal vision, which define the artist.

After the first of many afternoons I spent in the company of this painting, I turned out the lights in the gallery and prepared to go home. Of course I had to turn back for one last look. There was the model, still shining in the internal incandescence of the painting, the light coming from her right and falling on those open hands, that arched wrist. And there, over her shoulder, was the smaller figure, the artist, in his plain white shirt, wielding his pencil. It seemed to me that he had painted himself in less radiant light, had given himself the lesser glow. It was as if she were the sun and he, the moon.

~

Alex Colville, "Morning" (page 80)
"Woman with Revolver" (page 81)

"Frames and Variations"
A short fiction fashioned around nine Colville paintings

For our seventh anniversary Brad came home just to give me a car. It was a convertible, low and tapering, the glassy red of a candy apple. I didn't have the heart to tell him I hated it. I accepted the gift as his way of consoling me for all the business trips, the wrenching absences past and still to come. These I had already accepted as inevitable, but as they lengthened into weeks at a time I felt our life pulling away from me, like a train getting smaller and smaller until it disappears in the distance. Even the desire to paint had left me.

At first I kept the thing locked up in the garage. But as Brad continued to travel, I took to exploring the city in which we lived. I drove aimlessly, discovering family neighbourhoods and industrial stretches of emptiness I hadn't even known existed. I would start by picking a main road and following it to some random intersection where I'd suddenly veer off, turning into side streets, turning and turning until I was lost. I would wait for that feeling of contained panic which for me was a kind of freedom. Eventually I would blunder back into familiar territory, and as I made my way home in the gathering dusk I would snatch glimpses into people's dining rooms and kitchens and bedrooms as soft, warm lights began to glow in the windows.

One night in September, just before dawn, the phone startled me out of a dream. I had been riding a bicycle, following a crow that was flying low just ahead of me, over a field of tall grasses which rustled as the wind passed over them. I could taste the sweet air, feel it cooling my cheeks and lifting my bangs from my forehead. Half asleep, I fumbled the phone to my ear. Brad's voice boomed, "Great news, Anna! They're starting the project." He waited for me to respond but I was too slow. "Honey," he prompted, "we're in!"

"That's . . . wonderful," I managed, my voice scratchy and sere. He was in Hong Kong. It had to be late afternoon there.

"It's more than wonderful—it's damned amazing! This is the big one, the Deal. Anna, we're going to live here." He was waiting for me to say something, but my voice had gone. "Wait till you see this city, honey—it's unbelievable!"

I barely took in the rest of what he said, only the fact that at some point the call ended. I sat still on the edge of the bed. What had just happened? Brad knew that I couldn't live in a city like Hong Kong. Hadn't we always dreamed that one day we'd settle in the country or in some small

town? I would paint and he would run his software business from home. We would have a garden and we'd sell our flowers and vegetables at the local farmers' market. Hadn't we spent weekends exploring, seeking out the prettiest town, the ideal house, not bothered that it was unattainable for now? We had plenty of time, and we had each other.

I'm not sure how long I sat, feeling chilled, rubbing my eyes and trying to get my brain to clear. Then, with a jolt, I saw. He hadn't expected me to be happy about his big announcement– he didn't really need me to be happy. He just needed me to accept it and co-operate.

No, that couldn't be right. He loved me. He had always loved me, he said, from the first moment he saw me. I was nervously hosting an engagement party in my apartment for Evelyn, whom I'd known since we were six. Brad was her fiancé's best friend, soon to be his best man. I was carrying a big tray of shrimp hors d'oeuvres when I tripped, spattering bright red cocktail sauce all over the front of my blouse. As I sputtered and looked desperate, Brad appeared with a damp tea towel. "A minor scene of carnage," he said gently, as I blotted hopelessly at the stains. "Good thing you weren't carrying bowls of borscht." I could still feel the pressure of his steady hand on my shoulder, the warmth in his eyes. He always referred to that evening as "our first date."

I was smiling now but tears stung my eyes. This ancient little bungalow, which we'd managed to pay for and had filled with my paintings and a few odd pieces of garage sale furniture, suddenly felt like a tomb. I showered and dressed and headed for the car. I needed the feeling of the padded steering wheel in my hands, the curve of the leather seat against my back. I needed motion.

I decided to take the main road north, away from the city. It was still early morning, only about five o'clock, and there weren't many cars yet. I drove faster than usual, gearing the gas pedal to my adrenalin rush. In the east the sky was brightening with thin striations of orange light, brilliant as neon. A green sign directed me to a highway, and I took the ramp that led east.

By this time I was talking to myself, rehearsing arguments and rebuttals, trying to imagine Brad's replies. I had to prepare myself. Everything with Brad was a negotiation. "Look, I know you're on a mission," I began, "but at some point—and I know you didn't mean to– you left me behind."

"I'm not doing this just for me, Anna. I'm doing it for us."

"We're not the same 'us' we used to be. Do you remember what it was like to spend time together? Brad, do you even still love me?"

"Anna, since when are you so needy and pathetic?" No, of course he wouldn't say that, not at all. I despised the self-pity in my voice and pushed the gas pedal harder, as if more speed could take me away from myself.

Try something more dignified: “Brad, do you ever ask yourself why you’re doing what you’re doing? What would all this wealth you’re chasing bring us that we don’t already have? And, more important, what would it take away?”

“You’re kidding, right Anna? It would bring luxury and take away poverty. It’s a simple function of adding and subtracting.” I could see his raised hands, like scales balancing.

One last try: “Brad, you’re not the only one in this marriage. We promised to honour and cherish each other, remember?”

He wouldn’t skip a beat: “Absolutely. We can honour and cherish in luxury, in Hong Kong.”

So caught up was I that I didn’t notice the scenery change. I was far from the city and even the sprawl of the suburbs, speeding along a secondary highway that ran amid fields and scattered buildings, barns and sheds, and red brick houses with wooden verandas and sharply pitched roofs. Dairy cows ambled, cropping a sunlit pasture. By this time the sky was a luminous blue, with white clouds sailing like clippers on a windy sea. I slowed down and lowered all my windows as far as they would go and drank in the green fragrance of the air.

A hand-lettered plywood sign shaped like an arrow appeared by the side of the road: FOOD AND GAS. Someone had a corny sense of humour. In any case, the car and I both needed fuel.

Two hours later, heading north through a landscape golden with autumn, I saw the crow. It flew all alone over the fields, in a line as straight as an arrow, about twenty feet ahead of me. We proceeded at an even pace in our parallel paths, always in sight of each other, as if by common consent.

We came to the outskirts of a town. A speed limit was posted, and beyond it a cluster of signs—Lions’ Club, Big Brothers, Farmers’ Market Saturdays—and then the single-lane highway became tree-lined Main Street, with storefronts and sidewalks and a small park, in the centre of which was a war memorial. Atop the plinth stood a lone bronze soldier, wearing one of those rounded, shallow helmets from the First World War. People were sitting in twos and threes on park benches, chatting together in the warm September light.

When the crow fluttered up into a maple tree, I pulled over to the curb and parked. The bird let out a string of chortling wooden notes that sounded like a stick being dragged along a picket fence. Then it turned its shining back on me and rose into the sky. It wheeled once over the Seven Crows Café and was gone.

I got out of the car and walked across the sidewalk into the café. I hoped the locals were friendly.

By the time the leaves were falling, I had rented a house in Seven Crows Landing. It was a wooden frame house, tall and narrow and painted the colour of a fresh egg yolk. The café had proven to be Information Central. Betty, the waitress who took my order, complimented me on my car (she must have moved away from the window, I thought, when she saw me crossing the street) and asked if I was just passing through town. No, I said, I might stay a while, if I could find the right place to rent. She smiled as if I'd surprised her with a gift and directed me to the realty office, where Ruth, the agent, was already waiting. She was all business, with a pearly manicure and double-knit suit. She asked a few short questions and I answered as confidently as I could, all the while in a state of mild disbelief that the conversation was taking place at all. Finally she stood up and plucked a set of keys from the board behind her desk. "You're very lucky," she announced. "I've got just the place." From the moment I saw the yellow house, I knew I was home.

As I crossed the threshold, the place felt somehow familiar, although it was furnished like a Country Home showroom, everything matching. The tables and chairs and even the dishes seemed to have been bought not only in the same store but on the same day. Upstairs, the main bedroom had a jarring baronial look, thanks to a heavy oak four-poster bed. A second bedroom held only a dressing table and mirror, and a third, smaller room was empty. It had all the personality of a stage set, but I didn't care. The anonymity felt cleansing.

The house itself was Victorian, quirky and delightful. I exclaimed over the fireplaces, with pillars painted to look like marble, and the high ceilings with their etched glass chandeliers, once gaslit but now wired for electricity. I loved the marble checkerboard of the kitchen floor and I adored the old-fashioned bathtub, which stood on legs that were dolphins on cresting waves.

"Oh, Ruth, it's wonderful!" I said. "It's like time travel. This house feels enchanted!" I turned to catch her smile.

She didn't smile. She shot me a look that said I was a stranger in town, a city girl in a red sports car. If I didn't watch myself, people would talk, especially once Ruth got on her cellphone to Betty, who was chattily making the rounds at the Seven Crows, coffeepot in hand.

Finally she cleared her throat and said, "Did I mention there's an attic?" I shook my head.

"You get there by the back staircase, past the empty bedroom." She was once again the professional realtor, reciting information. "The family who built this house put in an attic window. A servant slept up there. You don't see it from the street– it looks out over the fields in back. There's no electricity, but the room does get good light." She paused. "It's not useful as living space, really. I'd have shown it to you, but the steps are too steep for my poor knees, I'm afraid." She looked away in what I took to be embarrassment. Ruth was terribly overweight.

"That's OK," I said. "I don't need more living space."

She nodded and gave me the keys. I handed over a cheque for two months' rent, practically all I had in my account. I was thrilled with the deal. The house had already bestowed its first gift. It had given me a studio.

But how was I going to pay for all this after my second month here? I didn't rehearse a dialogue this time. I was too worried I might back down without even making the call. When Brad answered I said in a rush, "Sweetheart, I've thought it through. I'm sorry, but I'm not moving to Hong Kong. I'm sure you'll be able to negotiate travel expenses and regular trips home."

There was only the slightest trace of a pause. "I knew you might not like the idea right away," he began, but I talked right over him.

"Yes, of course you knew. Of course you hoped, I'm not blaming you for that. But just listen, Brad. I've rented a house. I can't wait for you to see it. When are you coming home? Brad, it's the perfect house in the perfect little town, exactly the kind we used to go searching for– remember? We'll rent it for now, and when your stint in Hong Kong is over, we'll be able to buy it. It's even got a studio, or at least a room I'm going to make into a studio. I can paint here, I know I can. I feel it coming back already."

Can silence be loud? Brad's was the loudest sound I'd ever heard. It couldn't have lasted for more than a couple of seconds but it seemed very, very long. In the air that stretched between us I thought I heard the shifting of gears, of schemes turning and negotiations changing course.

At last he said very quietly, "If that's what you're worried about, Anna, I can find you the perfect studio here, in Hong Kong. Hell, I can even build you the perfect studio. We'll have the money for it."

That tainted echo of "perfect," the word I had used myself, made all his negotiations ring false. "What I want, Brad," I said, "is to get my life back."

He let out a melodramatic sigh. It was supposed to sound like resignation but in it I heard again the shifting of gears.

"Well, Annie, if you need this adventure now" *–adventure?–* "then I guess you need it. It shouldn't be complicated to set up." A pause. "Sell the house in the city. Price it for a quick, clean sale, an early closing, no conditions. Put the money in your account and use it to pay the rent on this place you've taken a liking to. I'll come home at Christmas. Then we'll figure things out." He let the words hang.

Christmas. Nearly four months away. He'd come home in four months? And home *where*, exactly? Then I understood that for him our little house, which he knew I cherished, was nothing more than leverage. This was a shock, but I had watched him at his game and I knew I could do it too.

"I'll think about it, Brad," I said. "I'll let you know." We both spoke the words "love you," and hung up.

As Brad had predicted, it wasn't complicated, not at all.

I kept the bungalow. I sold the car.

Ruth had been right about the steepness of the climb to the attic. The steps were narrow, too, as if the builders had assumed that servants had smaller feet than did the worthies who employed them. Fortunately there was a strong wooden banister, which I had to grab hold of a couple of times. Ruth would have plummeted down those stairs like a crashing zeppelin.

The light from the second-storey hallway reached up only as far as the third floor landing, beyond which the staircase turned sharply to the right into a narrow corridor. I couldn't see to the end of it, but assumed it led to the door of the attic room. A servant making her way to bed at night would have carried a candlestick, but as taken as I was with the idea of my romantic garret studio, I didn't see myself as a character in *La Bohème*. I would buy a flashlight– better yet, a tall lamp to put on the landing, and a few extension cords arranged in tandem to plug into a socket on the second floor.

As I stood on the landing, so close to that mysterious, beckoning door, a trip to the hardware store seemed an unbearable anticlimax. Besides, it wasn't even five o'clock. There would still be enough afternoon light coming through the attic window for me to have a quick look at the space before the hardware store closed, at six.

I turned the sharp corner and put my foot on the first of the steps leading up to the attic corridor, careful to steady myself with the railing. Six narrow stairs brought me to the planks of a level wooden floor, but by now I was in darkness. I hoped the groaning floorboards beneath my feet were sound. Gripping the banister with my right hand and holding my left straight out in front to keep from walking headlong into the door, I groped my way like a sleepwalker along the corridor until my fingertips brushed a doorknob. I let out a long, pent-up breath. I twisted the knob and pushed open the door.

The window was a large, grimy rectangle through which sickly greyish light barely passed. Dust caught in my throat and I began to cough, my eyes streaming before they had a chance to adjust to the semi-darkness. I must be allergic to dust, I thought vaguely. Never knew I was allergic to anything . . .

Rubbing my eyes, I straightened up for another look.

A woman was standing at the window, half-turned and watching me over her shoulder. She was naked, her long hair loose and parted on one side. She seemed to be all one colour, her face and hair and body an almost translucent beige. She stood motionless and calm, as if she had been expecting me.

I screamed and screamed, frozen in the doorway. When at last I turned to run, my shoulder hit something or someone, some sentry at the door. Another woman—no, a dummy, a dressmaker's dummy, headless and legless—swivelled to block my exit.

There was a rasping noise, a strangled sob, and the window went blank.

I lay shivering and dazed on the wooden floor until, in a surge of panic, I remembered where I was and opened my eyes. I had fallen with my head turned toward the window, and as I pushed myself to my feet, ready to run, I saw that it was night. A full moon was rising over the field behind the house, casting a silver swath of moonlight like a carpet across the floor to the open door. The light seemed to bring sounds into focus: crickets, a dog barking, and, from somewhere nearby, music from a radio tuned to a country station: "*Your cheatin' heart . . .*" I looked slowly around the room. The dressmaker's dummy stood, harmless, against the wall beside the door. The woman, if there had been a woman, was gone. Plain as it was, the room was mine, as beautiful and uncanny as an answered prayer.

I stayed for a few more minutes, making sure I was steady enough on my feet to make the descent to the second floor. Once there, I would have the benefit of the lights which I had left on downstairs. As I reached the third-floor landing, I looked down the full length of the main staircase. The walls seemed to lean inward. The railings and banisters made a kind of caged tunnel, catching the light which shone up from the first floor far below. In the depths of the stairwell, the polished floor glinted and wavered like the surface of a distant lake.

I didn't care if the lights downstairs stayed on all night. I made up the baronial bed with my own familiar sheets, turned out the bedside lamp, and burrowed underneath my old duvet. Hank Williams' keening voice drifted in through the open window, and I drifted with it into a dream of painting.

The first painting to come out of my new studio was "Main Street." I painted Mrs. Rhodes, my next-door neighbour, loading groceries into her car, parked at the curb in front of the war memorial. I caught her bustling movement and the lively yellow of the little car as the bronze soldier behind her stood eternally at attention. When I had finished I set the painting on the floor against the wall and thought about what the next one might be. Ideas crowded my head. Soon I was at work on a new set of drawings. Mrs. Rhodes again, backing her car out of her driveway, turning in the driver's seat to check over her shoulder for traffic, while her German shepherd, Mini, sat patiently in the back seat, looking straight ahead.

As the fall days passed, I fell into the habit of going for morning walks, sketchpad in hand, before settling down to work in the studio. Mostly I sketched people going about their daily lives, strolling, hanging out their laundry, walking their dogs. Sometimes before heading home, I would stop in at the café. In the quiet stretch between breakfast and lunch, Betty always seemed glad to see me, and I welcomed some company, though I took care not to give out too much personal information. Often she'd send up trial balloons of local gossip, but I never reached for any of them.

One day, I put my sketchbook on the table in front of me instead of on the floor as usual. As I was taking off my jacket Betty said, "May I?" I turned to see her already flipping through the pages. "Wow, I heard you were an artist, Anna, but I didn't know you were a *real* artist." She saw my expression and looked confused for a moment. "Sorry, I didn't mean . . ."

"It's OK," I said. "I know what you meant. I appreciate the compliment. I say klutzy things sometimes, too." We both laughed. "These are just sketches. If one of them looks as if it might make an interesting painting, I work it up in the studio. I do a lot of detailed drawings before I make the final work."

She nodded but looked vague. I wondered if she understood how paintings came about. "Do you ever sell them? Your paintings, I mean."

"I used to. I've just started working again. Once I finish a few more, I'm thinking of putting them up in my living room and inviting people in. You know, kind of an open house where people can look and buy a painting, if they want to."

Her eyes lit up. "That's a great idea!" Then, "Anna, would you do a picture of me?"

"I'm not really a portrait artist," I began. She assumed a pleading look. "Sure, I'll do my best," I said. She pulled out a chair and struck a pose, lifting her chin at an angle that looked uncomfortable.

"Just relax, Betty. Be yourself." She adjusted her head. "I was trying to make my neck look longer," she admitted, and smiled. I drew her like that, smiling, with the thin gold necklace that

read *BETTY* at her throat. I had never noticed before how delicate the planes of her face were. When I had finished the shading, I tore out the page and gave it to her.

"Oh, I love it!" she said, holding the paper carefully in both hands. "Now, here's the plan. I'm going to get David Landon to make one of his gorgeous frames for this, and then I'm going to hang it right by the cash register. Everyone who comes in will see it. That includes the tourists." She gave a shrewd wink. "Pretty soon, folks will be beating a path to your door!"

A week later when I stopped in for coffee, there, just as she'd promised, was the portrait in a simple, beautifully made frame, with a card bearing my name and phone number taped next to it on the wall. Before the week was out, I had my first commission. It was from Betty's competitive friend Ruth, the realtor.

"Sit down here by me and be a good girl, Marfa," said the elegant woman in the red dress. She had stopped at the café on her drive home to the city, had seen Betty's portrait, and had called me about commissioning a painting. Not just a sketch—a fully worked out painting. It was a rainy day in early November and we were sitting by the fire in my living room.

The brown-and-white terrier gave her what looked like a grin and immediately turned its attention to me. It trotted over, toenails tapping on the bare wooden floor, and pushed its soft, woolly head against my hand. Obediently I scratched the warm spots behind its ears.

"You see, what I had in mind," continued the woman, who obviously hadn't expected Marfa to obey and didn't mind in the least, "was a painting of her." She nodded in the terrier's direction but her eyes were on my completed paintings, which were on the floor, leaning against the wall. There were five of them now, about one-third the number I needed for a show. The commissions, which had all been delivered, were easier to do and didn't take as long. They paid for what I lived on, but the more difficult work was what I lived for.

"But now that I see what you do," she continued, "I'm rather embarrassed."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, you create fine art, don't you?" she said, her eyes still on the paintings. "I taught art for many years—I'm retired now, of course– and I collect too, in a modest way. I know good work when I see it, and these are very good indeed." She was looking directly at me now. "They're subtle, and they're about something, more than the excellent technique, I mean. I don't suppose you'd find anything very challenging in painting a portrait of Marfa here, adorable though she is."

I wanted the commission and besides I really liked the woman and her dog, enjoyed their easy companionship. Perhaps I should get a pet.

"May I suggest something, Mrs. Price?" I said, ideas already linking together in my head. "What if I painted both of you, together?" She shook her head.

"Oh, no—I don't have the looks I once did! I wouldn't like . . ."

"What I'm thinking of is painting your relationship, your connection," I went on. The idea was taking hold. "We can come up with a pose that would show that, without being an outright portrait of you. It could be mostly of Marfa, but it would be *about* the two of you, about the bond between you." I felt something stir sadly in me.

I was proud of the painting when it was finished. It showed Mrs. Price tenderly holding the terrier in her arms, up high against her chest, so that the woman's head and the dog's head were at the same level. Marfa's head in profile blocked our view of Mrs. Price's face, so that all we saw of her were her arms and one side of her body. The casual way the dog's front legs rested on Mrs. Price's arm gave the animal a trusting yet self-assured presence, as if she knew that she was the one we all wanted to see and Mrs. Price was just there to support her. Madonna and Child, transformed into a portrait of a terrier and her mistress.

I liked the painting so much that I decided to design the frame myself and present the work, ready for hanging, to my client. I phoned David Landon, who said he would stop by that evening after dinner.

"I've been meaning to come and introduce myself," David said, extending his hand. "I'm glad you called." From his voice on the phone I had expected a middle-aged man, but he was in his thirties, around my age. We shook hands and I felt the roughness of his palm. When I took his jacket I caught a hint of some subtle citrus smell.

"You really 'got' Betty in that portrait you made," he said, standing in the hallway as I hung up his jacket. It was soft suede and a deep navy blue. "She's part magpie, part nightingale—Florence Nightingale, that is." His eyes were the colour of water and his deep laugh rippled. "She's always helping people and she's very good at it."

He had brought wood samples for me to inspect and we were moving into the dining room, where he set them down on the table. He looked up and added, "She throws in the gossip as a bonus."

"She certainly helped me," I said, sidestepping his reference to gossip. "I guess she told you that hanging the portrait in the café was her idea. I drew it only as a favour—it's just a sketch– but

she somehow spun it into a marketing campaign." That warm, easy laugh again. No one had laughed in this house in all the time I'd lived here. I offered tea and he accepted. I hadn't planned on using my mother's porcelain teacups but I found myself setting them out on the tray along with my celadon teapot and a blue bowl of oranges.

"I've never seen anything like these," he said as I brought in the tray. He was walking around the living room, looking at the paintings that were still propped up on the floor. "They're kind of . . . well, enigmatic, aren't they? I mean, they seem to show scenes you'd come across every day, but they don't feel everyday. They feel mysterious."

He came back and sat down at the table. I pondered the vexing problem of whether to pour tea or examine wood samples. Enigmatic. Yes, that was how things felt to me these days.

"Tea first, or samples first?" he asked.

"Tea," I said, my voice startled and too loud.

I brought out Mrs. Price's painting and my sketch for the frame.

"Oh, it's a round painting," he said, sounding pleased. He looked carefully at my design. "I could carve the frame out of a block of vintage walnut I have left from a sideboard I made for a client in California. It's a beautiful wood, and you'd save money because I wouldn't have to special-order it." But when he told me the price, I shook my head.

"I'd love a hand-carved frame, but I just can't afford it. You see, I have my commissioned work, which is mostly straight portraits, and my studio work, which is what I make strictly to my own agenda, my own vision. Mrs. Price's painting is the first time I've done a commission that's also a studio piece. The frame is really my gift to her. I'm not increasing the price of the painting."

David thought for a moment. "What if we were to put the dollar amount aside and make a trade?" I waited. I hoped this wasn't going to turn into a negotiation. "I'll make a round bentwood frame and apply a dark walnut stain. And I'll make the right frames, ones you approve, for the rest of these"—he extended his arm toward the works in the living room—"in return for your smallest painting."

"David, are you sure? That's incredibly generous! I mean, I didn't expect . . ."

"I can't stand to see them on the floor like this," he said. "They should be up on the walls where they're safe and people can see them. And honestly, I'd love to have one for myself, if it's possible. I don't even know what you're asking for them."

I walked over and picked up one of the paintings, not the smallest one. In some ways it was the most important to me. "It's yours," I said, and placed it in his hands. Then I began at last to share my story. "It's called "Crows." In homage. You see, it was a crow that led me here . . ."

By the time I'd finished speaking, he knew all about the little bungalow, the sports car, and my faltering marriage.

"How do you feel about Hitchcock?" David asked several days later. "A group of us are going to Greg and Emma's place to watch *Suspicion* on their TV. They've bought one of those fancy new high-res systems with a big screen."

"I don't know, David. It sounds great, but . . ."

"It's not a date, Anna," he said. "I understand about Brad. If you don't like Hitchcock, that's a different story."

"As a matter of fact, I'm crazy about Hitchcock," I laughed.

"Had a feeling you were. I'll stop by at seven and we'll walk over. You can practically see their house out the back of your studio."

At first I was nervous, but they were a talkative group, everyone happy to welcome the "famous" local artist into their circle. After a while, drinks in hand, we took our places around the TV. David sat next to me, close, but not too close. Emma turned down the lights and Greg started the movie.

Very quickly, rich, spinsterish Joan Fontaine was swept off her feet and married glamorous Cary Grant, who seemed head-over-heels in love with her. But she soon realizes that she doesn't know him at all. Through the twists and turns of the plot she comes to suspect him of murdering his wealthy friend and plotting to murder her, too, for the insurance money.

One night as she lies sleepless in her bed, he brings her a glass of milk to soothe her nerves. She is terrified, sure that it is poisoned, and Hitchcock leads us to believe that she is right. Frame after frame, as Cary slowly mounts the stairs to her bedroom, we cannot take our eyes away from that lethal glass. It glows brilliantly white, with a ghostly incandescence that transforms everything else, even the actors, into background.

Walking home after the movie, I couldn't stop thinking about the glass. As we reached my door, I shivered and David put his scarf around my shoulders.

"Are you OK?" he asked. "Old Hitch really got to you, it seems."

"It's that glass of milk. It looks almost radioactive. He made something so innocent and harmless look so evil."

"But in the end, it wasn't evil, was it? There was no poison in the milk. He really did love her." The moment passed and he added, "Do you know how Hitchcock got that effect?"

"How?"

"He put a light bulb in the glass. Everything else is in shadow. The milk doesn't just seem to glow—it really does glow."

I couldn't fall asleep that night, and not just because of the movie. I put on my robe and went down to the kitchen. I took the carton of milk out of the fridge and poured some into a saucepan. Beneath my bare feet the checkerboard floor felt smooth and cool and reassuring. By the time the milk had heated I was already yawning. I drained the glass and went back up to bed.

The dream came so swiftly and vividly I could still feel the black-and-white tiles on the soles of my feet. I was standing with my back to the camera, naked in front of the refrigerator door, which was ajar. From inside the fridge the single bulb emitted a pale light, silhouetting the curves of my body. I was warm and safe, and I was not alone. A naked man stood beside the fridge, facing the camera in a relaxed, fully frontal pose. He was drinking a glass of milk whose intense, white glow partially obscured his face. I had never seen him naked but I knew who he was, as surely as I knew the naked woman to be myself. I let my gaze pan slowly over his body, knowing that as soon as we finished our midnight raid on the refrigerator, we would return to our bed.

Brad called a week later from Hong Kong. He had booked his flight and would be home four days before Christmas. He didn't press to find out whether I'd made up my mind to fly back with him, and he didn't tip his hand about what his own plans were. He didn't even say how long he'd be staying. We agreed that he would come to Seven Crows Landing and we would return to the city together on the following day. I didn't want to think about what Christmas with him would be like this year.

David had finished the frame for Mrs. Price and it really was perfect, a word I seldom used these days. The only problem was how I was going to deliver the painting to her in the city. "Use my van," David offered, and I accepted. I'd be able to bring her the painting, receive my payment, and even check on the bungalow. A heavy snowfall was forecast to begin sometime after midnight, but if I left early in the morning I'd be safely home by ten o'clock that night.

Mrs. Price and Marfa were just returning from their walk when I arrived at the stately stone house in the west end of the city. I brought the painting inside and unwrapped it. "Oh, yes," beamed my patron, "you've succeeded wonderfully! Marfa looks like an innocent little angel—and yet it's perfectly clear who the alpha-dog is around here." We celebrated with homemade cake and generous glasses of sherry. I hung the painting above their favourite armchair, next to a bay window that

looked out over a ravine busy with squirrels. Big, languid flakes of snow had been sifting down past the black trunks and branches of the trees, but now the wind began to rise. I still had the bungalow to visit and I didn't want to get caught on the highway in the first snowstorm of the season.

"I hope you're still planning to show your paintings at your house, Anna," said Mrs. Price, as I bent to give Marfa a farewell cuddle.

"Yes," I said, "I'll be painting right through until spring. I'll send you the official date of the opening as soon as it's decided."

"I'm delighted to hear it," she replied, "because I'm going to bring a friend along with me. She's a lovely woman, owns one of the best commercial galleries in the country. I think you two will have a lot to talk about." We hugged and I hurried back to the van.

Lights were coming on in people's houses, but I no longer felt the need to peek into their windows. Within twenty minutes I was turning the familiar corner into our street. I felt my pulse quicken, but whether it was with pleasure or anxiety, I wasn't sure. Up ahead in the middle of the block, red tail lights and then a left-hand blinker signalled that someone was turning in. I slowed down. A silver car was pulling into a driveway that had to be close, very close –impossibly close– to ours. I steered the van toward the curb and stopped for a better look.

A tall woman in a glossy, full-length fur coat got out of her car. She opened the rear door and took a small bag out of the back seat before trotting up our front walk in her high-heeled boots. I recognized the coat and I remembered the click-click-click of those boots. Evelyn had bought them at the two fanciest stores on her favourite shopping street during one of her jaunts to Manhattan. Evelyn, whose long-ago engagement party had changed my life.

I killed the lights and let the motor idle. I slumped down in the seat, but not so low that I couldn't see out of my side window. She reached into her coat pocket for her key– *her* key– but the front door suddenly opened wide, letting a stream of orange light spill out onto the walk. The man in the doorway was backlit but I didn't need to see his face to recognize my husband. He took hold of her overnight bag and then he took hold of her. They kissed for a long, terrible moment and then the door slammed shut.

I sat, a sphinx in a borrowed van, a stalker on a suburban street that was filling up with snow. After about five minutes I started to sob. Then I started to laugh, then to sob again. I looked across the street at what had once been my home. The light in the bedroom went on. I wiped my nose on my sleeve, took one of David's polishing rags from the seat beside me and blotted my cheeks. Then I fired up the engine, revved the motor twice, as loudly as I could, and peeled away from the curb. I hoped the racket broke their rhythm.

I barely remember the drive home. I only know I made it in record time. No lights were on in David's house when I got there. Good– I wouldn't have to talk. I dropped the key through the mail slot in his front door and started the ten-minute walk home. The snow, which had been softly falling throughout the afternoon, turned into needles of ice driven by a hard north wind. By the time I reached my door, the blizzard had struck in full force.

I locked and chained the door. Shedding my coat and shoes, I went from room to room, methodically switching on all the lights, raising the thermostats, lowering the blinds to muffle the hiss of ice pellets flinging themselves against my windows. When I had visited every room I stripped off my clothes and fell into bed. Despite the lamp burning at my bedside, I sank into a black and dreamless sleep.

I awoke hungry at four in the afternoon. There was no point in turning off the lights or raising the blinds, since whatever daylight there was would be gone in an hour. There seemed no point in getting dressed, either, but I dug an old flannel nightgown out of the closet, found a pair of thick socks, and went downstairs.

For weeks the attic had been too cold to work in, and so I had moved my studio into the dining room. On the table was a preliminary sketch for a new painting. It was to have been the first in a series of upbeat works showing figures in interiors. I was going to use each room in this house as a setting, to celebrate the gifts the house had brought me and the possibilities it had rekindled. I had planned on starting with the room that contained the dressing table and mirror. But I would never paint those works now.

I don't know how long I stared at the sketch without seeing it, but at some point I became aware of something small but insistent stirring within me. It was a memory as elusive as smoke, the memory of a feeling. I remembered how it had felt to stand inside the dressing room for a long time, breathing in the smell of new wooden furniture and old plaster walls, sensing the small space pressing around me until an image took shape in my mind: a woman standing in profile at the dressing table, looking at herself in the mirror as a man stood in the background, looking on.

I picked up my pencil.

Who were they, and why would he be watching her? I vaguely recalled that my intention had been to show him admiring her. That was certainly trite, as false as a TV commercial, but it might lead to something better. To make the next sketch more interesting I turned her around, with her back to the large mirror on the wall, and I placed a small mirror in her left hand. I had often checked the back of my hair that way when Brad and I were getting ready to go out . . . No—all that was

over. I pushed it away. I raised the woman's right arm so that her elbow blocked our view of her face as she smoothed her hair. The man remained where he was.

He might be her husband. Even so, why would her small act of grooming hold his attention? In the next sketch I removed all her clothes. I gave her a bracelet. Now she was teasing him. Why not go further? Why not deliberately arouse him by seeming to be completely absorbed, caught between her two reflections, unaware of his presence? Preening, letting his eyes play over her nakedness.

Her sexual power appealed to me. The sketches began to come more clearly and spontaneously. The top of the dressing table appeared, with the usual paraphernalia spread across it: comb and brush, lotion and cream, lipstick and makeup. Since the woman's face was not visible, I decided to show only the lower half of the man's face, letting the upper half disappear off the top of the page. That reinforced my suspicion that his watching was vaguely sinister. To deepen the mystery and the menace, I dressed him in a tuxedo.

It suddenly seemed very important that she be the one in control. Why were women depicted as the weaker sex, vulnerable, passive, conciliatory? I had no intention of adding to that great, obscene lie. But how to right the balance– no, tip the balance in her favour?

Then I remembered the gun. It belonged to old Mr. Wood. He had commissioned a still life made up of items he had kept over the years for their sentimental value. "Put this right in the middle of my picture, young lady," he had said, as he handed it to me. "I won it in a poker game in Chicago back in '47, when I was a wild, young fellow. It once saved my life." I placed the revolver in the centre of the dressing table, within the wife's easy reach. Just in case. And just in case, I included Mr. Wood's bullets: five of them on the table, an unseen sixth in its chamber, waiting.

When I was satisfied with the final drawing I started in on the painting. I painted with a vengeance. I imagined the black-and-white kitchen tiles in the dressing room, where they turned into a chessboard, a precariously tilted field of combat in the war between the sexes. For wasn't that, after all, what marriage—what love– really was? Wasn't every interaction between a man and a woman, from a coy flirtation to the most passionate love affair, a potential tipping point into violence? I aimed my brush at the surfaces defining the walls of the room: they emerged stippled with blood. The husband stood grimly in the background, wearing his funereal black tuxedo and looking as if he had been waiting for hours for his wife to get dressed. His mouth became a tense, straight line and his jaw clenched. His face assumed the lineaments of a death's head. The deep V of his white dress shirt pointed menacingly downward, poised like a dagger over the soft curve of her shoulder.

Meanwhile she continued to primp, calm and unhurried. She had even turned the little square clock on her dressing table so that it showed her husband its taunting face. She was self-sufficient and self-possessed. She had her enticing flesh, she had the gun, and she had all the time in the world.

By the time Brad phoned, the painting was finished and I was a new woman.

"Hi, Anna," said his cheery, treacherous voice. "I just got in. The house seems fine. A bit chilly, but no pipes burst and I've turned up the heat. I'm jet-lagged but I'll be out there tomorrow afternoon. I'm just dying to see you, honey. How about you? Are you ready to be with your man?"

"I'm ready for you, Brad," I said truthfully. "It may take a while for you to get here. The ploughs have been coming through for days, but the roads are still slow, so don't worry if you're late. I'll be working in my studio, up in the attic. There's no window to the street up there, so I can't watch for you, but I'll leave the front door unlocked and the lights on downstairs. Just come right in."

"OK, hon, will do. See you tomorrow. You sound good. Kinda businesslike, but good."

We hung up. I filled the bathtub with hot water and attar of roses. I soaped my skin and washed my hair, and after a luxurious hour I got out and dressed in fresh jeans and a blue silk blouse with tiny pearl buttons down the front. I brushed my hair until it shone. I even painted my toenails a soft pink. I felt surprisingly calm, now that I'd made my decision.

I phoned David, and when he arrived I opened my arms to him.

Looking down from where she stands now, she sees it all clearly at last. Everything has led inexorably to this moment, this landing at the top of the stairs. Her feet are firmly planted, her legs positioned one in front of the other for maximum stability. She holds the gun easily in her left hand. He will not see it right away.

Though the staircase is steep, the angle dizzying, she does not need to grip the railing or lean against the wall. Over the past months she has become her own support, her own stay against confusion. Her strength surrounds her like a light, an aura emanating from her body.

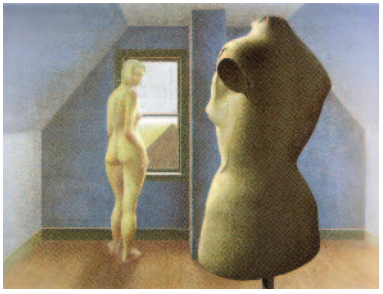
She remembers the first time she undertook this journey into darkness, not yet knowing that it was her own darkness she was about to enter, not yet willing even to acknowledge there was darkness within her which she needed to explore. The railings and banisters had seemed fearsome to her then, like the bars of a cage or the ribs of some predatory animal. Now the darkness is her

ally and the walls and railings watch with her, framing her waiting. She has become a woman who can see in the dark.

Far below, the door is opening. In a moment he will cross her threshold and call her name. She will not answer and he will begin to climb the stairs. When he reaches the landing she will turn and raise the gun.

What happens in the moment of their confrontation will be for her and the moment to determine.

Cyclist and Crow 1981
acrylic on board 27 3/4 x 39 3/8 in.
Collection of Montreal Museum of Fine Arts



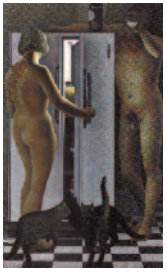
Nude and Dummy 1950
glazed gum arabic emulsion on board 24 x 32 in.
Collection of the New Brunswick Museum

Main Street 1979
acrylic polymer emulsion on board 23 5/8 x 34 in.
Collection of Power Corporation of Canada

Woman and Terrier 1963
acrylic polymer emulsion on board 24 in. (diameter)
Private collection

Dog in Car 1999
acrylic polymer emulsion on board 14 1/8 x 24 1/2 in.
Collection of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

Morning 1981
original signed screenprint 21 1/2 in. (diameter)
edition: 70



Refrigerator 1977
acrylic polymer emulsion on board 47 1/4 x 29 in.
Private collection

Dressing Room 2002
acrylic polymer emulsion board 22 1/4 x 15 3/4 in.
Private collection

Woman with Revolver 1987
acrylic polymer emulsion on board 22 1/4 x 11 1/8 in.
Collection: A K Prakash

III: Family and Generations

"We live in the present," writes Paul Auster, "but the future is inside us at every moment." So, too, is the past. With its divisions and confluences among generations of our families, its intimations of growth and change and loss, Time poses for each of us a wide range of personal and philosophical questions.

In the context of the interactions among artist, model and viewer, a few of the questions which occur to me are these: How does familial connection affect the space between artist and model? Does the act of depicting a face that resembles the artist's own blur the boundaries between selves, resulting in a work which takes on some of the characteristics of the self-portrait? Or does the Other, the model, remain an entity separate from the artist, outwardly familiar but essentially unknown and unknowable? How do empathy and memory colour the viewer's response to such works, since we all have our own histories and genealogies?

The four artists in this grouping take their models from among different generations of their own families. Lilias Torrance Newton portrays her son, Phil Richards his two grandchildren, Peter Krausz his parents, and Simon Andrew his half-brother.

Lilias Torrance Newton, "My Son" (page 101)

What's in a name? One might have expected this warm, deeply felt depiction of Forbes Newton at the age of fifteen to be called "Portrait of a Young Man" or "Portrait of the Artist's Son." In using the possessive pronoun "my" to specify her model, Torrance Newton not only alerts us to the close nature of their connection but explicitly lays claim to a part of Forbes's identity. Her painting conveys, through a mother's eyes, the gentleness of his nature and the fragility of his physique. Her love for him fairly pulses from the canvas. At the same time, she implicitly draws our attention to her own presence, even her centrality, in his life. And so the work also suggests, perhaps inadvertently on the artist's part, the complexities and conflicts inherent in the relationship between child and parent, youth and middle age, the adolescent's need for his own, independent experience and the mother's desire, especially strong in Torrance Newton's circumstances, to protect him from the vicissitudes of life. As a viewer I see both the artist's devotion to her child and the model's need, despite the ties of loyalty and affection, to pull away from her.

It was always part of Torrance Newton's process to converse with her models while she painted, in order to create an amiable connection with them and capture some characteristic and flattering effect which emerged as they relaxed in her presence. In the case of this painting, of course, the relationship had existed since the model's birth. As he grew, Forbes found himself at the centre of emotional upheavals, reversals of fortune, and his mother's strong will and dedication to her professional career and the well-being of her only child. The dynamics between them were inevitably far more complex and intimate than those between Torrance Newton and any of her other models. And Forbes himself, unlike her patrons, was, for the time being, dependent on her.

The only female member of the Beaver Hall Group to marry, Torrance Newton maintained a paramount commitment throughout her life to her vocation as an artist. Her marriage in 1921 to Fred Newton, a stockbroker, had conferred the means to pursue her burgeoning career without financial constraints, and she continued to have a surprising degree of autonomy for the time. (In 1923, for example, she spent four months studying in Paris while her husband remained in Montreal.) Forbes was born in 1926. An article published in *Saturday Night* the following year, as part of a series devoted to "Canadian Women of Distinction," touted her professional success and her ability to balance a flourishing career with her roles as wife and mother. The writer described her as a kind of "superwoman" wed to "a most helpful and sympathetic husband." The article quite rightly omitted anecdotal information we now have from her contemporaries. The talk at the time was that she had agreed to the marriage on condition that she be free to spend a number of months each year on the Continent.

The Crash of 1929 destroyed what may have been an already difficult marriage. Fred Newton's fortune collapsed and alcoholism claimed him. In 1930 he abandoned his wife and young son and never returned to them. Torrance Newton officially divorced him in 1933. "Winkie," a portrait of Forbes which she painted in 1929, shows a sad, wide-eyed little boy looking startled and bewildered. Through the window behind him is an overcast, turbulent sky and a single jagged tree branch.

Tireless in her pursuit of painting commissions, Torrance Newton supported herself and Forbes solely on the proceeds of her teaching and her portraits of members of élite Canadian society. She was accomplished and celebrated, but she seems to have had few close friendships, despite her acquaintance with colleagues, students, and a wide network of affluent sitters. With the conspicuous exception of her son, she had no close family. By 1941, when she made this painting, her parents were dead (her father had died while she was an infant), two of her three brothers had fallen in the First World War, and the third was in the final year of his life.

Torrance Newton arranges Forbes in a pose she favoured and a setting close to her heart, the Laurentian cottage at Lac Saint-Joseph. Like Millette, he looks to his left, an introspective expression in his eyes. Forbes' gaze has a dreaming look which suggests that he is far away, indeed barely present in his surroundings. His face is sensitive and serious; he seems already to have the preoccupations of an adult. But physically he looks younger than his years. Though his shoulders are broadening, there is little suggestion of muscle or strength in his physique. He slouches slightly forward, his delicate, almost feminine hands gracefully crossed at the wrists. Everything about the depiction of his body points to his fragility.

The artist has him angle his left elbow away from his side, creating a negative space which emphasises the slightness of his build. His soft, billowing shirt appears too large for him, its collar casting a shadow around his neckline and its folds and creases of excess fabric covering his narrow chest almost as a blanket would. The many subtle colours that make up the white of his shirt convey a softness of texture that deepens our sense of Forbes's own emotional softness and vulnerability. The black outlines around the figure, which characterize Torrance Newton's work, are present here as well in the areas of his head and hands, but elsewhere she has muted their tone to a less emphatic grey.

The model appears not only delicate but endowed with a patience seldom encountered in a person of his years. His posture and especially the positioning of his hands suggest this uncommon tranquility, while the pleasant, glowing colour of the wall behind him, a brightened version of flesh tones, gives the viewer the warm if somewhat uneasy sense that Forbes is still surrounded by his mother's arms. Even for a model conscientiously maintaining a pose, he seems the very epitome of stasis. Compositionally, too, there is only the slightest hint of movement in the foreground of the painting, present in the subtle slant of Forbes's shoulders, in a line quietly reiterated by the angle at which he wears his cap, and by a deep fold in his shirt.

It is the staircase in the background which denotes movement and progression, but even this is mitigated by the amorphous forms of all but the top step. Rendered in brilliant greens (visually complementary to the orange tones of the wall) and bright yellows, the staircase is a symbol, another of Torrance Newton's signature devices. It represents the Stairway of Life, which the youth has begun to climb. She had earlier used a more convincingly detailed representation of this symbol in another painting of an adolescent boy, "Maurice" (1939). In the earlier work the staircase is distinct and realistic, and the boy himself displays a much more active and energetic personality than the one we are offered in "My Son." Maurice's arms are crossed, his fingers tightly closed, his eyes sharply focused, and his hair slicked back under his tall, dark hat. He looks like someone ready and eager to make his way in the adult world.

Comparison of the models in “Maurice” and “My Son” is instructive. Torrance Newton sees none of the other boy’s self-assertiveness or impatience in her own child, none of his readiness to confront the outside world. Forbes remains safely under her protection. Even in the unlikely event that he would wish to leave his shelter, the staircase would not provide a means of egress. The steps dissolve into abstract, rectilinear patches of colour, less an architectural structure than a visually pleasing backdrop for the model.

But Forbes’s intention to leave is there, held in abeyance. His facial expression conveys the strong sense that he is an unwilling model. There is unspoken defiance in his clenched jaw and tightly closed lips. His eyes seem to dream of escape. A contemporaneous photograph of the artist attests to the fact that Forbes bore a strong physical resemblance to her: he had her high forehead and prominent cheekbones, her strong chin and jawline. Might he not also have inherited her strong will?

Forbes’s curious little cap has a military look about it. The dark rectangular form relates more strongly in visual terms to the staircase than to the soft pastels and gently curving lines of the model. Within a few years of sitting for this painting, Forbes Newton enlisted in the Canadian Air Force. One can only imagine how the artist, whose brothers had died while in the military, must have felt at his departure, inevitable though it was. Was she aware that her depiction of her son bore intrinsically the signs of her impending loss, or do we have in her beautiful painting a tender image of denial?

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Phil Richards, “The Latest Models” (page 107)

Of the three Canadian artists commissioned to paint official portraits of Queen Elizabeth II, two, Lilias Torrance Newton and Phil Richards, are in the present show. Torrance Newton depicted the young Queen in 1957, only five years into her reign; Jean Paul Lemieux painted his double portrait of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh twenty years later; and Phil Richards created his official portrait in 2012, on the occasion of Her Majesty’s Diamond Jubilee.

In “The Latest Models,” Richards has chosen sitters who could hardly be further removed from that most famous, dignified and public of personages. Not only does the artist admit us into the private world of his own family but he introduces us to its two newest members, his granddaughter and grandson, who were only a few months old at the time he created this double portrait.

Paintings of babies can be a risky undertaking, especially when the models are beloved of the artist. The danger of sentimentality lurks in the subject matter and especially in the emotional connection between artist and model. Moreover, to the eye of a discriminating viewer, the baby-model may be adorable but the picture may still be a cloying failure. Yet everything in this painting demonstrates how carefully Richards has avoided succumbing to the temptation to sentimentalize. Through the skilled and deliberate application of what he calls "the building blocks of picture making"—structure, palette, composition, light, space, and so on– he strenuously adheres to his dictum that "a portrait has to declare itself as a piece of art first, and a portrait second."

Early in the twentieth century, the American painter Robert Henri, one of the founders of the Ashcan School, had this to say to students who employed children as models:

> If you paint children you must have no patronizing attitude toward them. Whoever approaches a child without humility, without wonderment, and without infinite respect, misses in his judgement of what is before him . . . Paint with respect for [the child] . . . He is the great possibility, the independent individual.
>
> – *The Art Spirit*, 1923

Richards has always been adamant in his belief that "every person is the centre of his own universe." That is to say, each of us sees the world through his own eyes and with his own individual perspective, using the Self as a lens. We ourselves are the point of departure and of reference for our explorations of what lies outside us. A portraitist who holds such a conviction takes on a particularly difficult task: he must convey both how his model sees the world and how he, the artist, sees his model. The viewer becomes the recipient of all this information. In the case of "The Latest Models," this means that we see the babies' separate and different personalities, and at the same time we see the brave, new world whose images flood into the babies' awareness through their unclouded and innocent eyes.

And what a bright, sparkling world it is– a world of fresh, clear primary colours, of open spaces, natural light and shadow, shiny glass and soft textures. Most important, it is a world in which the babies are surrounded by those who cherish, protect, and nurture them. This is a painting about family, the artist's family in particular and the universal theme of generations by implication.

Each generation of the extended Richards family is included and figured forth in a separate object, a part which stands for the whole. In the importance he places on carefully chosen, vividly

realized objects, the artist upholds a visual aesthetic similar to William Carlos Williams' literary one: "no ideas but in things." Vagueness and generalization have no place in his work: it is the tangible, specific, and in most cases personal object which conveys meaning. The artist famously employs articles from the decorative as well as the fine arts, but his symbolic imagery can come from anywhere, as long as it enhances the composition as well as extends the meaning of a given work. The effect of the objects is cumulative, directing the viewer from thing to thing, toward the apprehension of a complex totality.

For example (to work forward from past to present), the wilting yellow roses on the table commemorate the babies' great-grandfather, whose funeral took place around the time of the preliminary work for this painting. The roses evoke death but also the enduring presence of the great-grandfather's memory, since yellow is the colour of remembrance and roses traditionally symbolize love. Next in the chronological order are the Noguchi coffee table and the yellow sofa, both examples of mid-century modern furniture design. These function as references to the babies' grandparents, the artist and his wife, who were born in the 1950s. The babies' mothers stand behind the sofa but we do not see their faces until we look closely at the miniaturized versions of portraits Richards made of each woman some years ago. These lie on the coffee table, with the babies' reflections (on the glass surface) seeming to arise out of the images. Similarly, the babies' fathers, though not physically present in the room, are represented in paintings which Richards made of them while they were still little boys themselves: the card propped up on the table is a miniature of Richards' painting, "More Short People" and the image on the wall to the right of the mothers is of "Vignette de Monet," both works created in 1979. "More Short People" contains a portrait of Napoleon; Richards is an unapologetic fan of puns and jokes. The title "The Latest Models" reminds the viewer of car advertisements, while the plum placed in the exact centre of the painting is a celebration of a "plum assignment," as it was in Richards' painting "Portrait of the Artist as a Very Young Man," in which the plum refers to his royal commission. His "Portrait of the Artist" is discussed at length in the catalogue essay of 2012's *The Self-Portrait Show*.

The "latest models" themselves genetically gather all the preceding generations into the present moment and project them into the future. The babies, too, have their co-relative objects. The little boy has a teddy bear mascot dressed in a University of Lethbridge T-shirt (the baby was born in Lethbridge and his father teaches at the university there) and the little girl has an exotic red fan decorated with white blossoms. (The fan appears in two earlier paintings: "Frozen Lotus," 1991, and "Fan Dance," 2007.) The snow-covered trees visible through the window specify the city in which the setting is located and the year of the babies' birth: 2013, the year of the historic Toronto ice storm, here just a sunny memory.

The overall sense one gets of this airy, welcoming room is that of a still, almost frozen moment in time. With its preponderance of symbolic detail, the work engages us in large part as a still life painting would. The viewer's eye moves rhythmically over the image, stopping to consider various sharply-focused details and then moving on to resume the exploration. But over and over our gaze is drawn back to the little models, whose presence is not only engaging but kinetic, breaking the spell of suspension. The girl, older by a few weeks than the boy, is the more outgoing and animated of the two. She looks directly at the viewer, inviting interaction. The little boy watches her quietly, tentatively imitating the gesture of her hands. The sharply defined shadows which the models cast on the yellow sofa emphasize their lively presence and underline their "grand" stature as the *raison d'être* of the painting.

Just as there are two babies, most of the other elements in the image appear in pairs (including the pears, another pun). Doubling is both a theme and a principle of composition in the work. As in narrative, a double can be another object or person, a reflection or its dark opposite, a shadow. It can even be a gesture, as in the boy's copying of the girl's hand position. And so we have two lemons, two limes, two pomegranates (all, especially the latter, suggesting the seeds of life and its coming to fruition), two paintings of two fathers, and so on. We also have two versions of the babies, one corporeal and the other reflected in the glass surface of the table. Similarly we have two versions of the table, one real and the other reflected on the carpet, the glass top transparent and the wooden base a partly translucent shadow—even the shadows in this optimistic work are filled with light. Here, again, Richards' eye and brush can work in the service of his wit in surprising ways. For example, the two sculptural legs of the table mirror the pose of the hands of the little girl's mother.

The gesturing hands of the babies give the painting a vivid sense of the kinetic present, but they also subtly point backward into the past, across centuries of art history. The baby girl's gesture is a mirror image of the identical gesture in Holbein's portrait of Edward VI, completed around 1538. In that work the infant son of Henry VIII raises his right hand in a regal blessing while his left is lowered, holding a sceptre-shaped rattle. Richards' paintings have always paid homage to the masters of the past, who are often explicitly cited in the titles, as here in "Vignette de Monet" (see thumbnail, page 106), which itself contains visual references to Matisse. "More Short People" includes a rendition of David's unfinished "Le Général Bonaparte" (1798).

Organized on the principle of bilateral symmetry, Richards' painting is rich in dichotomies and dualities, its symbols doubled and redoubled. But despite the multiplicity of elements and references, it is an accessible work which invites and includes the viewer. We come away with the conviction that we have participated in a moment of singular illumination. To linger in the sun-filled

domain of “The Latest Models” is to be granted an opportunity to see through the eyes of innocence and, simultaneously, through the eyes of experience.

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Peter Krausz, “Self Portrait with My Parents” (page 96)

“No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader,” declares Robert Frost in his essay, “The Figure a Poem Makes.” Throughout his career, Peter Krausz has maintained the same conviction: “The core of any good work of art is empathy. If the artist doesn’t feel it, have it in him, the work will fail.”

“Self Portrait with My Parents” is at its core a work about drawing breath and bearing witness. And while it differs in style and medium from the paintings in Krausz’s series “(No) Man’s Land,” it, too, is a work about crossing frontiers. So concentrated is its depth of feeling that I find myself physically collaborating with the image, breathing “for” the artist’s father, tensely holding my breath “with” the artist’s mother. By situating the viewer in the very spot he himself occupied while making his preparatory sketches and photographs, Krausz ensures our full engagement. The models, who seem in the arrangement of the diptych to look at each other, were in fact looking at their artist-son, in whose place the viewer now stands. All boundaries among artist, models and viewer dissolve.

The painting depicts Krausz’s parents near the end of their lives but while they were still able to live together in their apartment in Montreal. Krausz’s father was a well-established painter and had been a Professor of Fine Art at the University of Bucharest. His wife, an art historian and critic, had served as the Director of the National Gallery in Bucharest. In 1969 they fled Romania with their son, who was an art student in his early twenties at the time, making their way through Czechoslovakia to Rome and eventually on to Montreal, where they settled in 1970. For nearly forty years they led dynamic and productive lives, working, travelling, exhibiting internationally. Practical and tenacious, the wife became the husband’s business manager. When he became ill, she, ailing herself, took care of him at home until almost the final year of his life. He died at the age of 91. She, younger by seven years, died a year later, in 2013.

Krausz brings us into the intimate space in which his models lived and daily strove to maintain their independence. The single moment which he presents in his diptych is representative of a relentless succession of such moments, in which the father struggled to breathe and the mother fought to sustain him. The atmosphere is one of enclosure bordering on claustrophobia. On the one hand the parents’ home is a haven, their personal shelter against the prospects of hospitalization

and final decline. On the other hand, "home" has become a temporary stay against the inevitable, a fraught place of confinement. The couple exist in physical and existential limbo, caught in the fearsome borderland between their retreating past and their looming future.

To convey this most complex of states Krausz has employed a "simple" medium, conté on mylar, with a backing of white paper to heighten the luminosity of the image. His previous use of these materials appeared in *The Self-Portrait Show*. In that work, "Joe and I," the conté is black, and the upper half of the image is relatively open in comparison with the density of the lower half, in which Krausz appears, partly covered by a barber's black drape. "Self Portrait with My Parents" is densely worked throughout, and Krausz has applied a reddish-brown shade of conté called sanguine, whose colour and name evoke blood. The medium is simple only in the sense that it can be directly applied in stick form to the mylar surface, which the artist likens to skin. A mixture of pigment and clay, the conté is readily moved around by the fingers or with an eraser, as, for example, in the seemingly "washed" surface of the wall behind Krausz's father. The sanguine colour suggests both blood and a sepia-tinted past, while the directness of the medium intensifies the intimacy of the image. We can imagine Krausz's own hand modelling the faces and forms of his parents. The work that emerges has both the spontaneity of a drawing and the fully worked out quality of a painting.

The two halves of the diptych offer dramatic portraits of two quite different personalities. Krausz's mother appears to be the more determined and purposeful of the two, her strength of will visible in the tight line of her mouth, the set of her jaw, and the fierce focus of her eyes. Her resolve to keep her husband connected to life, through her, is expressed in the position of her hands. She holds his ankle and foot, as if by sharing what is left of her own strength she can ground him in the physical world. Age and strain have left their marks on her body, details which Krausz meticulously renders: her thinness, the slackness and mottled texture of her skin, the lines of stress and fatigue in her forehead and brows, and the cords of her neck. Yet even in old age, she is unbowed, clearly still a fighter.

Krausz's father seems at first to be her opposite in temperament and physiognomy. His heavily-lidded eyes seem to look both at her and into some other world. He clings to life and at the same time seems to be already falling backward, away from it. But there is strength in the union of opposites, as the marriage and life histories of Krausz's parents attest. The composition of the diptych creates a unity which produces a double portrait as opposed to two single ones.

In order to reinforce the idea of his parents as individuals united, Krausz compresses the setting while creating continuity through the use of specific details which allow our eyes to move logically from the left side of the diptych to the right and back again. The artist has posed his models on an L-shaped sofa which spans the two images. The father leans against a cushion at one end, his legs stretched out in front of him and his right hand gripping the right side of the sofa. The mother sits at the opposite end, facing him. Our view follows the line of his legs from the left side of the dual portrait into the right. At the same time, the reiteration of marks and patterns creates an internal rhythm, causing our eyes to move from the striped cushion behind the father's head, down to the stripes of his pyjamas, and over to the mother's side of the image. The floral patterning and wrinkles of the sheet on which he lies also span both halves of the diptych, as does the careful balance of dark areas (the father's shirt, the cabinet behind the mother) and lighter ones (the pyjamas, and particularly the parents' faces and hands). Our gaze and attention move continually back and forth between the images of father and mother.

The faces and hands of the parents are the principal focal points of the work. The striped cushion and dark pillow behind the father's head create a kind of frame, drawing our attention to his face and the exhausting struggle his expression conveys. We look naturally to the corresponding area on the right side of the diptych, the mother's face, with its deeply empathic gaze. His eyes look beseechingly into hers, and hers respond with understanding and reassurance. There is dynamic mirroring, too, in the positioning of both parents' hands. The father's right hand (still a strong, capable "maker's" hand) grips the side of the daybed, while the mother's right hand grips his left ankle. The models' mutual gaze and their effort to maintain control and hold on combine to create a sense of stillness amid the struggle, an attenuated moment in which time seems to expand, even as it slips away.

Behind the mother are paintings and photographs of each member of the Krausz family, as if the past has gathered to acknowledge and sustain the present. On our far left is a framed photograph of Krausz's daughter, on our right, a smaller photo of Krausz and his wife, Irina. On the wall on either side of the mother are the portraits of two men who bear a striking resemblance to each other: Krausz and his father. One of these, the artist tells us in his title, is his own self-portrait. In fact, they are both self-portraits. Somewhat surprisingly, the one on our right, which shows the younger man, is the father's self-portrait, and the one on our left, less fully resolved and somewhat masklike, is Krausz's. The artist seems to provide us with an accurate view of how all these pictures were arranged in his parents' apartment, but in Krausz's world, superficial accuracy never passes for truth.

The central trio of visages—Krausz's self-portrait, his mother's living face, and his father's self-portrait—presents in a concentrated, pictorial form the family's psychological and genetic history. In interviews Krausz recalls that he was his father's model from the age of six, and that as he grew, his father became his model with increasing frequency. And so Krausz would have been depicting versions of his own face, presentiments of the self he would come to resemble as he aged.

Even with this in mind, I was surprised to learn that "his" self-portrait, which he shows hanging on the wall in this painting, does not, in fact, exist. He invented it, he explains, in order to balance his composition and to give form to a premonition. In Krausz's deeply humane work, time is always layered, in individual lives and over the generations, stretching forward to an ambiguous future and back into the shadows of ancestral memory.

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Simon Andrew, "Jude" (page 85)

Simon Andrew's compassionate portrait of his younger half-brother, Jude, is suffused with deep blue tones, as if the model's own melancholy had seeped out into the world and engulfed him. The light falls on the right side of his face, casting the left into shadow and creating a corresponding deepening of the blues of the background. These grade almost to black toward the bottom of the painting. We get the sense that Jude has emerged from the depths for only a moment, just long enough to allow the artist to see the sadness in his eyes as he peers distrustfully into the light. In another moment he will slip back into his world of darkness.

This fugitive quality, a feeling that the artist has captured an image only briefly glimpsed out of the corner of his eye, is present in almost all of Andrew's work. Even his densely layered paintings seem to have been made with urgency, as if the artist were racing to manoeuvre paint onto canvas. His process, in his words, is one of "following the paint," accepting direction from the physical qualities of the medium itself and exploring the visual possibilities which open to him as he plies his brush. The result is an active, often agitated surface of swirls and marks in which the physicality of the paint, rather than a preconceived scene or idea, has driven the creation of the image. Never totally abstract, these images have an impressionistic aura of something half-remembered, with an immediacy of feeling that passes directly between artist and viewer.

"Jude" is remarkable in the depth and intensity of emotion it concentrates into a small, charged space. The artist has positioned the model's face in close-up at the centre of the canvas,

turned slightly to one side and tightly cropped. Our proximity to the model is uncomfortable, especially when combined with the assault of direct light onto his right cheek. Pain seems to overwhelm him like a breaking wave. In the deep creases bracketing his mouth and the grim, downward line of his tight lips, he looks like a person who has suffered an endless succession of blows and is steeling himself against the next, inevitable onslaught.

The fall of light also reveals contradictions in the model's appearance. His curly, tousled brown hair and casual, creased shirt and windbreaker initially seem those of a younger man. There is even something vaguely Romantic about the exuberance of hair and beard, as if the model were emulating a Byronic hero. His complexion has a pinkish tinge (with tones of blue), as of someone living an outdoor life, perhaps travelling and sleeping rough.

But there are stray, wiry grey hairs among the whorls of dark and blond locks. The skin of the cheeks and around the eyes is puffy and elsewhere has begun to sag, with a definite softening in the lines of chin and jaw, denoting middle age. Andrew daubs on broad white highlights which bring the brow and top of the cheek forward, suggesting both tension and weariness. In contrast, the touches of white paint at the throat and earlobe are delicately stroked in, as if the skin were still as soft as a child's. In their tactile docility we feel the model's vulnerability and the artist's feelings toward him of tenderness and protectiveness.

It is Jude's eyes which are the arresting, still point of the painting. Though his face is turned toward the artist and viewer, the model's eyes slide away from ours, avoiding contact. The effects of Jude's long history of illness, for which he has had at times to be hospitalized, are present in his gaze. There we see mistrust, rejection, suffering, disenchantment, fear and confusion. His eyes seem somehow to convey different emotions, the left one registering alarm and the right one, half-closed, resignation. Dark, bruised-looking shadows gather around the inner corners, creating circles and hollows which deepen the impression of unease.

Extraordinary for the success with which Andrew employs the materiality of paint to convey his model's inner and outer darkness, "Jude" is a loving, evocative depiction of a troubled soul. The bond which unites artist and model in this work enlarges the viewer's own capacity for empathy, encouraging us to feel, as well as to try to understand.

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IV: Animals and the Animating Spirit of Art

The visual artist communicates by translating ideas into forms. This feat of transformation from internal to external, from private to public and from intangible to concrete is the result of intuitions and decisions on the artist's part which verbal language is hard pressed to describe. The closest and most successful approach is through metaphor. For example, the Romantics would speak of "Inspiration striking like a bolt from the blue." The very notion of inspiration (literally, a "breathing in" of ideas which in classical times were seen as emanating from the gods) is itself a metaphor for the confluence of all kinds of forces, from mystical to conscious to subliminal. To paraphrase Marcel Duchamp, the most important part of art-making is "that which cannot be explained."

Three artists in this show use the metaphor of an animal's presence to give the viewer some insight into how they transform their personal visions and impulses to create, into fully embodied works of art.

Fabian Jean, "Horse and Studio" (page 95)

Don't let that horse
eat that violin
cried Chagall's mother

But he
kept right on
painting

And became famous
And kept on painting
The Horse with Violin in Mouth

And when he finally finished it
he jumped up upon the horse
and rode away
waving the violin . . .
– *A Coney Island of the Mind,* 1958

That is the playful voice of the American Beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, offering some very serious advice to artists: Trust the logic of your dreams and ignore the rules of your pedestrian, rational elders.

Dreams expand our understanding of reality by providing access to a world where physical laws and linear thinking are suspended. In this other world, what seem to be warring opposites can and do co-exist. The image of the horse in the painting can eat the image of the violin, and both can take on material form, allowing the artist to wave the violin (now magically uneaten) as he rides away on the horse.

An enduring tradition of celebrating dreams and the Unconscious through the use of illogical and often disturbing juxtapositions is the legacy of Surrealism, a movement which arose out of Dadaism, in the aftermath of the First World War. Founded by André Breton, who had been a student of psychiatry, Surrealism was heavily influenced by the investigations of Sigmund Freud, especially *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Dedicated to liberating the imagination from the strict confines of reason, Surrealist artists– painters, sculptors, collagists, writers, and filmmakers– combined within the same "frame" or context elements which had no apparent commonalities. The Surrealists called such elements "distant realities." The artists' unexpected combinations of distant realities produced in viewers a kind of psychic collision between their rational and non-rational selves, startling them into the perception of a more powerful emotional truth than reason alone could provide, a truth not only thought but deeply intuited. This perception, in turn, engendered questions about what and how we know anything with certainty, and about the validity of supposedly universal truths which individuals and institutions had traditionally upheld. It is not surprising that the promptings of Surrealism extended beyond art and aesthetics into calls for social and political revolution.

When I first saw Fabian Jean's "Horse and Studio," I thought of the Surrealist Magritte's painting "The Treachery of Images," in which the phrase "Ceçi n'est pas une pipe" appears in cursive script under a detailed representation of a pipe in poster-advertisement style. The artist depicts the pipe with meticulous precision, creating an idealized object, a poster child for pipes everywhere. Yet Magritte's epithet reminds us that representational images are not to be trusted: an image of a pipe is a visual construct and not an actual, physically present object. Those who unwarily allow themselves to be seduced by appearances fall prey to "treachery."

For me, Jean's painting bears a phantom inscription: "Ceçi n'est pas un cheval." Yet while we understand that the animal has no physical presence in the real world, there is no suggestion in

this image of treachery. Instead there is an implicit and spontaneous invitation to expand reality by creating something new amid an atmosphere charged with mystery and possibility. Jean's magically present horse emanates, as does the horse in Ferlinghetti's poem, from the realm of unfettered imagination.

Jean's many paintings of animals in surrealistic settings include a number in which horses appear as idealized subjects. Three of these feature the phrase "Equus Idealis" printed in capital letters, while a fourth bears the epithet "Ars Longa Vita Brevis." "Last Arcadian Horse" and "Horse and Clouds" allude to the Ideal without the explicit, painted labels. In part, Jean's use of the animals may proceed from his interest in bringing Eastern and Western traditions together, a signature element of his style. Horses in Chinese mythology are associated with dragons and so are linked to heroic themes and magical transformations. Their importance in Chinese military history and in trade (their use in the Silk Road routes, for example) is far-reaching and too large a subject to open here. What is clear is that Jean's realistic presentations of horses are not portraits of specific animals, as are, for example, the works of the eighteenth-century English painter George Stubbs, but rather embodiments of the creative relationship between artist and model.

In "Horse and Studio," the young animal, impeccably brushed, stands in perfect equipoise, its body at the exact centre of the composition, which is indicated by the line of the central floorboard beneath its belly. Though its body is centred, its neck and head lead our gaze almost to the right-hand edge of the canvas, balancing a sheet of drawing paper which is taped to the wall on the left. The horizontal areas (the dark form of the animal's body, its shadow, the wall with its baseboard molding, the dark expanse of the floor) impart a sense of stability and of hushed stillness. We have entered the interior of not only a studio but an artist's focused mind.

The horse is posed against a scumbled wall whose complex whiteness is as rich as a pearl's. Jean's handling of surfaces is exquisite: the lustre of the animal's coat and the plasticity with which its anatomy is rendered play off the matte texture of the wall in deft and harmonious counterpoint. And yet, despite the minimal cast shadow and the hooves resting on the floor, there is a suggestion of weightlessness about the animal, as if it were a *trompe l'oeil* mural, its outline possessing a preternatural clarity.

Similarly the sheet of drawing paper, only part of which is visible on the left, receives *trompe l'oeil* treatment, and while its irony does not extend as far as Magritte's "treachery," Jean is delicately toying with our perceptions here. The paper, too, casts a shadow along its right-hand and bottom edges, especially at the subtle fold which almost imperceptibly lifts the bottom corner away from the wall. The fold and the two pieces of blue tape are tiny but vivid details which imply the

artist's presence so strongly that we can imagine him hurriedly affixing the paper to the wall, accidentally bending the sheet and not getting the tape quite straight. The paper holds a secret: a grey wash has been applied over its surface in order to obscure something the artist had drawn there, and so tease our inquisitive gaze. The partial outline of the sheet of paper is clearly visible in grey paint on the floor, at the lower left.

The floor itself bears the gestural marks and spatters of the artist's process, tangible evidence, despite his physical absence in the image, of his active life in the studio. The figured grain of the wooden floor and especially the delineation of the planks provide perspective and a sense of energetic movement, as well as emphasizing the symmetries of the composition. The interplay between the static and the active is consummately achieved. The wall and horse—the model– are perfectly still, and archetypal in the sense that they are idealized, whereas the marks on the floor and the mysterious sheet of paper imply the kinetic creativity of a specific individual.

The straight lines of wall and floor define the space of the studio with mathematical precision, and Jean uses the lines of perspective established by the wooden planks to encourage the viewer's eye toward the centre of the painting, and upward toward the model. But it is the two elements which he deliberately causes to pull off the edges of the canvas that deepen the mystery of the image and ensure the engagement of the viewer's imagination. These elements are the curiously uncommunicative sheet of paper (with its hidden subject matter) and the enigmatic yellow drape on the floor. (A similarly-hued covering appears on the back of a patient white horse in Jean's earlier painting "Horse Waiting.")

The drape is spread out on the floor like a magic carpet. Metaphorically, its placement extends beyond the picture plane, intruding into the viewer's space and acting as an invitation to step into the scene, to enter the inner sanctum of the artist's studio. The equivalent strategy in theatre is the breaking of the "fourth wall" which separates the audience from the characters on the stage. By rupturing the illusory division between the seer and the seen, all such devices encourage viewers to engage emotionally and so take part in the work of art which is unfolding before them.

But Jean does more than issue an invitation: he makes it irresistible. The drape is not only brightly coloured but animated, lively with folds and creases. Like Chagall's horse, it may magically lift off the canvas and carry us away. There is also the intriguing possibility that the artist has hidden something under it, some treasure which we can see only if we enter the scene and lift the "veil." With a surrealist's sensibility, he raises questions but serenely refuses to answer them. It remains to us to cross the threshold and dream ourselves into the mystery.

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Lindee Climo, "Artist and Model" (page 111)

"A grown ox you've raised from a calf doesn't see you as smaller or weaker than he is," explains the artist, speaking by phone from her farm in Nova Scotia. I take note of the third person pronoun—"he" not "it"– and picture this gentle, diminutive woman standing next to her ox, Bright, who is eight years old and weighs 2,650 pounds. "You were the one who fed him and looked after him," she continues. "Oxen remember."

For this show, Climo has created a large, square painting of almost hypnotic intensity. The relentlessly staring, unblinking eye is a recurring image in surrealist art, and Climo's painting might be frightening if it were not so gentle. For she is no surrealist. The eye she shows us is calm and softly lidded, conveying a sense of docility and patience and, both literally and figuratively, reflection. It is, moreover, a specific eye, that of her beloved animal. The painting provides a realistic and carefully detailed depiction of the artist's hands around Bright's eye, with, in Climo's words, "the two of us studying each other."

Viewers familiar with her previous work are accustomed to seeing her skilled and witty responses to the art of the Old Masters in which she substitutes animals for the human figures, while retaining the settings and iconography of the original works. Chickens strut their plumed and embroidered finery, while sheep reveal a wide range of human facial expressions, personalities and emotions. However, for *Artist and Model*, Climo has decided to present directly, in a tightly cropped image, her own private and personal response to the theme, omitting external details of setting or temporal context and resisting any reference to a Renaissance painting.

Everything about the image conveys the profound connection between artist and model: the trustingly open eye of the model, the tender gesture of the artist's hands bracketing the eye, and the reflection of the artist herself in the ox's eye, with the implied suggestion that the ox, too, sees himself reflected in Climo's gaze. The spirit of connection binds not only two living beings in affectionate relationship but also crosses the boundaries between species. As remote as they are from each other physically and mentally, their reciprocal affection and trust cancel the sense of Otherness. In conversation Climo states that she never works with Bright when she is in a bad mood, because "he can intuit that. He senses my body language."

The bond which the artist depicts is one of empathy but not sentimentality. From an early age, Climo has raised farm animals, beginning with sheep which were a gift from her father when she was only nine. (Biographical information about Climo's early experiences as a livestock farmer and about the genesis of her career as a painter is available in *The Self-Portrait Show* catalogue

essay.) It was her practice then, as it is now, to treat her animals humanely and responsibly, but when the time came, she sent them to market. Climo's farm is a working farm, and the hands she presents to us are strong, labouring hands. She has trained her ox, a working animal, to obey and respect her, because by simply shifting his weight or turning his huge head unexpectedly, he is capable of accidentally crushing or goring her. Animal and human must of necessity respect the space around each other. The inherent possibility of Climo's being seriously injured or even killed makes the placement of her hands around the ox's head an especially strong visual statement.

Her touch is clearly loving and gentle, a tending touch. Each day, this docile animal allows Climo to clean the dust from the ducts of his eyes. (He also permits her to sand his horns.) The angle of the head and the apparently small size of Climo's hands in comparison to the ox's eye lend to the image an air of exaggeration, but in fact the image is realistic. Climo, who trained and worked as a technical illustrator, making anatomical drawings for veterinary textbooks, has ensured that the details and relative size of each element in her painting are strictly accurate. In response to my many questions, she provided a concise summary of the anatomy of an ox's head. Here is what I learned:

Oxen are prey animals which graze with their heads down. Evolution has provided them with eyes placed high up and on the sides of their heads, so that they can see danger even while they are grazing. The prominent ridge of bone over their eyes, along with their thick skulls, protect them from one another, since horned animals fight by butting heads. (I remembered that it was Paulus Potter's painting "Young Bull" (1647) which had inspired Climo to become a painter when she first spied it in the Rijksmuseum in 1968. A close look at an image of that work helped me to identify the portion of Bright's head which Climo depicts.)

As to the structure of the eye, that, too, is accurately presented here. In order to prevent dust and soil from entering their eyes, oxen have long, thick upper lashes and shorter lower ones which interlock to form a mesh when the ox closes its eyes. The vulnerable duct area on the inside edge of the ox's eye and the layers of blue membranes are all carefully shown in the painting.

Climo pays such meticulous attention to her model's eye because, for her, seeing is a metaphor for reciprocal empathic connection. Like the curved mirrors of Renaissance paintings, Bright's eye gives her back her own image, her Self in the eye of another, thus reinforcing and expanding her understanding and her humanity. In this sense, artist and model reflect each other, or, as Climo puts it more intimately: "Everything he does is a reflection of what I've done, all a reflection of what we've learned and taught each other."

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Joe Fafard, "Olé" (page 83)

Strong affinities exist between the work of Lindee Climo and Joe Fafard, the most fundamental being their respect for animals. Both artists strive to convey not only the dignity of all animals but the essential character of each individual life.

Fafard seems to have a special place in his heart for the calm and companionable presence of cattle, a prevalent feature of his rural Saskatchewan landscape. Fortunately for us, his bovine creations have proliferated far from the place of their birth. Many a harried urbanite has found comfort in "The Pasture", composed of seven life-size bronze cows drowsing in an unlikely green plot of pastoral tranquility in the heart of Toronto's financial district. "Royal Sweet Diamond", the enormous bronze bull which welcomes art lovers to Mira Godard Gallery, has for many years been a reassuring Yorkville landmark.

Yet these two artists have taken very different approaches to the theme of *Artist and Model*. While Climo's response, as we have seen, is literal and intimate, Fafard's is metaphorical and philosophical. His etching starkly dramatizes his belief that destruction is a necessary component of artistic creation. Moreover the dedicated artist proceeds with his work oblivious of the pain and destruction he is inflicting, because it is his art, and his art alone, which matters to him. This blunt truth Fafard conveys in "Olé" through the metaphor of the complex and highly ritualized dance of death which is the bullfight.

Treatises and etchings devoted specifically to the art of bullfighting have a tradition dating back to the late eighteenth century, when Antonio Carnicero produced twelve prints for his *Collection of Principal Manoeuvres of a Bullfight* (1787-1790). *The Art of Fighting Bulls on Horseback and on Foot* appeared in 1804, but the most celebrated expression of the genre before Picasso is Goya's *Tauromaquia (The Bullfight)*, a series of thirty-three etchings produced between 1815 and 1816. In literature from classical mythology to Hemingway and beyond, and in visual iconography since ancient times, the bull appears as a symbol of strength, courage and virility.

By visually combining the roles of the artist and the bullfighter into the archetypal figure of Picasso, Fafard sets up his argument that artists create timeless art by depleting and sacrificing the time-bound– their models– here represented by the bull. A model can be a living being, like Picasso's numerous lover-muses, or an idea he wishes to commit to canvas, or even an art movement which he pursues for a time, exhausts, and abandons before moving on to the next. Fafard's point is that the artist in his obsessiveness is neither loyal nor merciful toward his model. And Fafard has chosen his iconic artist well. As a reviewer recently wrote, "No artist has ever embraced the freedom of the imagination with more fierce, hell-bent intensity than Picasso."

Picasso was a lifelong devotee of bullfights, which he attended first in Spain and later in Arles and Nîmes, after the Fascist takeover in his homeland caused him to declare his self-imposed exile. The imagery of bulls and bullfighting recurs throughout his career, from his etching "Minotauromachia" ("The Minotaur Fight", 1935) to "Guernica" (1937), to the etchings and aquatints of *Tauromaquia* in the late 1950s. In "Olé," Fafard places Picasso's easel in such a way as to divide the composition into two halves. The dark half, on our left, represents the country from which Picasso turned away, the blighted land which the poets Lorca and Neruda called "black Spain." The lighter, daytime half of the image represents the south of France, with its twisted olive trees and whirling sun, evocative of the paintings of Van Gogh. Although the bull and artist confront each other in this artificially conjoined landscape and not in a bullfighting arena, the artist seems completely indifferent to his surroundings. Immersed in his process, he paints day and night.

Picasso is among the artists whose portraits Fafard has cast in bronze, including a sculpture which shows Picasso wearing the striped shirt and slippers which have become his signature apparel, a kind of shorthand for identifying the artist. Yet Fafard cannot resist admitting the gentle note of humour which somehow always finds its way into his work. Here Picasso stands with his feet flat and conspicuously turned outward, an aging, mortal man. Nor does his underwear, with its modest swelling (an especially poor showing when compared to the bull's emphatic genitals), enhance his dignity. There is a strong sense of the erotic energy which his models generated in him and which the act of painting imparts, indicated by the bull's horn projecting out of the canvas toward the artist's groin. And yet his grounded, steadfast stance in such close proximity to the bull also recalls the heroic tradition of legendary matadors such as Martincho, whom Goya's etching shows audaciously seated in his chair, unperturbed as he faces an attacking bull.

Surprisingly, the bull in Fafard's etching is not attacking. In this early stage of the "dance," the animal appears patient, even innocently co-operative, rather than aggressive, as if it were taking part in a game rather than a fight to its own death. This is particularly disturbing to the viewer, who sees the wounds which the artist has already inflicted, and the larger, deeper wound which he is in the process of making. Fafard deliberately shows us the mechanics of his metaphor, in which the brush and sword are lethal weapons. Indeed the brush is mightier than the sword. Two swords are already shallowly imbedded in the bull's neck, while a third has turned into a paintbrush. The brush which Picasso wields is the most destructive of all, creating the deepest and widest wound. In a bullfight the purpose of the initial thrusts is to weaken the bull and lower its neck for the final, lethal blow. Yet the artist has no perception of the bull as a living, sentient being.

"Olé" is one of a series of etchings Fafard is in the process of creating which depict the artist and the bull. Perhaps he is compiling his own fanciful *Tauromaquia*. A number of images I have seen show the two peaceably together in a studio, the bull prancing or posing or looking on with amused interest at the artist's work. But one image shows the beast lying dead on the far side of the canvas as the artist unconcernedly completes his painting. What we have before us in this etching is an image of the model in the process of being transfigured. The legs and body remain for the time being grounded in the physical world, whereas the head and shoulders have been immortalized on canvas.

Dora Maar, the "weeping woman" who was for seven years Picasso's mistress and his muse, bitterly said of him, "He used me until there was nothing left of me. Nothing left but his art." Paloma, his daughter by his subsequent lover, Françoise Gilot, concurs: "My father took everything [his models] had from them, their souls and emotions, and made his Art from them." Yet Gilot herself, now in her nineties, upholds the advice Picasso gave her when she approached him as an aspiring young artist: "One must rip and tear at reality."

The theme of Fafard's etching is ultimately one of perception. Does the artist see the fullness of the life before him or does he see only what he can use in the creation of his art? And is translation from warm, earthly life into a master's work of art worth the price the model must pay?

V: "The Luminous Darkness in the Depths of Art": Uses of Light and Shadow

I have taken the title for this final grouping of works from Robert Conquest's poem, "The Rokeby Venus." Retrieving from memory the image of a work of art which has deeply moved him, Conquest writes, "We come at last to analyze and name/ The luminous darkness in the depths of art." The work he is pondering is Velázquez' mysterious painting of the nude goddess reclining with her back to us as she admires herself in a mirror held by her son, Cupid. We see her face reflected in the mirror, and at the same moment become acutely self-aware, realizing that she sees us looking at her. And so even as we assess her beauty, she assesses our response to it and her power over us.

In addition to its bold sensuality (especially noteworthy because the work was commissioned by a Spanish nobleman during the height of the Inquisition) Velázquez' painting is an exploration of perception, of different layers and ways of seeing and reflecting upon precisely what it is that so moves us. For just as the experience of looking at art is not exclusively cerebral, neither is it exclusively visual. It is an experience felt in the whole body, as strong and visceral as Venus' "transcendent sexual glance." Conquest concludes his poem, "Art grows brilliant in the light it sheds / . . . on the inhabitants/ Of our imaginations and our beds."

There is in all our looking the hope of finding that confluence of thought, feeling and intuitive knowing which is elusive in the everyday world but resoundingly present in works of art. What moves us again and again is an artist's ability to communicate that living network of contradictions which connects us and makes us human, the full spectrum of light in the darkness and shadows amid the light.

Peter Harris, "Ground Floor Review" (page 89)

Ambling among the parks and boulevards of nineteenth-century Paris, stopping for a midafternoon demitasse beneath the awnings of a fashionable café, was the *flâneur*, the strolling observer of urban life. His leisurely occupation placed him both inside and outside the society in which he moved, for while he seemed to blend seamlessly into the crowd, he watched the scene with a critical eye. His aim was to understand, in the words of a contemporary writer, "the rich variety of the city landscape."

Peter Harris is a twenty-first century *flâneur* of the night. Armed with his camera, he sets out after dark to photograph the silence and emptiness of places which during the day are abuzz with human activity: offices and factories, parking lots, streetcars, gas stations, store fronts and restaurants. Since there is no one about except the occasional, unsympathetic security guard, he has no need to blend in. He captures his images of what Robert Frost called "desert places" and hurries them back to his studio for use as references for his paintings.

Harris organizes his urban and suburban landscapes around sharp contrasts between central areas of intense artificial light and surrounding areas of nocturnal darkness, the latter acting as frames. Sometimes pinpricks of cold light pierce the darkness (the streetlamps in a city park at night, for example), but for the most part he permits no superfluous details to divert the attention of the viewer's eye. His inanimate subjects, brilliantly illuminated, appear in focused, almost surreal proximity to us. And while people are never present, we have the strong sense of their recent departure and imminent return, the implied narrative of a daily routine temporarily suspended. The artist shows us trucks and school buses parked for the night, offices with lights left burning, empty restaurants with tidy interiors ready for the morning's patrons. Inevitably, since these are urban scenes, he paints the hard surfaces of industrial materials—metal, concrete and plate glass.

Harris' attraction to spare compositions and rectilinear, symmetrical forms is ideally suited to the representation of Modernist buildings, such as the one he creates in "Ground Floor Review." Most of Le Corbusier's famous Five Points of modern architecture are in evidence here: the minimalist concrete columns which hold up the structure and allow the ground floor to "float," the unadorned facade, with the horizontal expanse of windows occupying its entire length, the open, flowing interior in which the artist displays a collection of masterpieces for our unobstructed "review," even though we are standing outside the building. Harris has likened his own paintings to theatre stages, where a brightly-lit proscenium area, on which some unspecified action will take place, is flanked by dark curtains. In the case of "Ground Floor Review," however, the enclosure which comes most readily to my mind is the vitrine, a glass-fronted cabinet in which treasured objects are staged and exhibited.

"Vitrines exist," writes the artist Edmund de Waal, "so that you can see objects, but not touch them: they frame things, suspend them, tantalize through distances." The intention is not only to display but to control. The protective glass preserves the objects and at the same time regulates and influences the viewer's behaviour and emotional responses. Our gaze is drawn to the objects inside the cabinet but we are kept at a physical distance from them. This produces an interesting pictorial dynamic in Harris' painting, a tension between abstraction and realism. The ground floor of the geometrically flawless building has four horizontal blocks of glass, each containing four vertical windows. The structure stands in tightly controlled "natural" surroundings which allow for only five small evergreens, precisely positioned and identically pruned, and a black expanse of closely-clipped lawn. The overall image has the flatness of Colour Field abstraction, and yet the interior, seen through the windows, possesses visual depth. By placing his five masterworks within his architectural vitrine and flooding them with light, Harris produces a painting which looks at once flat and three-dimensional.

The flood of interior light is golden, providing metaphorical as well as visual illumination. The light is warmer and more inviting than we would expect from the ceiling fixtures which Harris depicts, and it falls on five seminal paintings which he has set against a gold-coloured wall. For artist and art-lover alike, this is an Edenic space, a place for contemplation and inspiration. Architecturally, however, it is also a hallway, a passage from one place within the building to another. As viewers privileged to see (though not to enter) this space in the still of night, we wonder at its mirage-like magic. Would daylight break the spell, banishing the paintings and leaving only an ordinary, sprawling, suburban office building? Or, even if the paintings were to remain in place, would people preoccupied with the pressures of workday life rush heedlessly by? Inevitably such

speculation opens questions about our own willingness to stop and pay attention, to take the time to fully see what is around us.

The five paintings themselves are Harris' models, works which he admires and which have influenced him. We might think of them as Five Solitudes. Each painting depicts its human model in an enclosed, pared down setting. The works are of different dimensions and palettes and show their models in various poses; they constitute the only deviations from symmetry in Harris' painting. Chronologically, they span the twentieth century, but their visions and virtuosity are timeless. Harris' miniaturized renderings are astonishingly true, acts of reverential homage to the originals.

The work on our far left is "Nude in front of the Mantel," painted by Balthus in 1955. It shows a childlike woman whose pose and scale (in relation to the under-sized mantel) remind us of monumental ancient statuary. Standing against geometrically figured wallpaper and panels of wainscoting, she looks at herself in a gold-framed mirror, completely absorbed in her own image and oblivious of the viewer. The left side of the painting suggests depth and a historical context in the ornate embellishments of the mantel, but the overall impression is of flatness and solidity, a horizontal arrangement of squares and rectangles surrounding the stolid nude figure.

To the immediate right is Edward Hopper's "Hotel Room" (1931), in which the nude model (Hopper's wife, Jo) sits in a weary, possibly dejected posture on an uncomfortable-looking bed. In the harsh overhead light she studies a railway timetable, her shoes and suitcase crowding the narrow space between bed and dresser. The diagonal line of the bed leads our eyes to (and, in imagination, out through) the open window, into a black rectangle of night sky. The room is an anonymous box enclosing stasis, but it is also a place which implies transience and introspection, a kind of waiting room of the soul.

Lucian Freud's "Naked Man, Back View" (1991-92), is next, portraying the flamboyant London transvestite performance artist Leigh Bowery, with his shaved head and voluminous masses of flesh above, in Freud's words, "those dancer's legs." Completed only two years before the model's death, the portrait deliberately shows him vulnerably "naked" (rather than artfully nude), his legs still strong and graceful but his face averted and his body turned away from us. The image is tightly cropped and devoid of props other than the stool and pedestal which support the model. As in his earlier portraits of Bowery's friend "Big Sue" Tilley ("Benefits Supervisor Sleeping," for example), Freud has here followed his dictum that "paint should work . . . just as flesh does," sculpting the model's corpulence in thick swirls and swaths of pigment. The background, combining a soft, white drape and an agitated area of dark colour and marks, renders the sitter's aura, the complex energy of his mood and character which Freud felt to be an indispensable element of every portrait he made.

The result is a contemplative, humane portrait, stripped to its essentials and rendered with uncompromising directness and truthfulness.

In stark contrast to Freud's portrayal of inwardness and stillness is George Bellows' painting, "Stag at Sharkey's" (1909), by one of the leading proponents of what would come by the 1930's to be called the Ashcan School, whose adherents were committed to producing images of American urban realism. Two men are engaged in a violent and illegal boxing match, or stag, at Sharkey's Athletic Club in New York City, where prizefighting was outlawed. Like two competing stags, the fighters are graceful and fearsome embodiments of "Nature, red in tooth and claw." The glaring light illuminates them at the centre of the composition and creates around them the frame of darkness which the bloodthirsty crowd populates.

The last of the Five Solitudes is a self-portrait painted in 1927 by the German artist Max Beckmann. "Self-Portrait in Tuxedo" shows him as a magisterial and urbane aristocrat, haughty and confrontational in his posture and facial expression. He stands, formally dressed, against a curtained window in a minimally-rendered interior composed of verticals and horizontals. Beckmann, who never aligned himself for long with any artistic movement or group, was steadfast in his determination to pursue his own vision with complete autonomy, and it was partly his constant assessment and re-assessment of himself as an artist that inspired him to create over eighty-five self-portraits over the course of his career. At the time he made this painting, he was an august figure in Weimar, showered with honours and public acclaim, an elitist who believed that the dedicated and enlightened artist would play an integral role in the new social order. Here we see him dressed for the part.

Black and white dominate the palette: Beckmann's shirt is dazzling against the deep black of his tuxedo and formal bowtie. His hands and most of his face are brightly lit, but shadows of introspection or foreboding darken the central area of his brow and his deep-set eyes. A mere five years after the completion of this self-portrait, the Nazis condemned his work as "degenerate art" and his life in Germany was over. He fled into exile, first to Holland and ten years later to the United States, where his teaching and the expanding acquisition of his works by public galleries continue to influence new generations of artists.

It is common to hear people speak of the kind of paintings which Harris presents in "Ground Floor Review" as expressions of urban malaise, of the isolation, sterility, alienation and violence of life in contemporary cities. But this approach mistakes works of art for strictly historical documents when they are, in fact, aesthetic objects. Great paintings transcend the specific times and

places of their making by expressing themselves through pictorial strategies rather than declarative didactic statements. The solitudes which Harris admires and the solitariness which gives rise to his own works open a space for both artist and viewer to enter, a suspended place in which thought and feeling can expand and creative response ripen.

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Mary Pratt, "Dressing Gown Series—Donna (C)" (page 105)

I remember the rush I felt, instantaneous and beyond thought, the first time I saw Mary Pratt's "Threads of Scarlet, Pieces of Pomegranate." I feel it still, remembering the pools and spatters of redness against the reflective silver foil, the leathery skin of the fruit cleaved by the knife, the exposure and scattering of tender seeds. Part of the charge came from the disturbing thrill of recognition, not simply of what Pratt had seen and expressed but of something deep within myself and every human being who has known love and anger and fulfillment and sorrow and loss.

Skin is our first covering, soft and sensitive when it is new, thickening and toughening with the slings and arrows of life experience. Many of us equate nakedness with vulnerability, but this is a notion Pratt long ago dismissed. "After painting women with no clothes," she has remarked, "I ceased to consider them helpless. . . . I prefer to think that women who have abandoned their clothes have also abandoned layers of artifice."

One of Pratt's preoccupations over the course of her long career has been the idea of wrapping and covering, whether her model is living or inanimate. The distinction is not as absolute as it sounds; even the fruits, roasts and gutted fish of her paintings project a richly sentient life. The coverings in which she depicts food differ in their ability to conceal, and they carry a variety of metaphorical weights. Foil, for instance, is opaque, and completely obscures the surface of the object it wraps, but not necessarily the shape. All her friends discerned the contours of her foil-encased Christmas turkey. (Consider how differently you respond to her naked images of the clammy, pocked skin of plucked chickens.) Ziploc bags and Saran Wrap are translucent and sealed, imparting to their juicy contents a quality of entrapment, with all its implications. Glass containers confine, too, but Pratt depicts them as magical and shrine like. Entirely transparent, glass has the power to not only transmit light but to bend it, inspiring her paintings of dazzling, jewel-like jellies and pickled beets and raspberries balanced like garnets on beaded glass salvers. In Pratt's hands, glass assumes its ancient alchemical properties, transforming common materials into precious offerings.

With human models, items of clothing and evidence of shed clothing– the marks left on a model's skin by the waistband of her jeans, or the indentations left by the elastic of a model's socks—can paradoxically both cover and reveal at the same time. Combined with Pratt's inspired use of light and shadow, the idea of robing and disrobing raises numerous questions. Among them are questions about the inner and perceived life of the model, about the relationship between artist and model and how their responses to each other affect and find expression in the painting, and ultimately about how we as viewers perceive the work as an aesthetic object. I will try to shed light on some of these issues by focusing on Pratt's "Donna" paintings.

Like all her work since 1969's "Supper Table," the artist's paintings are photo-based. She begins with a projected colour slide, making numerous and profound changes to the image as she evolves her painting. Pratt is decisive and outspoken about how she chooses, out of the hundreds of slides she has available, which one she will use for her next painting. She speaks of her physical "gut reaction" to an image, a "sexual surge or charge" she experiences when she sees a slide which demands to be transformed and preserved as a fully realized work of art. It is feeling, rather than analytical thought, which drives the decision. In the case of the "Donna" paintings, the identity—especially the gender—of the person who took the original photograph is of utmost importance, as are the circumstances in which the picture was taken.

Referring to her first painting of Donna, "Girl in a Wicker Chair" (1978), made nearly a decade after the original photograph, Pratt recalls, "Donna came to live with us when she was seventeen, after she had graduated from high school. She was very tiny, but beautifully built. She helped me around the house, baby-sat the children, and was Christopher's model." It was he who took the picture. After Donna left the Pratts' household, Christopher, who preferred to work directly from the model, gave his photographs to Mary. "This particular image seemed too perfect to throw away," she continues. "When I printed it, I was aware that she was looking at Christopher, not me, and this difficult knowledge has continued to plague me, as I've worked on other photographs offered to me over the years."

The "difficult knowledge" derives from the turning of her husband's gaze onto a female model and the model's response to his gaze, a complex dynamic which many years later reaches the viewer through the lens of the female painter. Mary Pratt's canny eye takes in not only the masculine scrutiny of the model but also the model's feminine awareness of the photographer's act of looking. The model's response can range from thinly veiled hostility, as in several of the "Donna" images, to enjoyment, as in "Girl in Glitz," an image of another model. Each participant has a different kind of power, which is withheld or wielded depending on conditions attending the taking of the

photograph. And so Mary describes the Donna of "Nude on a Kitchen Chair" (1978) as "contorted," and the Donna of "Girl in My Dressing Gown" (1981) and "Donna" (1986) as, respectively, "sulking" and "angry." It was Christopher who took the photographic images which were the geneses of these paintings. Mary explains that the model had "come to us at a disastrous time in her life. . . Maybe she was angry at having her picture taken, maybe she was angry at men, maybe she was heartbroken, angry at life itself and the hand she had been dealt."

The model's energy is quite different when Mary Pratt points the camera. In "Red Turban" (1981), we see, in the artist's words, "the timeless gestures" of "a young woman coping with her appearance." The model, wearing a red robe and with her hair wrapped in a twisted red towel, holds a white towel to her face as the soft light from a snowy window gently bathes her features. She is Snow White and Rose Red, and the photographer is merely there, quietly capturing the moment. In "Cold Cream" (1983), she is identically clad, her wide blue eyes peering out through the mask of gesso whiteness which shows the placement and gesture of her fingers when she applied the face cream. And in "Blue Bath Water" (1983), she splashes playfully in the tub, her head turned away and downward, heedless of the camera. The artist recalls that although she had hoped to capture the look of pale skin seen through water tinted blue by bath salts, "what Donna presented . . . was playfulness, not at all what I'd had in mind. . . She forgot the camera. I didn't try to inflict my preconceived ideas on this spontaneity. I became what the viewers of the painting would become: a voyeur." The sense of unobtrusive looking—voyeurism without the prurient connotations—often attends the photographs which Mary took. "Donna with a Powder Puff" (1986) provides a further example. The naked model, indifferent to the camera, shows undisguised, un-self-conscious pleasure as she touches her talcum-dusted midriff. Even when the female photographer is not ignored, she is seldom "played to," merely allowed to capture a look or posture.

"This is Donna" (1987), part of the series to which the watercolour in the present show belongs, presents the "male or female photographer/ female model/ female painter" web of energies and perceptions in all its dynamic complexity. The young model, clad only in her sensible underwear, faces Christopher's camera with her arms behind her back and her chin held high. Her back is literally against the wall. The expression on her face is angry and defiant. She is resisting and even disdainful of his gaze. Yet what Mary paints some twenty years later is Donna's tenacity and emotional fortitude, "the strength," the artist says, "that would sustain her over many turbulent years." As viewers of the final painting, we experience both the model's resistance and her strength, and much more. In the shape of Donna's profoundly feminine, almost dancing aquamarine shadow on the soft yellow wall, the touchingly human model is also a creature of sun and ocean, of fire and water and golden light.

The blue-green shadows had made earlier appearances, most notably in "Donna" and "Girl in My Dressing Gown," the latter of which also explores the ideas of covering and exposure. The model again wears her utilitarian undergarments, but is additionally clothed in an ill-fitting, creased, open satin wrapper belonging to Mary. Donna is clearly unhappy in these "borrowed robes." The artist recalls, "[The dressing gown] was too big for her, and hung straight from her shoulders. It hadn't been pressed, and the resulting pictures had a rumpled, sulky look which I hadn't expected. Once again, she was looking at Christopher. This wasn't the image I had intended, but I accepted it anyway."

Almost one-third of the upper part of the wall in the painting is occupied by a turquoise shadow, grading softly into the yellow wall against which the model's legs glow in rich flesh tones, warm with browns and reds. The blue/red juxtapositions in the palette recall the Fire and Ice colours Pratt used the same year in "Fire Barrel," a colour combination which brings to her mind Robert Frost's poem: "Some say the world will end in fire;/ Some say in ice./ From what I've tasted of desire/ I side with those who favour Fire." Pratt comments wryly, "One can be profound about Fire and Ice." Her subtle and symbolic application of these two colours brings us full circle to her paintings of pomegranates, those fruits which figure so prominently in the Bible: "And they made upon the hems of the robe pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet." *(Exodus* 37).

"Dressing Gown Series—Donna (C)" seems to me to be the last painting Pratt intends to make of the model. Completed forty years after the photo, twenty-three years after "This is Donna," it is imbued with what the literary critic Frank Kermode called "the sense of an ending." Executed in watercolour, it has a softer surface and a milder palette, while still carrying over from the previous paintings the Fire and Ice combination: blue shadows on the model's legs, red heat on her inner thighs. She casts a paler aquamarine shadow, minimal now, on the wall behind her. Her stance is both relaxed and securely grounded, her legs and feet framing an invisible triangle.

The camera has captured the transitional moment at the end of a modeling session. No longer in borrowed robes, Donna buttons up the cuff of her own shirt, still slightly open, but not deliberately so, not for anyone else's gaze. Her look, too, signals her withdrawal into privacy, the cessation of being on view. Her lips are pressed tightly together and the expression in her eyes projects closure.

"Put the camera down," the model seems to say. "I have finished posing."

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Andrew Hemingway, "Jane: She tried on the silk dress for the Barristers Ball" (page 91)

Andrew Hemingway can show you a world in a grain of sand. He pays minute attention to small, humble things which most of us fail to notice: a fallen leaf, a dandelion "clock," a bruised apple. The kinds of manmade objects he favours, the wooden moulds and dented silver bud vases, the chipped cups and battered tea caddies, carry living traces of their individual histories, and of the busy households and daily routines of which they were once a part.

All found objects which have survived time and change possess this latent ability to stir imagination by intimating the past, as any lover of collectibles can attest. What is extraordinary about Hemingway's vision is how he combines all these small histories, putting together objects in such a way as to lift them out of their ordinariness and ennoble them by alerting us to their quiet, intrinsic beauty. And the whole is always so much greater than the sum of its parts. Grouped together, the single voices sing a different song, reverberate in strong, metaphysical chorus. A lone porcelain inkwell may hold memories of a schoolboy's desk in a classroom of the 1950's. But in golden light, it also evokes a scriptorium in the Middle Ages, with monks labouring over enormous vellum pages of illuminated manuscript. As part of a composition which includes an egg and a tin of fish (stripped of its label, so as to provide a reflective surface), the inkwell becomes a sacred font evoking life itself, both earthly and eternal. The egg stands as a symbol of the temporal life of the body, while the Christian symbol of the fish stands for the eternal life of the soul.

Lately, after more than thirty years, Hemingway has turned his attention to pastel paintings of the female nude. While these are in many ways unlike his still life representations, the artist continues to pursue his signature interests in narrative and metaphor, as well as in showing the inherent beauty of small moments and individual lives. The model for his "Jane" series is not conspicuously beautiful according to the usual Western precepts of superficial beauty, which have mostly to do with glamour and extreme youth. Yet he shows us her poise and hesitation, her dignity and hopefulness. For Hemingway, her story is momentous precisely because it is so human.

The artist stresses the narrative element of the "Jane" paintings by giving them descriptive titles which resemble the chapter headings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels. (Chapter 6: "I am sent away from Home," Chapter 9: "I enlarge my Circle of Friends," Dickens helpfully informs us, in the voice of his protagonist David Copperfield.) The storyline of the "Jane" series is a simple, linear one: a woman is getting ready to attend a ball about which she has misgivings. Sample titles give us the sequence: "Out of the shower she wiped the mirror and stood and thought for a while," "She stood close to the mirror and dried her hair," "Putting on her underwear, she

stretched to put her pants on," and so on. A number of the titles employ the words "thought" and "reflection," clearly signalling the viewer to consider the psychological as well as the physical aspects of the images.

The pastel painting in the present show is "She tried on the silk dress for the Barristers Ball." Jane's "dress rehearsal" lends tension to both the story and her pose, as Hemingway translates her nervousness about the impending evening into an agitated and dramatic image of her struggle with the dress. Indeed it is the garment, more than the woman, which seems to be in motion, its folds and creases tugging our attention in diagonally opposed directions as the hemline catches on her breast. Hemingway elevates the model's everyday gesture of pulling a dress over her head into an image of high drama.

Central to this achievement is his mastery of *chiaroscuro*, the arrangement of areas of light and darkness, an interplay which he explores in all its subtleties and extremes. Like Caravaggio's figures, Jane is brightly lit against a background so dense and black that it precludes the depiction of any details which might indicate a setting. (The technical term for this extreme contrast is tenebrism.) Falling on the model from the right side of the painting, the light also sculpts her body, allowing Hemingway to delicately shade the hollows and bring forward the rounded areas of her abdomen, breast and thighs. An inverted triangle of darkness defines her pubic area and is reiterated in a correspondingly dark triangle on her dress (to the right of her breast), creating unity within the composition. The form, though not quite the intensity of values, is echoed again in the shape of the model's face amid the folds of the silk neckline. Similarly, the tiered folds of the dress resonate visually with the lines of the model's ribs, all these parallels reinforcing the coherence of the image.

For the most part, Hemingway uses gradations of grey to build his composition. The greys of the shadows within the folds of fabric are darker than those of the wrinkles near the hem, just as the tone of the model's "olive-coloured" complexion (referred to in another painting) is different from the shaded area above her navel. Hemingway uses the transitions and wide range of tonal values not only to describe volume but to present the different skin textures of the model's hands, face and body, delicately lightening her eyelid and adding darker lines to her forehead in order to give her averted face a touching humanity. At the same time, he binds his composition together by suggesting physical and metaphorical correspondences between skin and cloth.

Silk, with its highly reflective surface and its susceptibility to creasing, is the ideal fabric for Hemingway's purposes, not only because of its texture and its ability to catch and hold light but because of Hemingway's interest in the psychological implications and effect on the viewer of the model's pose. He is as much interested in suggesting her mood as he is in depicting her body. In a

sense, the dress is her second skin, smooth and wrinkled, dark and light, sensitive, reflective, almost sentient. (Another title in the "Jane" series refers to the model's relaxed enjoyment of "sun and silk sheets.")

Her face and body show signs of her middle age and also, possibly, of past hardships. As in his still life paintings, Hemingway is here acknowledging the passing moment and the inevitable marks which our life histories leave upon us. Yet he does not regret the passage of time. For him, imperfection is as intrinsic to beauty as it is to our common humanity. As Jane steps into her silk dress in another painting, the artist sees not an aging body but "perfect poise and balance," a woman who is "simply elegant." In yet another title, he reads the model's thoughts: "Was the Ball worth all the effort? She knew the answer." Sensing disappointment, Jane nevertheless takes the risk and makes the effort, and Hemingway dramatizes her progress in celebration of her striving spirit.

Though our bodies are earthbound and subject to time, our spirits reach for the light. If our world were perfect and changeless—if Eden were still our home—there would be no need for struggle or achievement, no incentive to dream or to create works of art. Hemingway always interweaves in his vision the opposing forces of mutability and hope, creating through his art a tangible fabric of faith. In the process he guides the viewer toward a more profound understanding of the human and the beautiful.

~

Colin Fraser, "Looking Towards Light" (page 87)

"What I'm concerned with is the world that is ongoing, not one frozen as in a snapshot," writes Colin Fraser. "It's the feel of the thing, the mood that the sunlight gives, which fascinates me. . . . These issues are ultimately steered by the heart, not the intellect."

Fraser's quiet, atmospheric painting depicts a moment retrieved from the past, a moment which precedes the first touch of his brush onto the gessoed surface, precedes even the mixing of his delicate colours. It is the meditative moment in which time and imagination expand and the artist begins to sense the emergence of his next work. Since meditation is an active undertaking, however static its outward appearance, this remembered moment pulses with "ongoing" life and possibility.

To the intimacy of the moment, interior in both its mood and setting, the artist adds the intimacy of self-portraiture. Admitted into the private space of his studio, we see many of the elements familiar from previous paintings: the wicker chair in which he sits, the paint-stained jeans

in which he works (a prominent feature of his painting "Imprint" in this gallery's *Self-Portrait Show*), the woven rug, the leafy shadow of a bush outside the window, and especially the sleeping model bathed in light. He conveys not only the quality of the light but the sense of buoyancy and lightness. Both artist and model seem to float in the airy space which surrounds them, she resting entirely in the central area of white light, he partly in the light and partly in the surrounding frame of gentle shadows. The light catches his white T-shirt and socks and the bronze hairs on his arms, lending to the intimacy of the image a specific human warmth and informality. Fraser brings home the idea that it is not exclusively the model who preoccupies him but the totality of his experience of "looking towards [the] light" in which she lies, an illumination too bright for his direct gaze. He portrays himself with his eyes downcast and introspective, rather than deliberately focused on her.

In conversation, Fraser cites a fourth presence in the relationships among artist, model and viewer. "The viewer makes intellectual decisions about what should and should not be done," he says, "but the artist works intuitively. He switches off the viewer's voice . . . and loses himself in the act of painting." It is at this point that a fourth "persona" enters the discourse: the painting itself. "The painting instructs the artist in what the next move should be. [It] gives you signals and you let the process take over. This and the paint [are] what open the possibilities. . . You do not impose your will."

The properties of egg tempera and Fraser's three decades of working in this challenging and seductive medium preclude the impulse to overthink or overwork the painting and thereby leech it of its emotional energy. Thinned with water and bound together with egg yolk, the pigments dry very quickly and the marks are all but impossible to correct, whether the strokes are long and flowing or short and precise. For Fraser the difficulties are more than offset by the gem-like surface of the paint and the luminosity of the semi- transparent layers built up over the gesso base. On the contrary, in his hands the demanding nature of the medium is an asset, imparting the freedom to proceed spontaneously in response to the dictates of feeling and practised skill. "You must do it all in one shot," he says. "Freedom comes through compromise. You must accept the strokes you have made and move on. In this way you are not tied down by the material." Because he does not make detailed drawings or rely on photographs, the images are informed by memory and the subliminally stored information of subjects he has painted in the past. The new work unfolds organically, stroke by stroke and layer by layer.

While Fraser's self-portrait occupies the foreground, his sleeping muse and the pictorial elements which surround her dominate the rest of the composition. The model, his wife Eva, appears frequently in his paintings, and when posing "asleep" is usually depicted with her back to the viewer.

Here, however, she faces the artist, suggesting the openness and accessibility of creative forces. Blonde and fair-skinned, partially draped in a white sheet and resting on a pillow and bed covered in white cloth, she is almost a personification of whiteness and light. White in Fraser's paintings is always a complicated colour, made up of many intricate layers of warm and cool tones and conveying its own internal luminescence. While there are many qualities and gradations of white, all exert upon the artist the same kind of fascination, which derives from the immediacy of their responses to even the most subtle changes of light. "White surfaces," he writes, "[are] alive and dynamic [and] never stay the same for too long."

Above and behind the model are reminders of the fugitive nature of time: red flowers plucked in their full bloom and the dancing shadow on the wall, a shadow which will lengthen and fade as the day wanes. While Fraser is adamant about excluding deliberate and calculated symbolism from his images, he does communicate a sense of the universal in human experience by carefully editing the objects and details he includes and leaving "breathing room" around them. Much of what he paints is intangible—light and air and the feeling of a specific mood or memory. And while it is his own experience of these things which he shows, he always leaves enough space for us to inhabit them as well, and to connect them to our own inner lives. Fraser invites us to breathe in the painting's light and air and to populate the moment with our own conjured memories.

~

David Milne, "Summer Night, Saugerties" (page 99)

Works on paper are fragile objects which require protection, and so by the time you see this watercolour by David Milne, it will be safely housed behind UV-filtering glass. However, as I have had the opportunity to spend time with the painting while it was still unframed– out of the glass– I would like to share with you something of the immediacy of that experience.

Within my first few moments of viewing, two impressions arrived almost simultaneously. Astonishment is not too strong a word to describe the first of these. What I was seeing was a startling approach to picture-making which united the familiar and the experimental into a seamless and visually exciting unity. A sense of familiarity arose from the work's apparent subject matter, which seemed at first glance a serene, domestic scene of a seated woman—Milne's young wife Patsy—reading a book by lamplight. But there is, in fact, nothing familiar about Patsy as the artist presents her here. She is not a model in the traditional sense at all, but rather a pretext for the composition

of the work, which is anything but serene. Her bowed form serves as a kind of filigree anchor for the fearless arrangements of line, volume, colour and white space which make Milne's painting an undeniably abstract work of art. When the artist first showed it at the New York Water Color Club in 1914, the title deliberately made reference to neither a summer night nor a woman reading. The painting was called simply "Yellow and Black," a clear indication that Milne's interest lay not in figurative representation but in the interplay of masses of colour. The title may have been a homage to Whistler's "Nocturne in Black and Gold: the Falling Rocket," which Milne had seen in New York in 1910.

My second impression reinforced the first. I realized with a start that the fresh, vital object before me was exactly one hundred years old. And because it was so vulnerably unframed, I could clearly see the texture of the unpainted parts of the paper, the dense or sparse application of paint in different areas of the composition, the wispy outline of graphite and, perhaps most surprisingly, the lines around the image of the lamp which showed where Milne had cut and pasted this element into place. The large, confident signature, in graphite, was one he often used at the time for works which he intended to exhibit.

With such direct access to the surfaces of the paper, I could easily imagine the movement and direction of Milne's hand. My focus shifted from the posed figure to the artist's swift brushstrokes of heavily diluted yellow pigment, his more deliberate building up of opaque layers of black, the spontaneous dabs of colour perfectly positioned within the white space, and other purely aesthetic decisions he had enacted. All these elements Milne directed toward a single objective: the creation of a dynamic unity of the kind he had seen in Monet's Grainstack paintings, of which he wrote, "It was a unity gained by compression, by forcing all detail to work to one end. In other pictures I was conscious of parts, in those I felt only the whole."

The three months which the Milnes spent in a spartan, cheaply-rented cottage in the hamlet of West Saugerties, New York in the summer of 1914 were an especially happy and productive time. The artist was thirty two, his wife of two years, twenty-four. They had married after a six-year courtship. Milne continued to barely eke out a living by doing commercial work, producing advertisement "show cards" and magazine covers and illustrations. It was a form of employment he detested, writing in later years, "There is more difference between commercial art and creative art than between a bishop and a burglar." The important Armory Show of 1913, which brought European Modernist art to a wider American public, briefly brought Milne a measure of recognition when five of his paintings were included in the exhibition. But though critics and fellow artists praised his work, it did not sell, and Milne remained financially dependent on commercial piecework.

The couple's temporary escape from the pressures and distractions of New York City freed Milne to paint all day, every day. The result, according to David Silcox, was a treasure trove of paintings, both watercolours and oils– as many as seventy, or nearly a painting a day. The work was innovative and experimental, looking at times almost breathless in the speed and exuberance of its invention. Patsy, the ubiquitous "slim girl" cited by a contemporary critic, appears often, as a figure in a doorway or a rocking chair, a willowly shape carrying a parasol or standing camouflaged among red or green foliage. Sometimes she disappears almost entirely, the kaleidoscopic fragments of her form subsumed in the composition of the whole.

In "Summer Night, Saugerties" she is both there and not there. Milne was assiduously limiting his palette in these paintings to only a few colours, plus black and white. Of the five colours he employs here, four—a teal blue he favoured during this period, a light green, a darker green and a brown—are confined to the central portion of the painting, which Patsy's form occupies. Milne has sketched in her outline, leaving the pencil marks visible along the length of her skirt and around her feet. The delicate curve of her wrist suddenly reminded me of a similar gesture in Jeremy Smith's *Artist and Model* painting of his wife, Meg. As Milne is not concerned with portraiture, a deft, brown swirl of the brush defines Patsy's face, while four smaller brown areas suffice to establish her arms and feet.

What is most intriguing is the calligraphic quality of the brushwork, the sparseness and openness with which her form is suggested. Milne seems to be sketching with his brush as he applies his jewel-like colours to the strong curve of her back and to the negative spaces under her uplifted arm and over her ankles. But he leaves most of her form unpainted, an open white space whose purpose is two-fold: it magically suggests the fall of light from the lamp onto her dress, and– more important– it creates in the lower half of the painting (consisting, in figurative terms, of the woman and the bed, separated from each other by only the feathery stroke of his pencil) a single, abstract expanse of whiteness. Visually Patsy's form melts into the surface of the bed on which she sits. Rather than applying white paint to the area, Milne leaves it uncovered, thus availing himself of the texture of the paper.

In order to balance and unify the lower half of the work, he carries over to the bottom of the sheet of paper, where he centres the lamp, some of the colours and filigree brushwork he has used above. He sketches the lamp in the same minimal way, reiterating the dark green of Patsy's book cover and the lighter green of the ruffle at her throat. An annotation in the *Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings* tells us that "The section of the painting with the lantern has been cut out and replaced by paper overlays on both sides of the sheet." The scale and positioning of the lamp are crucial to

the composition of the painting, and Milne may have tried several variations before he was satisfied with the result. This method of moving an element around before collaging it into place is evident in a number of his works on paper, and remains a common practice among artists today.

Focusing initially on Patsy, our eyes move downward over the composition to the lamp, stopping temporarily at the tabletop on which the lamp rests. This strong, black octogonal (not totally symmetrical in appearance, as its lower edge is made to pull off the bottom of the page) is the only rectilinear element in the composition. Milne places the table at the midpoint of the bottom edge of the sheet and centres the lamp on the table, stabilizing the lower half of his composition and again reinforcing unity through the use of colour, this time black. The glass lamp-chimney redirects our gaze upwards again, pointing like an arrow toward the large black shadow which Patsy presumably casts. White, too, is reiterated, as Milne deliberately leaves blank breathing spaces of uncovered paper showing through the expanses of black paint. These "raw" spaces energize the surface of the painting, making it almost uncannily dynamic. And they give the viewer a strong sense of Milne's presence and of the urgency with which he committed this bold inspiration to paper.

The shadow is a powerful abstract statement, a deliberate flaunting of the laws of optics in the service of pure aesthetics. Milne has pierced (left open) sections of the black paint in order to keep our eyes moving, but also to raise– only to immediately quash– suggestions of representation. A white line of blank space on the left-hand side of the shadow leads our gaze to the black sash of Patsy's dress, and then baffles us with an intimation of perspective. We may think for a moment that we are seeing the edge of the bed on which Patsy is seated. But there are no logical edges to the bed, and no traditional notion of depth. The linear white space on the left continues in an oblique path on the right side of the shadow, where it breaks down and abruptly stops. We are left to ponder not the illusory edges of an undepicted bed but the actual edges of Milne's own brushstrokes.

The area of shadow on the left, directly over Patsy's back, is the most densely painted of the entire composition. Milne seems to have almost brutally laid on the blackness until it resembles a cave yawning and looming behind the figure, dwarfing her. The size and angle of her head, with its untidy wisp of hair, for example, are vastly disproportionate and illogical, conceptually independent of the female form which supposedly casts them. Indeed the black area on the right-hand side of the painting looks lacy by comparison. Milne's presentation of spatial relationships in this work has more in common with Eastern ideas of suggesting near and far than with traditional Western strategies of perspective. Standing back from "Summer Night, Saugerties" we see basically horizontal panels or strata of shapes and colours, essentially flat but sometimes deceptively layered in such a way as to suggest depth. Milne in such cases is raising questions rather than answering them, experimenting with volumes rather than recording a scene from life.

The shadow spreads itself, phantom-like, onto the surface of a yellow wall. Milne has carefully controlled the values here, using a muddied, mustardy yellow rather than a clear one, in order to avoid overwhelming his composition with bright hues. He has loaded his brush with water, working fluidly and rapidly from left to right and allowing the paint to drip in all its richness and looseness. Again we are made to see the artist's hand. For me, Milne's treatment of the wall is one of the most daring elements in a painting replete with bold innovations. Decades ahead of his time and working in watercolour, David Milne has created a gestural painting.

The artist extends a vertical yellow line down the right-hand side of the painting into the white space at the bottom, distributing three additional dabs of yellow into the white area. There are also teal-coloured dabs there, which seem to have detached themselves from Patsy's dress. All these subtle and seemingly random spots of colour bind the individual portions of the painting into a cohesive whole, as our eyes move around and our senses remember. Such small, unity-sustaining fragments seem to me to embody the very essence of that quality which for Milne gave true art its authenticity and its power. The metaphor he chose to describe "compression" serves equally well as an epigraph for "Summer Night, Saugerties":

"The thing that makes a picture is the thing that makes dynamite... It isn't a fire in the grass. It's an explosion."

Patsy in Reflection

Hot day done at last
Sweetness of evening, scent of meadowgrass
Through our open windows

It's quiet here. Even the landlady
doesn't talk much
I don't miss New York
much

Crush of the sidewalks, bleat of motor cars zagging
trolleys and billboards and
cake shops on Broadway
Macy's windows a bright flock of hats

Central Park on a Sunday
Boats and children, couples strolling
frocks swishing and fob chains glinting
my long fringed shawl and ice cream by the Reservoir

The chop house here doesn't serve oysters
But beer's just one cent a glass.

"Shall we walk now, David?
Sun's nearly down."
But my husband of two years
tends to his water jars, bends to his brushes
"Soon, soon," he answers
as much to himself
"Sit by the lamp, Dear. As if you are reading."

I raise my hands, adjusting hairpins
"No need for that, my girl" he laughs
lips brush my forehead
he lights the lamp, dips a brush
and it blooms yellow

First time I posed
worried, aflutter, wondered
Was I pretty enough for a portrait?
When he'd finished I saw only
sweep of cheek, arm amid shadow
my lilac skirt a brownish dappling
a leaf among leaves

He's shifting the lamp
    in love with my shadow
        dark familiar on a flickering wall
Flame stretches out like a sleeper awakened
by one mad moth bumping the glass

Brush and paper whisper together, conspiring
 releasing Mystery–
    Art out of blankness

Moon has risen, full and high
Dark to his knowing eye
    is bright as day

I am content

~

Eva Seidner is a writer, lecturer and collector with a doctorate in English Literature and a wide range of collecting interests spanning the late nineteenth century to the present. Areas of special interest include contemporary painting, Symbolist objects and design of the early twentieth century and sculptural glass of the International Studio Glass movement. Her previous catalogue essay for Mira Godard Gallery was for *The Self-Portrait Show* (2012).

Dr. Seidner is currently at work on a collection of short stories. She and her family live in Toronto and Salt Spring Island, B.C.

Colour Plates

JOHN VANDERPANT (1884-1939)

Photograph of Vera Weatherbie
c. 1930
photograph
11 1/2 x 8 3/4 inches
Collection: Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

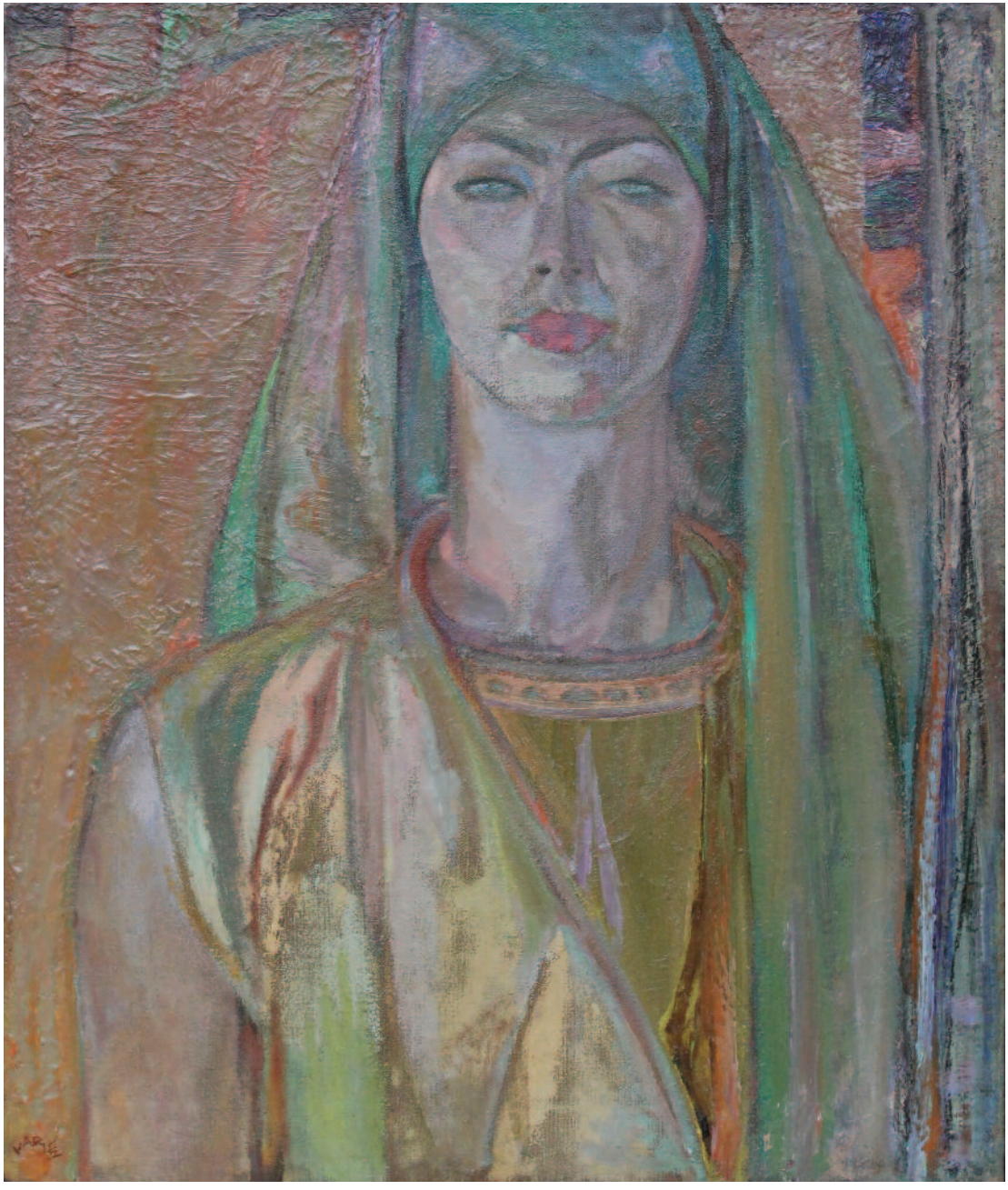
JULIA MARGARET CAMERON (1884-1939)

Beatrice
1866
photograph
11 1/2 x 8 3/4 inches
Collection: Victoria and Albert Museum, London

FREDERICK H. VARLEY (1881-1969)

Green and Gold, Portrait of Vera
c. 1933-34
oil on canvas
24 x 20 inches

Private collection



ALEX COLVILLE (1920-2013)

Morning
1981
original signed serigraph
21 1/2 inches diameter
edition 70

ALEX COLVILLE (1920-2013)

Woman with Revolver
1987
acrylic polymer emulsion on board
22 1/4 x 11 1/8 inches

Collection: A K Prakash

JOE FAFARD

Olé
2014
original signed etching
12 x 17 1/2 inches
edition: 15

SIMON ANDREW

Jude
2014
oil on board
15 x 12 inches

COLIN FRASER

Looking Towards Light
2013-2014
egg tempera on board
39 1/4 x 48 inches

Ground Floor Review (Detail)

PETER HARRIS

Ground Floor Review
2014
oil on canvas
20 x 60 inches

ANDREW HEMINGWAY

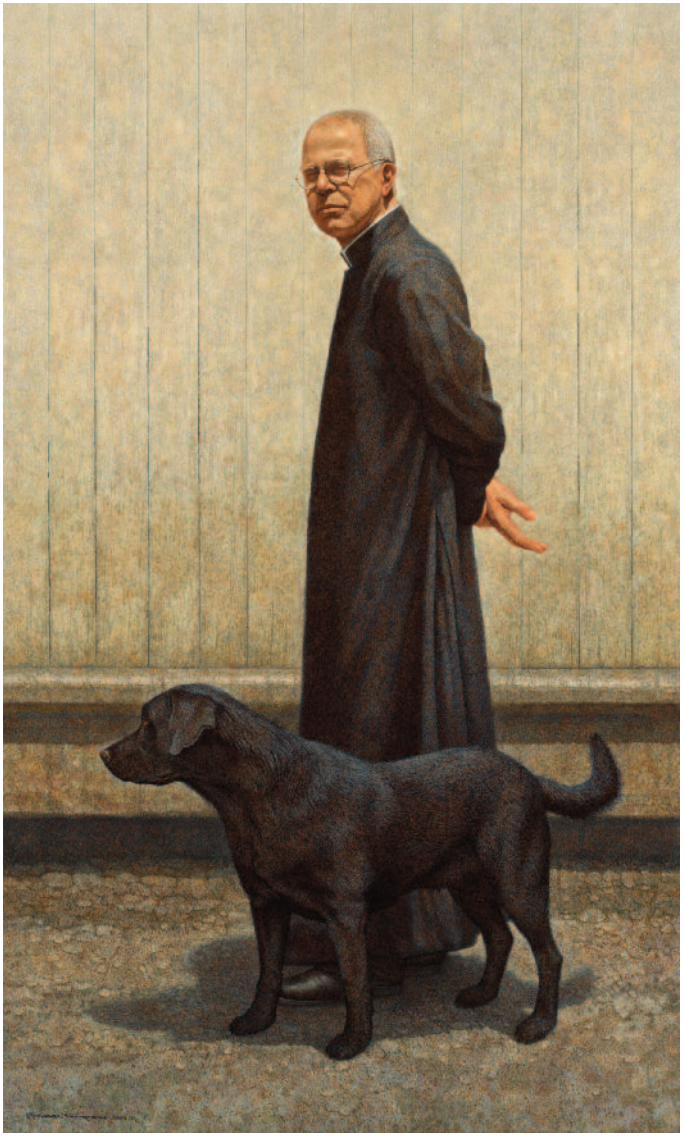
Jane: She tried on the silk dress for the Barristers Ball
2014
pastel on board
8 x 7 3/4 inches

MICHAEL THOMPSON

Priests 1988 acrylic on board 40 x 60 inches Private collection

MICHAEL THOMPSON

Guardian Angel 1983 acrylic on board 48 x 24 inches Private collection



MICHAEL THOMPSON

Priest and Black Dog
2014
acrylic on board
40 x 24 inches

FABIAN JEAN

Horse and Studio
2014
oil on linen
48 x 48 inches

PETER KRAUSZ Self Portrait with My Parents 2011 conté on mylar 33 x 27 inches each (diptych)

DAVID MILNE (1882-1953)

Summer Night, Saugerties
1914
watercolour on paper
20 3/8 x 17 1/2 inches
CR #105.72

LILIAS TORRANCE NEWTON (1896-1980)

My Son
1941
oil on canvas
30 x 22 1/2 inches

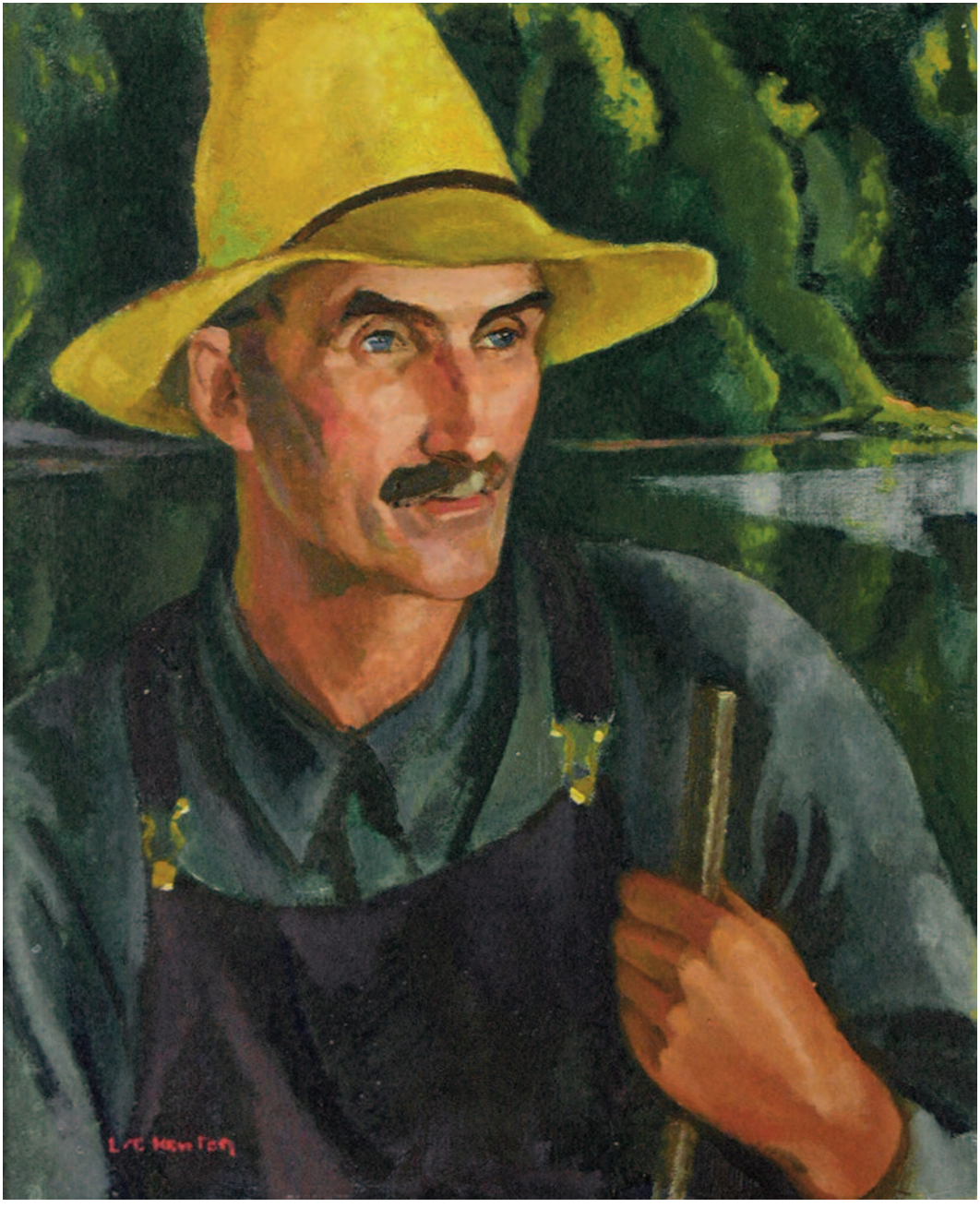
Collection: Art Gallery of Ontario
Gift from the Albert H. Robson Memorial Subscription Fund, 1942

Acc. 2592

LILIAS TORRANCE NEWTON (1896-1980)

The Guide, Millette
1939
oil on canvas
24 x 20 inches

Private collection



MARY PRATT

Dressing Gown Series - Donna (C)
2010
watercolour on paper
28 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches

PHIL RICHARDS
Vignette de Monet
1979
acrylic on canvas
48 x 66 inches

Collection: Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa

PHIL RICHARDS

The Latest Models
2014
acrylic on canvas on board
48 x 64 inches

JEREMY SMITH

Artist and Model
2012 - 2013
egg tempera on masonite
30 1/2 x 27 inches

LINDEE CLIMO

Artist and Model
2013
oil on canvas
24 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches

List of works in exhibition

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Jude 2014
oil on board 15 x 12 inches page 85

LINDEE CLIMO
Artist and Model 2013
oil on canvas 24 1/2 x 24 1/2 inches page 111

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Morning 1981
original signed screenprint 21 1/2 inches (diameter) edition: 70 page 80

ALEX COLVILLE (1920-2013)
Woman with Revolver 1987
acrylic polymer emulsion on board 22 1/4 x 11 1/8 inches page 81

JOE FAFARD
Olé 2014
original signed etching 12 x 17 1/2 inches, edition: 15 page 83

COLIN FRASER
Looking Towards Light 2013-14
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PETER HARRIS
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oil on canvas 20 x 60 inches page 89

ANDREW HEMINGWAY
Jane: She tried on the silk dress for the Barristers Ball 2014
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LILIAS TORRANCE NEWTON (1896-1980)
My Son 1941
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LILIAS TORRANCE NEWTON (1896-1980)
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oil on canvas 24 x 20 inches page 103

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JEREMY SMITH
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MICHAEL THOMPSON
Priest and Black Dog 2014
acrylic on board 40 x 24 inches page 93

FREDERICK H. VARLEY (1881-1969)
Green and Gold, Portrait of Vera c. 1933-34
oil on canvas 24 x 30 inches page 79

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