



# CREATING THE NEW CENTURY

Contemporary Art from the Dicke Collection

Published on the occasion of the exhibition

***Creating the New Century: Contemporary Art from the Dicke Collection***

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Cover

Inka Essenhigh, ***Spring***, 2006, oil on canvas, 72 x 62 in.

Back cover

Lisa Sanditz, ***The Legend of Creve Coeur***, 2003, mixed media on canvas, 42 x 48 in.

Francesco Clemente, ***The Weight of Light***, 2006, oil on linen, 74 x 81 in.

John Alexander, ***Ship of Fools***, 2006-07, oil on canvas, 96 x 76 in.

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# CREATING THE NEW CENTURY: A Contemporary Art Collection

Janice Driesbach

*When you collect within the time of your own life, you confront your own mortality, and the things you respond to . . . you enter into the metaphysical aspect of art and art history. The vocabulary is not just linear, it's like how light bends in time. History bends in time. And a collection bends in time.*

—Jeff Koons, artist

*Contemporary art challenges us, it broadens our horizons. It asks us to think beyond the limits of conventional wisdom.*

—Eli Broad, art collector

The observations of Jeff Koons and Eli Broad about collecting in the continually fluctuating context of the present are salient in relation to *Creating a New Century: Contemporary Art from the Dicke Collection*, centered on a collector who is a practicing artist as well as a business leader. Eagerly seeking information of all kinds, Jim Dicke is finely tuned to the manifold simultaneous stimuli that characterize our experience of the world today.



fig. 1. Julius L. Stewart (1855–1919), *Visit on Board*, 1896, oil on canvas, 31 7/8 x 25 1/2 in.

While referencing the diversity of contemporary artistic practice has become a cliché, it should be acknowledged that the range of expressions that comprise *Creating the New Century* also reflects the catholic tastes of the collector. Describing himself as “always eclectic in [my] purchases,”<sup>1</sup> Jim Dicke matches the breadth of the literature he ardently consumes with the expansiveness of his art collecting. He continues to acquire 19th-century American paintings while seeking out the latest works by today’s young talents in studios and gallery previews. Julius L. Stewart (fig. 1), John Twachtman, Arthur Wesley Dow, and Doris Lee continue to inspire him even as new work by Mark Bradford attracts his attention.

Dicke’s commission to Sam Gilliam for a triptych for a 30-foot wall in his Florida home paved the way for a shift in his primary focus away from historical American masters. After installing Gilliam’s work, Dicke was eager to learn more about the artist and subsequently acquired more than twenty works by Gilliam, some dating back to the 1970s (fig. 2), a number of which he has donated to museums.

However, the real beginning of Dicke’s contemporary art collecting dates to the early 1990s, with contacts who assisted him in navigating the complexities of its burgeoning market. As Dicke comments, by that time “contemporary art was so voluminous that knowing what was happening required full attention all day every day.” Additionally, even as he favored



fig. 2. Sam Gilliam (b. 1933), *Cay*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 129 in. © Sam Gilliam

earlier American artists who had not achieved great renown, there is an established framework for evaluating their works, one that does not exist for the art of our time.

*Creating the New Century* is comprised exclusively of art produced since the turn of the millennium, and, in the interest of representing a range of expressions, generally showcases only a single work by each artist. Fourteen of the 69 contributing artists were born after 1970, while others developed and were recognized for their mature styles during that same decade. Philip Pearlstein, whose lively portrait of Jim Dicke conveys their rapport, is the senior artist in the group, and Brian Fahlstrom the youngest. Some of the artists have had significant press attention while others have yet to receive substantial notice, evidence that Dicke is engaged by the qualities of the work itself and trusts his personal responses to it.



fig. 3. Gregory Amenoff (b. 1948), *Rise*, 2006, oil on panel, 19 3/4 x 19 3/4 in. © Gregory Amenoff  
Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York



fig. 4. Mark Bradford (b. 1961), *Helter Skelter I*, 2007, mixed media collage on canvas, 114 x 411 in. Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York



fig. 5. John Alexander (b. 1946), *Goldilocks' Delight*, 1998, oil on canvas, 42 x 32 in. The Dayton Art Institute; Museum purchase with funds provided by the James F. Dicke Family, 1999. 129 © John Alexander

John Alexander is represented in the Dicke collection by the dark landscape *Forest Scene*, the drawing *Angry Simian*, and the monumental *Ship of Fools*. Very different in character, but also reflective of Alexander's diverse talents—in this case, gardening—is *Goldilocks' Delight* (fig. 5). This lovely painting is one of the many generous donations Dicke has made to The Dayton Art Institute that have shaped both the early and contemporary American art collections. There is a certain irony in the fact that *Goldilocks' Delight*, filled with pristine yellow roses, should be in a museum collection while *Ship of Fools*, with dollar bills floating among doomed, masked Ensor-like figures, graces the foyer of a corporate office complex.

As a painter himself, Dicke is intrigued by how artists handle materials—for instance, the way Linda Besemer uses glass as a temporary support to create compositions that “are nothing but pure paint.” He also savors the contrast between Will Cotton's cotton candy curls when viewed from afar and from up close. His decisions to acquire specific paintings or sculptures are sometimes based on their uncharacteristic aspects. For instance, when Dicke saw Bill Jensen's *Ashes* in a solo exhibition, he not only described it as the largest but also “the only dark painting in the entire show.” Upon prolonged viewing, the work struck him as having a “Mark Rothko quality” that distinguished it from other examples by the artist. This occasional interest in acquiring works that depart from their creator's signature style likewise informed his purchase of Alex Katz's intriguing small painting *Tracy*, which depicts the subject with an ambiguity that is uncommon for this artist. Similarly, although the collector has admired Gotthard Graubner's work for 25 years, he deferred on making a purchase until he encountered *domino III*, one of the artist's rare small-scale compositions.

Concern with scale is not overarching for Dicke, and he has not allowed size to be a factor in his decision making. He went to considerable effort, for example, to reconfigure his New Bremen barn to accommodate Rachel Feinstein's *Sorbet Room* (fig. 6), a lavish all-white environment the artist created in response to a Rococo palace she had visited outside Munich. The installation is entered through an anteroom that sets it apart from the rest of the building, and the grounds outside the windows on the back wall were landscaped with Feinstein's input. Francesca DiMattio's oil on canvas *Collapse* (fig. 7) soars up more than nine feet. On acquiring Mark Bradford's 34-foot-long *Helter Skelter I* while it was on view in the New Museum's inaugural exhibition at its Bowery location, Dicke immediately offered it on loan to The Dayton Art Institute, where it filled the largest wall in the museum's sizable Rotunda entry.



fig. 6. Rachel Feinstein (b. 1971), *Sorbet Room*, 2001, wood and enamel paint, 144 x 188 x 276 in. © 2001 Rachel Feinstein

As painting is Jim Dicke's own artistic medium, the predominance of two-dimensional work in this selection is not surprising. Both figuration and abstraction are amply represented, and paint surfaces range from Brian Calvin's austere application to Per Kirkeby's and Bernard Frize's rich textures. Words form the content of several selections, as in Mel Bochner's and Mark Bradford's very different references to commerce. And others take direct or indirect inspiration from film, with Judith Eisler's *Steve McQueen (Bullitt)* and McDermott & McGough's *My Happiness is Misery* as primary examples.

A quality of mystery is prevalent among the works in *Creating the New Century* and characterizes much of the work in the Dicke collection. Gillian Carnegie obstructs our view into what we must presume to be a cemetery, Stef Driesen invites us to enter a disconcerting grotto that can be perceived as both positive and negative space, Eric Fischl asks us to bring our own experience to deciphering the tense relationship between his figures, and Tam Van Tran offers few clues to navigating his complex map.

A sense of motion is another recurrent motif, conveyed by the wave-tossed bark that dominates John Alexander's *Ship of Fools*, the simple yet complex spool of paint that bisects Ed Cohen's *Language is never owned*, the vibrant gestures with which Brian Fahlstrom and Louise Fishman develop their compositions, and the lines that activate Mary Heilmann's *Broken*.

Access to artists' studios and to exhibitions prior to their openings has often made it possible for Dicke to select from a wide range of new work. Among the studio visits that resulted in important purchases was one with Cecily Brown in



fig. 7. Francesca DiMattio (b. 1981), *Collapse*, 2006, oil on canvas, 112 x 68 in. © Francesca DiMattio and Salon 94, New York



fig. 8. Francesco Clemente (b. 1952), *Portrait of James Dicke*, 2006–07, oil on canvas, 46 x 92 in. © Francesco Clemente  
Courtesy Mary Boone Gallery, New York

On occasion, as with the Clemente portrait, Dicke has commissioned work from an artist. However, other than portraits, Will Cotton's *Candy Curls (Melissa)* is a rare example of such an acquisition. This departure was motivated by Dicke's appreciation for a similar composition and his desire for a modestly scaled painting to embellish a small living room. Likewise, while Dicke enjoys attending art fairs, he describes them as "not an ideal way to see art." Nevertheless, he purchased Lisa Yuskavage's watercolors and Muntean/Rosenblum's untitled painting from New York fairs, and paintings by William Daniels and Sam Windett (fig. 9) at London's Frieze Art Fair. Indeed, Frieze may have piqued Dicke's interest in more fully representing British artists in a collection that, while including artists from Europe and Asia, resembles his holdings of 19th-century art in being dominated by Americans.

Critical to some acquisition decisions was the context in which works were to be displayed. Although Dicke does not shy away from placing provocative works in public spaces—witness John Alexander's *Ship of Fools*—he carefully considers

New York, which left Dicke impressed with the artist as a person and admiring of the attention she devotes to each of her compositions. The riotous explosion of forms and lush paint handling evident in *New Bunnies (El Greco)* are typical of the work that established Brown's reputation. As well, its title reflects the artist's open acknowledgment of past masters as generative influences.

Another artist Dicke readily notes liking as a person as well as a painter is Francesco Clemente, whose *Weight of Light* was also acquired during a studio visit. Around this time, Dicke sat for a portrait (fig. 8) by Clemente, who described his ambition to "show the person in his totality, beyond the narrative of age, and of time." Clemente continued to comment that his "portraits of women are more dynamic, and the background is colorful, to reflect the mutability of their role. In this portrait James Dicke is shown against a green background, which has just turned black. The black background, the weight of the hands, the verticality of the head, are all indications of stability and strength, qualities that agree with the role of a man. The portraits are always made in one sitting, from life, to capture the singular emotional tone of the subject. I enjoyed painting this one, but then, I always do."<sup>2</sup>

Among artworks that Dicke selected while visiting galleries prior to formal exhibition openings is Amy Sillman's *Get the Moon*. In this case, he encountered the artist while she was installing a solo exhibition at her New York gallery. Sillman shared that the canvas was one of the rare works that she liked from the beginning and had never felt a need to revisit after initially realizing its composition. Similarly, Dicke discovered *Krefeld Project, Sunroom, Scene #2 (Champagne)* at Eric Fischl's studio before the series was first presented at the Museum Haus Esters in Krefeld, so chose the work prior to its public display. In another instance, Dicke identified Inka Essenhigh's *Spring*, a classic example of the "Neo-Baroque" style with which the artist is associated, as his favored work in her one-person spring 2006 exhibition soon after it opened.

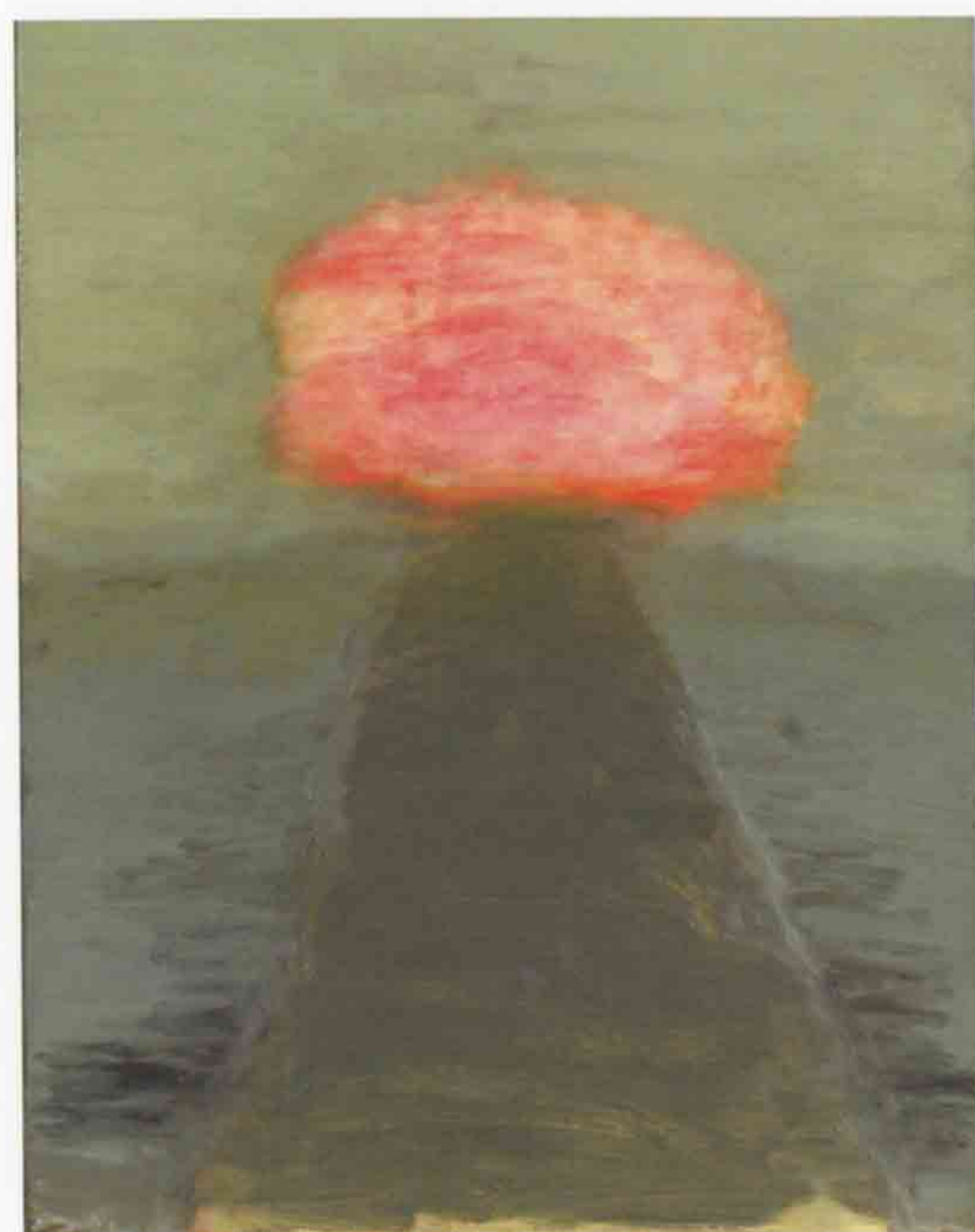


fig. 9. Sam Windett (b. 1977), *Sun and Road*, 2007, oil on canvas, 14 x 9 in. © Sam Windett and Marc Foxx, Los Angeles



fig. 10. Donald Moffett (b. 1955), *Lot 041000*, 2000, oil on linen mounted on wood, 12 x 9 3/4 in. © Donald Moffett



fig. 11. William Tucker (b. 1935), *The Emperor*, 2002, bronze, 65 x 78 x 44 in. © William Tucker

where they will be located in Crown offices. For example, Sue Williams's *Springtime for the RNC* was among the tamest of the beautiful, but risqué, canvases in her 2005 one-person exhibition. Likewise, while Mel Bochner's *Money* is thematically appropriate for the finance office wall on which it hangs, its words are less inflammatory than the vocabulary that peppers many of this artist's works.

Although each Crown area abounds with a variety of artistic styles, the individual artworks are thoughtfully selected, juxtaposed, and sequenced in the historic Crown Equipment Corporation headquarters. Compositions by Bill Jensen, Donald Moffett (fig. 10), and Dana Schutz are nestled among elegantly framed paintings by Childe Hassam, Francis Coates Jones, and John Carroll. A modestly scaled horse by Deborah Butterfield is situated not far from an Indian on horseback of similar dimensions by Cyrus Dallin, with Bryan Hunt's *Flume I* rising close to the ceiling in an adjoining annex. Visitors to the complex encounter, in close proximity, works by Doris Lee and Georges Schreiber; Manierre Dawson and Charles Seliger; and Marc Swanson and Toots Zynsky. A few blocks away, ancillary offices are filled with objects that, for the most part, date from the 1970s to the present, offering a visual history of Dicke's contemporary art collection.

The art that graces the Dicke residence and, most personally, the collector's nearby studio gives additional insight into his sensibility. On arriving, guests first encounter William Tucker's *The Emperor* (fig. 11), an upturned head in bronze that appears to emerge from the earth. Dicke appreciates that his maintenance people did not wax the sculpture's lumpy surfaces because "they thought it was rock," and notes that many people do not understand the work until he explains that it is a portrait of Ronald Reagan. Dicke comments that he appreciates the ambiguity of *The Emperor*, as well as how viewers bring their own life experiences to viewing it. Further, as a painter, he notes "liking to see how [Tucker] did it."

The installation of artworks in the Dicke home has many parallels with that in the central offices—a Dale Chihuly chandelier in the foyer welcomes visitors into rooms hung with works by 19th-century American masters. One room is filled with a stack of red plastic plates by Robert Therrien, while others feature works in glass, a collecting interest of Dicke's mother. All are a delight, yet the studio—a Craftsman-style structure a few steps away—is most revealing of what inspires the collector (fig. 12).

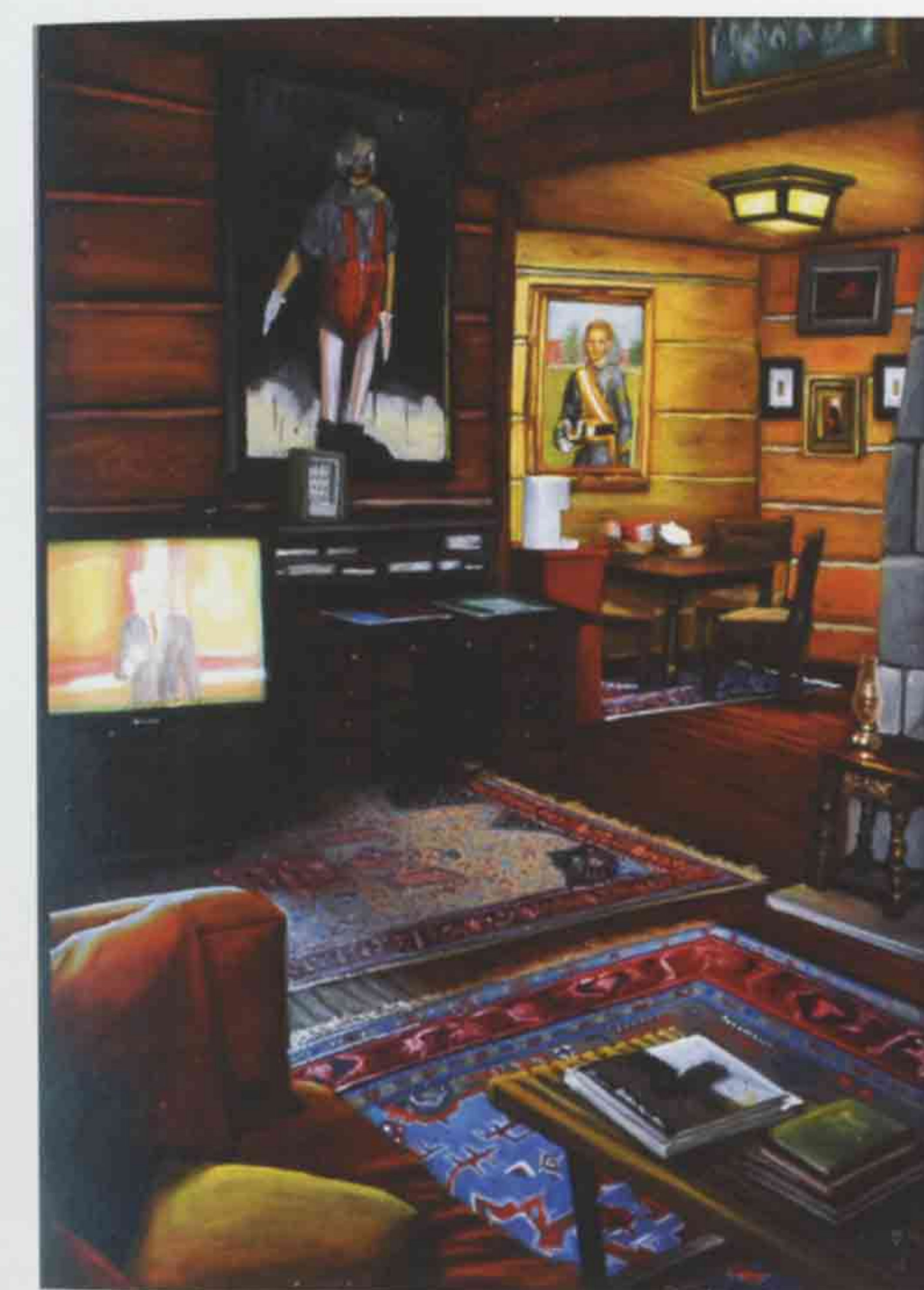


fig. 12. Dori and Joseph DeCamillis (both b. 1963), *The Price Is Right*, 1999, oil on board, 7 x 5 in. © Joseph and Dori DeCamillis

Filled with art, books, and CDs, the comfortable studio offers both respite and stimulation. The large central room and adjacent spaces are animated with smaller-scale, more intimate canvases and a smattering of sculpture. Artists represented range from Tonalist painters to Joan Mitchell and Marilyn Minter. This building, notably the interior stairway, also houses a number of drawings, by John Currin, Lisa Yuskavage, and others. In the larger space, Per Kirkeby's untitled painting occupies a corner close to Alex Katz's *Tracy*; across the room, Richard Patterson's *A Small Lot of Love* hangs high on the wall, level with Gotthard Graubner's *domino III*. The dense arrangement suggests that the collector considers these pieces sustaining rather than incidental.

All told, *Creating the New Century* presents a rich array of artworks created during the past decade that offers insights into artistic practice through the temperament of a collector. While some aspects of the art of this period, notably video and time-based media, are not represented, the artists featured—their styles, technical interests, and sources of inspiration—reflect a wide range of dynamic and original pursuits following the turn of the millennium. As Jim Dicke has remarked:

*The artwork I find interesting, and the art I try to make, engages interest and tries to stop the viewer for a closer look. A certain element of ambiguity and beauty should address the senses. Is the image abstract or representational? Is it a view through a microscope or a view of space spanning millions of miles? As a matter of the physical painting itself, I hope the technique can be interesting and awaken a sense of questioning fascination. Wonderful works of art are interesting to live with each day and never lose their capacity to engage the viewer.*

1 This and subsequent quotations of James Dicke II are from conversations with the author in New Bremen, Ohio, on December 2, 2009, and March 29, 2010.  
2 Francesco Clemente, quoted in an e-mail message from Ricardo Kugelmas, Clemente Studio, to Ellie Bronson, December 15, 2009.

## LISA YUSKAVAGE

(b. 1962, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

*G. B. Posing*, 2001Watercolor with gouache highlights on paper  
10 1/4 x 7 in.

## LISA YUSKAVAGE

Lisa Yuskavage's subjects are almost exclusively women, most often variations on the time-honored tradition of the female nude. Her inspiration comes from a wide range of high and low art: the paintings of Tintoretto, Caravaggio, de Chirico, and Philip Guston, Degas's monoprints, Shirley Temple movies, and Bob Guccione's lad-mag *Penthouse*. Her inclusiveness may arise from the contrast between her background and her ensuing life experiences. She grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Philadelphia (her father drove a delivery truck) and eventually, on the strength of her talent and drive, attended Yale University and traveled through Europe studying art. This gutsiness has served her well; her oeuvre has positioned her as a polemical figure—she has been accused of everything from slavish catering to the patriarchy to radical feminism. Her work often sparks controversy for its explicit, exaggeratedly pneumatic female forms and for her borderline kitschy infantilization of women. Despite their outsize proportions, her subjects often appear to be young girls. Though she readily explains that she is something of a feminist, as an artist she is conjuring a set of possibilities that could contradict her work's initial read.<sup>1</sup> It stems from a personal and psychological space of discomfort, culpability, and identification<sup>2</sup> having more to do with women's self-image and sense of worth<sup>3</sup> than with men's vision of what a woman should look like or be.

Yuskavage discovered early in her career that painting is, for her, a solo activity, so in advance of her studio time she stages elaborate photo shoots with live models in order to map out her compositions. She also makes small sculptures of figures with clay to experiment with positioning and lighting. She then spends long hours in her studio alone—without even a

telephone—working her way through drawings, watercolors, and paintings. Painting is an emotional experience for Yuskavage, and she has often mentioned her tendency to anthropomorphize color and shape as women—a yellow-hued painting will evolve into a portrait of a blonde, a red one into a redhead.<sup>4</sup>

In *G. B. Posing*, by restricting the palette to shades of salmony orange, the artist not only imbues the watercolor with warmth and a kind of gentleness, but also directs our attention to its curvilinear forms and composition. The ruffled blouse is echoed in the soft drapery behind the figure and the waves of her hair. A vase of flowers and a teapot appear just to her right, a knowing wink toward traditional feminine pastimes of flower-arranging and tea-parties. "G. B." appears pensive, her eyes dark pooling dots, her mouth an inscrutable wash. Her hands are demurely folded in a ladylike pose. The work, studded with a few bright points of light, seems to glow from within.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Enright, "The Overwhelmer: The Art of Lisa Yuskavage," *Border Crossings* 103 (August 2007), <http://www.bordercrossingsmag.com/issue103/article/15>.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Viveros-Fauné, "Cursed Beauty: The Painting of Lisa Yuskavage and the Goosing of the Great Tradition," *Lisa Yuskavage* (Mexico City: Museo Tamayo, 2006), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Schjeldahl, "Girls, Girls, Girls," *New Yorker*, January 15, 2001, 100–01, and Jayson Whitehead, "What Kind of Thing Am I Looking At? An Interview with Painter Lisa Yuskavage," *Gadfly* (April 1998), <http://www.gadflyonline.com/archive/April98/archive-yuskavage.html>.

<sup>4</sup> "Interview: Chuck Close Talks With Lisa Yuskavage," *Lisa Yuskavage* (Santa Monica: Christopher Grimes Gallery, 1996), 31.

## LISA YUSKAVAGE

(b. 1962, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

*Elizabeth on a Pedestal*, 2001Watercolor with gouache highlights on paper  
10 1/4 x 7 in.

## LISA YUSKAVAGE

*Elizabeth on a Pedestal* is an example of Yuskavage's more racy subject matter. "Elizabeth" is a nymphet perched with delicately angled hips, clad in scanty underthings, solipsistically examining her own arm. Her upturned button nose is a recurring Yuskavage icon—her women are unfailingly cute—yet there is beauty there too. The mannerist pose artfully conceals the figure's breasts. She is adorned with a corsage on her left wrist and her right arm appears to end in a teacup. Her stance invites a certain measure of ogling, but she conceals even as she reveals, and, armored as she is with flowers, feathers, and a teacup, the viewer responds to her sweetness and vulnerability rather than to her teasing. The artist has said that all of her works are to some extent self-portraits. *Elizabeth on a Pedestal* conveys the full range of Yuskavage's preoccupations—desire vs. voyeurism, male vs. female ways of looking, and most of all, the delicate balance of light, composition, and subject matter. Keep looking, she seems to say, there is more here than meets the eye.



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JUAN USLÉ

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TAM VAN TRAN

Sultan, Terrie. *Tam Van Tran: Psychonaut*. Houston: Blaffer Gallery, the Art Museum of the University of Houston, 2006.

CLARE WOODS

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