

Hionas Gallery
89 Franklin Street
New York, NY 10013
www.hionasgallery.com
212 274 9003



Melanie Vote

Traces

November 4-25, 2011

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 3, 6-8 pm

I recently visited artist Melanie Vote's studio on Suffolk Street in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Genteel but still gritty, Vote's work seems to channel the collision between fallen-down tenements and upscale boutiques indicative of the neighborhood.

I had expected to see paintings of white, Godzilla-size Precious Moments figurines sprouting from depopulated landscapes. Instead, I saw several intimate plein air oil sketches of Maryland's western peninsula.

I enjoyed the surprise.

Of all the lush green vegetation in the region, Vote chose to paint a solitary tree, which stood askew. What distinguishes this tree from other trees in the area is what it lacks: roots, bark, branches, and foliage. If the tree sounds like it's dead, it is.

The tree is a visual aberration, a peculiarity among the living, breathing plant life native to the region. The tree is neither symbolic nor functional. It is no more a totem than a utility pole or grave marker. It is what it is: a dumb dead tree by the side of the road baking under hot daylight.

This tree, which Vote said the owner unearthed and later replanted for no particular reason, is located near a U.S.D.A. farm outside of Washington, D.C. It caught Vote's eye while she was jogging. She spent several weeks in the area during the summer heat wave making paintings, oil sketches, and drawings.

I saw several paintings (in progress) that caught my interest.

An enormously cast infant figure reclines against a patch of sun-baked ochre-colored hills. A cloudless blue sky hugs the figure's translucent skin. In the foreground, a band of green shrubbery sways to and fro. (The scene reminds me of the Buddha of Happiness, a gigantic statue, which sits on top of Cam Mountain in the southern province of An Giang in Vietnam.)

A thin lingerie-clad woman stands ramrod-straight in a pair of vintage heels on a patch of grassland. She could be a Richard Kern model—breasts perky, stomach flat, arms and legs toned. She wears a gigantic Chihuahua head over her cranium. (Mr. Met, the official mascot of the NY Mets, comes to mind. He wears a giant baseball over his head.) In the background, the wide blue sky hovers over calm waters.

A Scamp travel trailer roasts under the sun in a nondescript field. An orange and white striped tire jack props up its rear. Three orange cones are placed in the foreground; one cone is on its side. No one is around, not even the owner of the trailer.

Vote admits the subject matter of her new work may seem arbitrary or obscure, even random. She is allowing herself to sit with the imagery, and surrender to it. These paintings mark a transition period in her evolution as an artist. “[I am] trying to work though ideas visually,” says Vote. “Like a diary or journal, the works on paper record ideas, thoughts, and impressions.”

Vote is neither turning her back on her skill set nor changing her approach to picture making. She is still a visual scavenger—culling images from the Internet, direct observation, family photos, old paintings, imagination and memories, to name just a few sources.

One element, more than the others, influences her practice: plein air painting.

“I paint outside when I can. The experience is vastly important,” says Vote.

“Plein air painting is an athletic event of sorts—or maybe a bit like hunting, fishing, or farming. One has to be prepared: palette mixed, location scouted out in advance, up before dawn to capture something. There is a sense of urgency to capture the moment and see—not think, just do. A certain flow happens or hopefully does. Self-consciousness leaves and a real connection to what is present can happen. With this sense of urgency, there is no time to judge.”

Besides the practical benefits that plein air painting offers Vote, it has also provided her ample opportunities to revisit the Iowa plains of her childhood. “My work has grown out of my childhood experience,” remarks Vote.

Iowa is part of Tornado Alley. As a child born and raised on Iowa farmland, Vote has firsthand experience of cataclysmic twisters. The landscape embodies fear and anxiety as much as wonderment, fertility, and sustainability.

The question or challenge she has set for herself is difficult: how to identify, capture, unleash, and convey the nightmarish visions of her unconscious without sacrificing the unfussy realism particular to plein air painting.

Nearly half of the paintings on view in *Traces* were begun within the past year. This show provides a unique opportunity to see an artist in transition. If her current paintings are an indicator of what is to come, I look forward to following her on her journey.

- Brendan Carroll

Brendan Carroll is an artist, writer and curator living in New York City.

Landscape Peopled with Figurines
-an ekphrastic based on work by Melanie Vote

Many have been employed
unearthing the remnants of culture,
wrestling artifacts and knick-knacks from their cribbing –
but our frames are too slight
for the collection of fears we carry. Especially
worrisome at the ravine's edge, we stand and trade
rumors of those who have fallen.

The trail is fashioned of questions.
What is this place? How can I
determine the scale of things?
What warrants restoration? Why has this,
and not that, survived?

I tiptoe, transformed to a modern minotaur
rummaging in my rough way through ruins.
Barefoot and entranced, I have come to inhabit
the doll's head, called by others the godhead,
entered by stringing together scraps
of natural refuse. You may say this is rustic.

Unable to discern the vile or holy events
that deposited these relics, we cling to hints,
traces of recalled dream, a canvas knapsack
we cannot open, a dress thrown to the ground,
and make use, and make lives among them.
History is inescapable that way.
None among us starts fresh.

Despite our excavations, the end of the story
is always just out of earshot, an abandoned campsite
with embers still hot under the stir-stick.
What we agree upon is this: the infant
at the fence line has never been easily pacified.

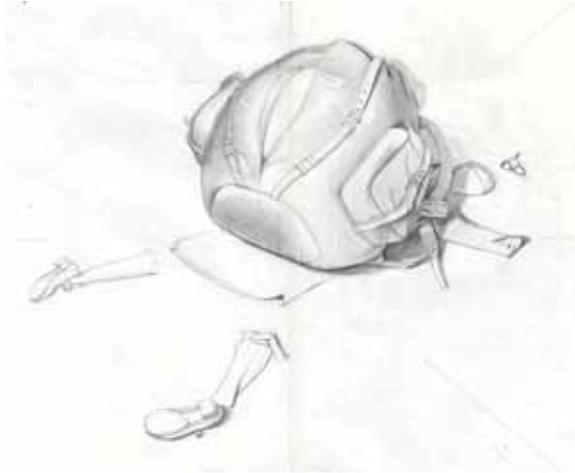
-Kelly Madigan

Backpack (2011)

plaster, magic sculpt, found rock

6 x 6 x 6 in.





Metamorphosis (2011)

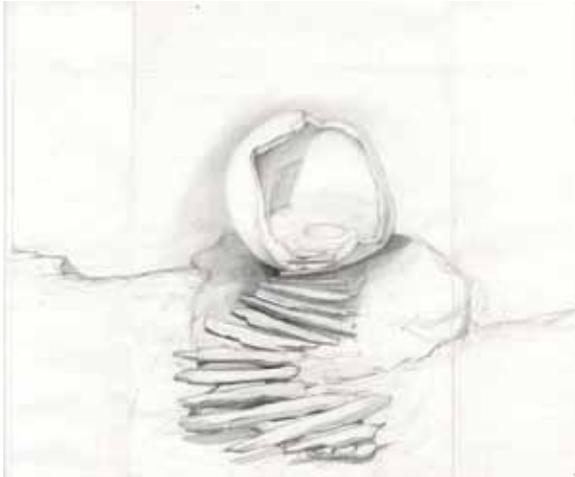
oil on linen

58 x 70 in.





Head as Home, maquette (2010)
unfired porcelain, cow pie, wood, other found materials
10 x 10 x 12 in.



Head as Home (2010)

oil on panel

20 x 24 in.





Baby Zephyrus (2010)
oil on panel
9 x 12 in.



Wyoming Landscape (2009)

oil on panel

9 x 17 in.



Refuge in Ruins, maquette (2009)
dirt, plaster, sculpy, other found materials
8 x 24 x 36 in.



Refuge in Ruins (2010)

oil on panel

10 x 17 in.





Auburn, Iowa (2007)
oil on panel
8 x 12 in.



Farnhamville, Iowa (2007)
oil on linen
58 x 70 in.



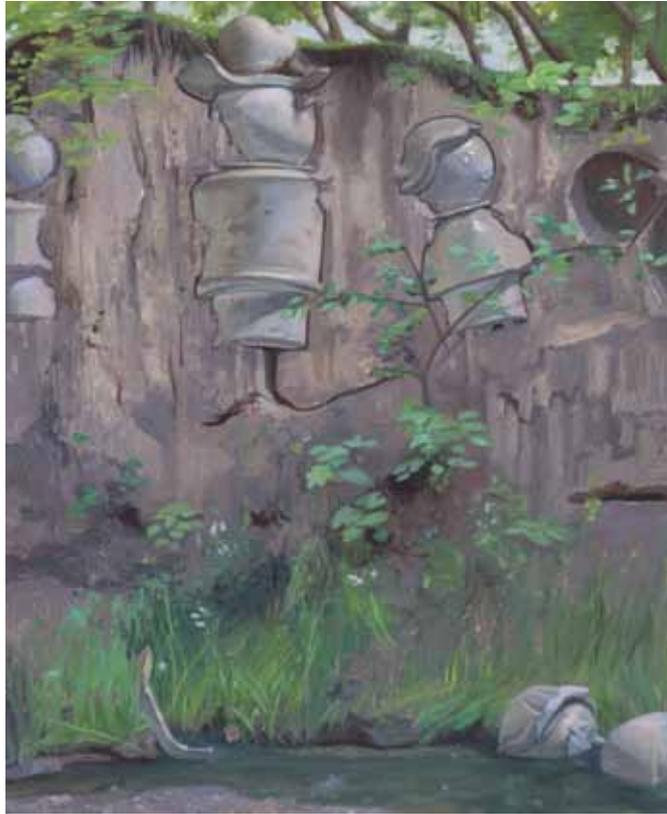
Lorhville (2007)
Oil on panel
5 x 12 in.



Invented Water Towers, Nebraska (2007)

oil on panel

8 x 12 in.



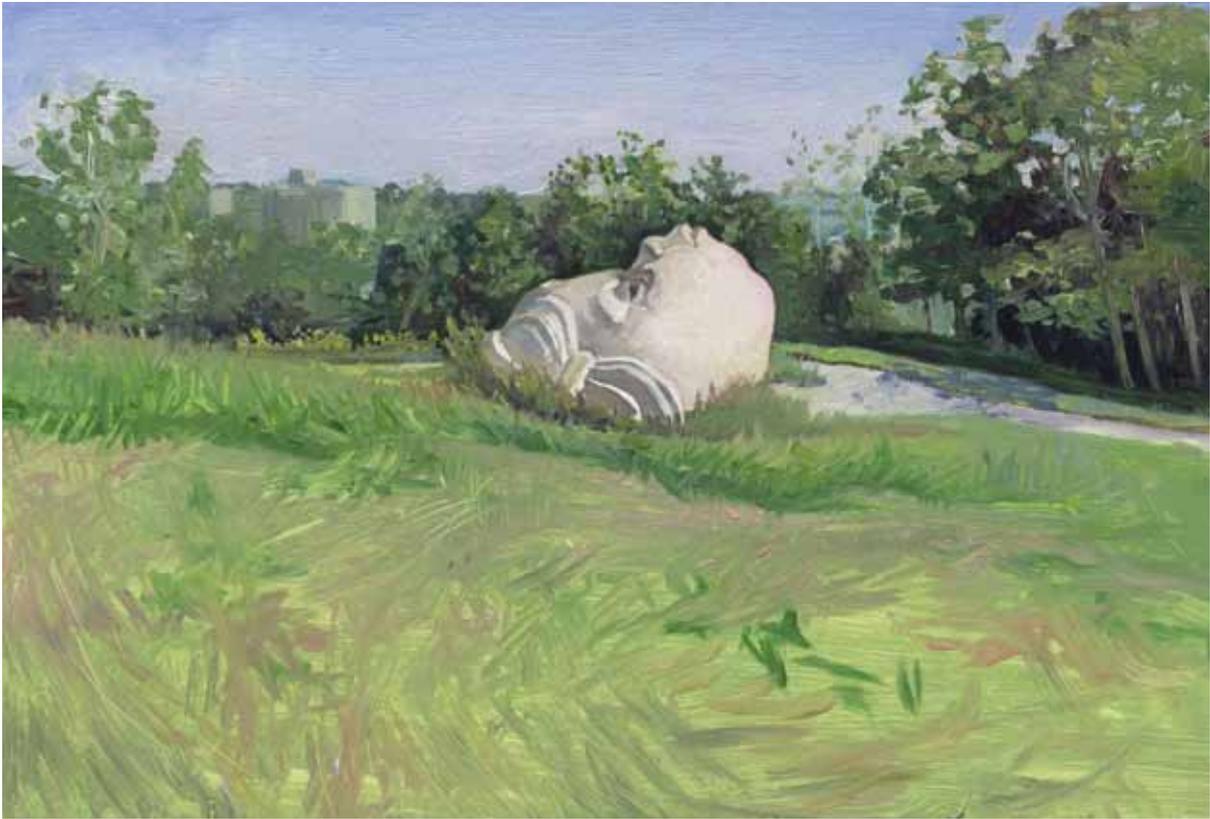
Discovery in the Bank (2008)
oil on panel
10 x 12 in.

Kissing Doll (2007)

plaster

12 x 12 x 12 in.





Head I (2007)
oil on panel
8 x 12 in.



Excavation (2008)
oil on panel
8 x 12 in.

Found (2011)

fiberglass resin, rigging strap

40 x 24 x 20 in.





Precious Moment on the Plains (2007)

oil on panel

6 x 9 in.



Ruins of a Precious Moment (2008)

oil on panel

7 x 9 in.



Precious Moments in the Snow (2011)

oil on panel

10 x 12 in.



Stanton, Iowa (2007)
oil on panel
8 x 12 in.



Posted (2010)
oil on paper
9 x 12 in.

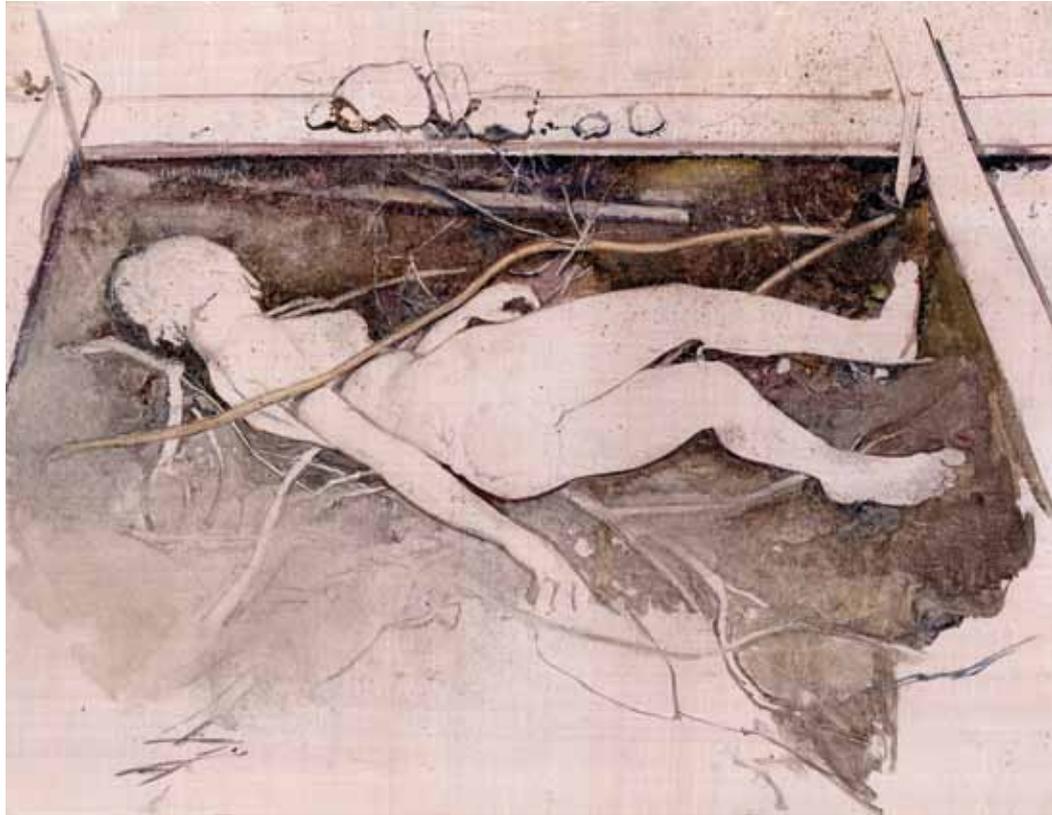


Totem (2011)
oil on paper
10 x 13 in.



Scamp (2011)
oil on paper
11 x 13 in.





Dead (2011)
oil on paper
11 x 13 in.



Detroyer (2011)
oil on paper
11 x 13 in.

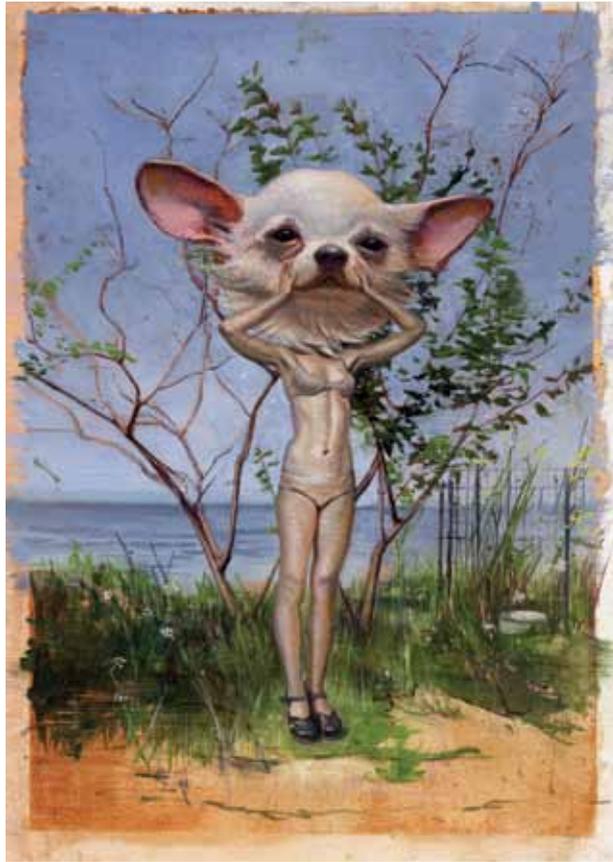


Big Head (2011)
oil on paper
11 x 15 in.



Magic Wand (2011)
oil on paper
10 x 13 in.

Dog Head (2011)
oil on linen
8 x 10 in.





Girl with Spade (2008)

oil on panel

10 x 17 in.



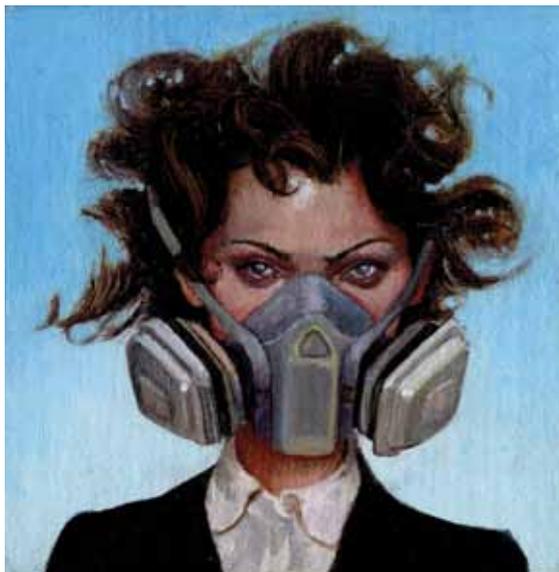
Girl with Double Headed Hare (2008)
oil on panel
14 x 17 in.



Girl with Gas Mask II (2008)

oil on panel

9 x 17 in.



Girl with Gas Mask (2008)

oil on panel

4 x 4 in.



Girl with Book (2008)

oil on panel

8 x 12 in.



Girl with Tie (2008)
oil on panel
4 x 4 in.



Girl with Scissors (2011)
oil on canvas
9 x 17 in.



Girl with Cupcakes (2008)
oil on panel
9 x 17 in.



Girl with Carry All (2008)

Oil on panel

8 x 12 in.



Girl with Cucumber and Mask (2008)
oil on panel
10 x 17 in.



Melanie Vote, NYC 2011

Education

- 1998 M.F.A. (cum laude) Painting, The Graduate School of Figurative Art
New York, Academy of Art, New York, NY
- 1995 B.F.A. Craft Design, Iowa State University, Ames, IA

Selected Awards

- 2009 Jentel, Artist in Residency, Banner, Wyoming
- 2007 Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant
- 2007 Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, Nebraska City Residency
- 2003 The Rosenthal Foundation Best of Show Award, Annual 54th Art of the
North East, at Silvermine Guild Arts Center
- 2002 Full Fellowship for an Artist in Residency at the Vermont Studio Center,
Sponsored by the Dodge Foundation

Selected Exhibitions

- 2011 *Traces*, Hionas Gallery, New York, NY
- 2011 *Paintworks*, Gowanus Ballroom, Brooklyn, NY
- 2011 *NYAA Summer Exhibition*, Flowers Gallery New York, NY
- 2011 *Lost and Found*, Lemmerman Gallery, New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ
- 2010 *“Draw” tour Museo de la Ciudad de Mexico*, June 19 - August 15 Curators: Erik Foss and Curse Mackey, Special Guest Curator: Miguel Calderon, Museum Director: Cristina Faesler
- 2010 *Nature Calls*, SICA, Long Branch, NJ
- 2010 *Just Off*, Sloan Fine Art, New York, NY, Curators: Peter Drake and Alix Sloan
- 2010 *Looks Good on Paper*, DFN Gallery, New York, NY
- 2009 *Reconfigured & Relocated*, DFN Gallery, New York, NY
- 2008 *Trepidations*, DFN Gallery, New York, NY
- 2008 *Dangerous Women*, DFN Gallery, Curator: Julie Lohnes and John Nickel, New York, NY
- 2008 *Trading Places*, Pro Arts/Canco Lofts, Jersey City, NJ, Curator: Hugo Bastidas
- 2008 *Small is Beautiful*, Flowers Gallery, New York, NY
- 2008 *Becoming: Visions of Childhood*, Bronfman Center Gallery, Curator:Lois Stavsky, New York, NY
- 2008 *The Toy Show*, Hans Wiess Newspace Gallery, Curator: Susan Classen-Sullivan, Manchester, CT
- 2008 *Works on Paper*, DFN Gallery, New York, NY
- 2007 *Small is Beautiful*, Flowers Gallery, New York, NY
- 2007 *Wet*, DFN Gallery, New York, NY

- 2007 *REPRESENTATION*, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2007 *Summer Exhibition, New York Academy of Art*, Selection Committee: Vincent Desiderio, Eric Fischl and Jenny Saville, New York, NY
- 2007 *The Beholders Eye*, Salmagundi Art Club, Curator: Katherine Chapin, New York, NY
- 2007 *Draw*, Gallery Lombardi, Curator: Erik Foss and Curse Mackey, Austin, TX
- 2006 *The Bridge Art Fair-Other Events of Art Basel/Miami Beach*, DFN Gallery Miami, FL
- 2006 *Palpable Painting*, Kresge and Pascal Galleries Berrie Center, Ramapo College, Curator: Sydney Jenkins Ramapo, NJ
- 2005 *10th Anniversary Show*, DFN Gallery New York, NY
- 2005 **Laptop Series*, Realform Project Space, Curator: David Gibson Brooklyn, NY
- 2005 *The Chautauqua Center for the Visual Arts*, Juror: Stephen Westfall Chautauqua, NY
- 2005 *Night and Day, Women's Caucus for Art*, Juror: Helen Cooper Fairfield, CT
- 2004 *4 Artist/4 Walls*, Interior Paintings, DFN Gallery, Curator: John Nickel New York, NY
- 2004 *The Drawn Page*, The Hersam Acorn Newspaper and The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Curators: Harry Philbrick and Jessica Hough Ridgefield, CT
- 2004 *NYAA Alumni Exhibition*, 1st Annual Juried Exhibition for the New York Academy of Art Alumni Association, Stricoff Fine Art New York, NY
- 2004 *Martha and Me*, Gallery Onetwentyeight, Curator: Elisa Soliven New York, NY
- 2004 *NJCU Faculty Exhibition*, Lemmerman Gallery, Curator: Midori Yoshimoto Jersey City, NJ
- 2003 *54th Art of the Northeast*, Silvermine Art Center, Juror: Harry Philbrick New Canaan, CT
- 2002 **Selected Works*, Ground Jersey City, NJ
- 2002 *Convergence*, NYAA Alumni Exhibition New York, NY
- 2000 *Art at Barrow Mansion*, Jersey City Art Tour, Curator: Kimberly Ewald Jersey City, NJ
- 2000 *Group Show*, Gallery 156, Curator: Matthew Greenway Brooklyn, NY
- 1999 *Beyond Appropriation*, NYAA Alumni Exhibition, Juror: Philip Pearlstein New York, NY
- 1998 *M.F.A. Exhibition*, New York Academy of Art New York, NY

* Solo Exhibitions

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