



ADELSON GALLERIES
BOSTON

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Contemplating Figures
Andrew Stevovich



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May 4th through June 24th, 2018

Texts by Adam Adelson

Contemplating Figures

Over the past 36 years, Adelson Galleries has developed a close relationship with Andrew Stevovich. In 2012, Adelson Galleries Boston opened to the public with our inaugural exhibition of Stevovich's artwork. We were met with enthusiasm by old and new collectors. Two years later, we exhibited Stevovich again and sent the exhibition to our New York gallery. Now, as we begin work on a comprehensive publication on the artist to be released in 2019 – including a traveling museum tour – we are thrilled to present our third exhibition in the Boston gallery. The artist is a core member of the gallery's stable of artists. He has developed a dedicated following throughout the country and many parts of the world.

Stevovich's ability to carefully apply thin layers of oil paint over linen to represent his unconventional figures distinguishes his style from other artists. One must take a few moments to study each painting in order to properly appreciate the artist's attention to detail. The subtle and delicate brushstrokes coalesce into swaths of color, interrupted by carefully contoured lines. Each composition has been meticulously assembled through several drawings, sometimes over the course of

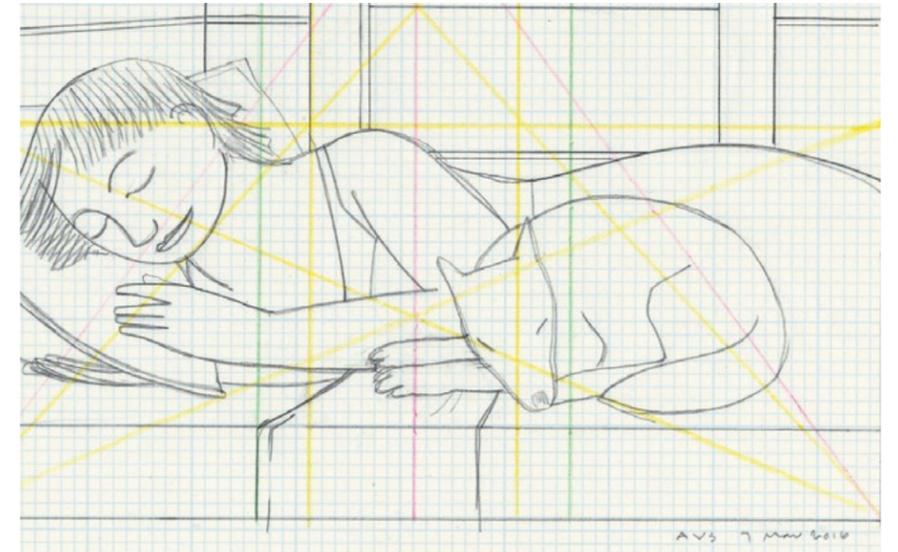


Jessie's Diner, 2017, Detail

many years. The result is a balanced collection of colors and shapes that materializes into organized milieus, which produce narratives that are open to interpretation. He has distilled the features of the people he represents to their essential elements, and allows the observer to determine their own meaning.

The artist's aesthetic voice is stylistically inspired by Old Master Renaissance painters but consciously comments on contemporary society. The subjects explore our culture's social constructions, and allow us to investigate how we view ourselves. At first glance, they may appear to be ambiguous figures in indistinctive environs, but upon further inspection one can see the underlying themes of identity, societal practices and pressures, the passage of time, nostalgia, neuroses, and idiosyncrasies of human interaction to name a few. The paintings' vernacular is simplistic, allowing the bystander to reflect their own views onto them, rather than being told how to feel. He invites the viewer to contemplate the paintings as they relate to their own lives.

Our increasingly globalized ethos today – facilitated by the screens that some of us are addicted to watching – is fast paced, and it's often difficult to slow down. The artwork of Andrew Stevovich provides us



Sleeping Woman with Dog #2, 2016, Pencil on graph paper, 6 x 9 inches

an opportunity to pause and examine moments of our personal and social lives that we all share. The artist rarely describes the narrative elements of his work, so I have provided my own interpretations of each painting in the exhibition with the hope of inspiring a deeper look. The artist is painstaking in his process – both in compositional analysis and application of paint. My goal is to allow the visitors of this exhibition to appreciate these intricacies and read carefully among the lines to identify with the figures they form.

Adam Adelson
Director

Game in the Garden

2015, Oil on linen, 20 x 16 inches

Three cards on the table. One diamond turned up between two face-down cards, and a man looking down at them, deep in thought. Why is he so torn if the choice is one of two options? The man's pensive expression suggests there must be more to the game than 50/50 odds. The moment of contemplation is representative of life's daily choices. There is often more beneath the surface of each option, and whether we approach the conclusion with skepticism or candor, we know that our verdict will affect an outcome. Sometimes, our choices are as simple as flipping a coin, but we tend to weigh our odds regardless of our control in the circumstances. The man is not alone in the garden. He is joined by a woman, whose face is more prominently displayed in the composition – looking down, awaiting his decision. They are both enclosed in a space by a white wall; they are outside and separated by a tree in the background. We assume that whichever card the man chooses will make him the winner or loser of the game – effecting their next moment together, but ultimately being inconsequential to the world around them.



Martini at Lola's

2015, Oil on linen, 15 x 24 inches

A man waiting for his martini, looking at the bartender – perhaps the owner, Lola. While she carefully pours a mixture into the glass, focusing on making the drink, he gazes directly at her. Both of their postures and expressions suggest a quiet evening. Neither are frantic, but both have something different on their minds. Lola is keeping to herself, either thinking about making a drink for her customer or her own life. The man's stare and body language suggests that he's thinking about Lola. Waiting for her to look up. Although it is difficult to imply the status of their relationship, this moment of waiting before connection seems inherent in human interaction. Connection with others is vital and can be abundant in life, but it is rarely met at the same time. The man came to the bar for a martini at Lola's, but that drink in this moment is interfering with his fundamental goal – interacting with her.





Cosmetic Counter #4, 2015, Pencil on paper, 20 x 21 inches

Cosmetic Counter

2015, Oil on linen, 20 x 20 inches

We are at the counter of a cosmetic store, but our eye is first drawn to the woman in a green shirt, standing behind it. She gazes at the viewer, in front of an advertisement of another woman that looks at us simultaneously. Her pink nail polish highlights one of the store's products, which sits on a glass display case of other makeup products. Another woman stands in profile behind, perhaps serving other customers. The figures take up a majority of the composition, telling us that the encounter is more about the people than the products. Whether one is in commerce or not, people are constantly selling something to others, and the pitch is more about selling ourselves than the merchandise. The artist reminds us about a part of human nature just by the position of the people and framing of the composition.



Mirror

2015, Oil on linen, 6 x 5 inches

In the age of selfies, we are all familiar with our own reflection, but we seem to need constant reminders. Our society places such emphasis on vanity. Depending on how we are feeling, we see something different. We often see what we want to see. The painting portrays a woman in profile looking at herself in the mirror, which reveals her facial features. The figure and her reflection is deliberately portrayed at different angles to point out that people are multi-dimensional, and their 2-dimensional reflection is not entirely accurate. The expression of the woman is benign; however, whoever is viewing the painting may interpret her attitude differently – reflecting your own feelings.



Dog with Slipper

2016, Oil on linen, 5 3/4 x 11 1/2 inches

A dog has found his owner's slipper and settles down, rumpling the carpet, as he begins to gnaw teeth into the footwear instead of the plain, white treat next to it. If you're a dog owner, the painting might hit close to home. Dogs tend to eat some strange things that they shouldn't be eating. Most people can relate to the impulse of eating what they want rather than what they know is healthy for them. In that way, the dog personifies human behavior in our compulsion to act on our own free will instead of following advice.



Parker

2016, Oil on linen, 4 x 4 inches

The black dog with red collar stares directly at the viewer. His tail foreshortened in the background could mean he's happy to see us or alert. The ambiguous expression allows the viewer to determine our relationship to him. It is unusual that Stevovich depicts a solitary subject looking directly at the viewer, and even more rare that we see a dog by itself, so the animal must have a unique resonance with the artist, as pet owners can understand.



Sleeping Woman with Dog

2016, Oil on linen, 20 x 36 inches

A woman sleeps peacefully and her companion lies at her feet after stealing one of her slippers. The room is illuminated, but the open window signifies a dark night outside. The composition is diagonally balanced between the woman's and dog's faces. There are reflected curved lines between the pair, as they both lie still like ying and yang. The angelic sleeping woman next to her alert, disobedient pet. Dogs tend to take after their owner, so perhaps this pet's rebellious action reflects a rougher side to the quiet, sleeping figure. Assuming this personification to be true, the painting alludes to the fact that people are often more than they appear to be.



Wolf Hat

2016, Oil on linen, 6 1/2 x 4 3/4 inches

A man in profile wearing a hat that resembles a wolf's face, secured by a strap under his chin. The hat, which may also be a mask flipped onto his head, sits low on the man's forehead – pushing his eyebrows down and forcing an uncomfortable or indignant expression. If the hat were to symbolize the social masks that we all occasionally wear, then this painting represents a person who is embodying the role of his inner "wolf." We often wear "masks" to hide our true identity or protect ourselves. Here is an example of someone who needs to put on a brave face.



Young Man Smoking

2016, Oil on linen, 6 1/4 x 5 1/2 inches

A man glances slightly beyond the viewer, holding his cigarette close to his face – preparing to take another drag. His red hat and jacket match the color of the small red ember at the tip of his lit Marlboro. We are living in a time in our culture when smoking is no longer viewed as “cool” by the majority of the population, yet smoking still encapsulates an identity of rebellion among some young people. The dangerous habit along with his loud red attire screams for attention. He does not want to fully engage, but he wants to be noticed.



Lola Likes Red

2016, Oil on linen, 8 x 5 3/4 inches

A woman's face in profile and body in full view, wearing a red shirt in front of a red wall. If not for the figure's facial features, the arrangement would be an exquisite abstract painting – a harmony in red. The separate shapes in shades of scarlet, delineated by precise lines and interrupted by a wavy black swash – the figure's hair – all have clear relationships with one another. The woman looks away, and seems uninterested in whomever is observing her, yet still wants to be noticed. Analogous to a person driving a red sports car who wants to be seen by some but ignored by police on the highway. We all want some form of attention, but sometimes elicit a response from those we had not intended on attracting.



Broken Glass

2016, Oil on linen, 10 x 7 1/4 inches

A woman gazes directly at the viewer while her hand rests or gestures against the side of her face that turns away. Sitting in front of a broken glass, she seems to be waiting for your reaction rather than having her own. This blip in time – presumably the moment after the glass broke – represents a common trait of the human condition. We make mistakes in life and often need to determine the weight of those consequences by referencing our friends or loved ones. Some people have a tendency to make mountains out of molehills, and we rely on others to put the experience into perspective.



Contemplating a Sculpture

2016, Oil on linen, 9 x 10 inches

A woman and a man sit, staring at a biomorphic sculpture. They are joined together in this moment by their mutual attention; yet, given the abstract quality of the piece, they are almost certainly having different thoughts and feelings. Even though the polished bronze sculpture is the focal point of the composition, our eyes are split between the figures on either side. We are expected to contemplate this painting like the figures in the painting are contemplating the sculpture. The painting comments on these moments of quiet meditation in front of objects of beauty.

We are living in a fast-paced time in history – our lives are constantly interrupted by flashes of images and advertising, and our eyes are glued to our screens. For some of us, it's rare that we stop and appreciate beauty in the world. The goal of this painting is to tempt the viewer to look away from their phone and appreciate beauty in the physical world around them.



In The Clay Room

2016, Oil on linen, 14 x 12 inches

An artist in her studio, sculpting the bust of a figure in clay – the two looking directly at one another. In the background, a large drawing is pinned to the wall above several other clay heads – all unconsciously looking at one another. Human beings have always had a fascination with representing ourselves. One of the earliest known representations of a human is the miniature sculpture titled Venus of Willendorf (ca. 28,000 BCE). Today, artists face the same challenges as our early ancestors. From Michelangelo to Alberto Giacometti, sculptors and painters alike battle with themselves to perfect their craft and produce an artwork with their hands that satisfies their mind's eye. As one can see by the multiple, nearly finished clay heads in Stevovich's painting, the artist has practiced her craft endlessly, and the result is *imperfectus ad perfectum* – perfectly imperfect, like every human being.



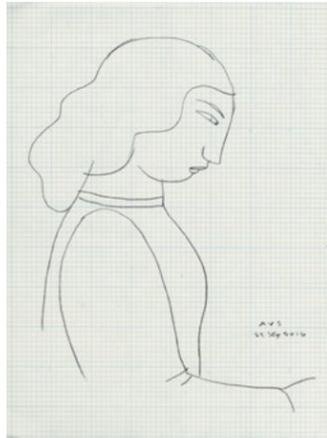
Jessie's Diner

2017, Oil on linen, 35 x 65 inches

A busy day at a diner. Jessie – the blonde woman – who appears to be depicted three times, runs across the canvas from stove-top to counter to window-sill. At the same time, one more patron enters the room on the right, even though all the seats at the counter are taken. The viewers' eyes pass through the cacophony of colors, diagonally down-left until we are met by the gaze a man in a green hat. He engages the viewer and draws them into the scene, as if we are sitting across the room. One interpretation of the subject of this painting appears to deal with mindfulness. For most people, it is difficult to remain present while going through our daily routines. We tend to have morning rituals, like putting on our right shoe before our left. Learning to pause during each moment of activity can be a powerful tool in re-centering our thoughts. As Jessie moves through each action, she appears to do so with delicate precision.

Renaissance painters, such as Sandro Botticelli, used this technique to delineate the passage of time. The protagonist in his narratives was depicted several times to animate the canvas. The viewer identifies





Jessie's Diner #31, 2016, Pencil on graph paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches

the figure as the main subject of the story, and can infer the character is moving through time as well as space. Stevovich appears to apply this same technique to Jessie, as she performs her routines. The technique is a *momento mori*, a subtle reminder of our finite time on earth.

Furthermore, it can be argued that we often become so caught up in our routines that our bodies take over throughout the day while our minds are asleep. If we don't remember to wake up occasionally, life will pass by quickly.

The artist first conceived this concept in 2004, and 42 drawings later we see the finished painting. The length of time it took to complete this initial idea speaks to Stevovich's persistence in his effort to coalesce a concept on canvas. As part of the exhibition, we have included a selection of these drawings in the gallery to give the viewer a better understanding of the artist's thought-process.



Jessie's Diner #33, 2016, Pencil on paper, 21 1/4 x 40 inches



Jessie's Diner #35, 2016, Pencil on paper, 12 x 14 inches



Loretta Feeding a Monkey #2, 2017, Pencil on graph paper, 4 3/4 x 5 1/2 inches

Loretta Feeding a Monkey

2017, Oil on linen, 14 x 16 inches

A woman offers an orange to a primate who meets her glance - seeming more curious about the human than the food. Leaves of the exotic vegetation behind them get darker as they recede into the light gray sky. The two figures appear to be in an un-caged but not entirely remote tropical setting, and it's difficult to tell who is the guest and who is the host at this table. The painting was the first project that Stevovich began after his trip to Southeast Asia with his wife, Laura. In a few of the artist's earlier paintings, he personifies men as devils, so perhaps the monkey is a personification of a man.



Two Women Feeding a Monkey

2018, Oil on linen, 18 x 20 inches

A small monkey sits on a table, reaching for an orange offered by one of two women. Each of the women, whose gestures protect their own fruit, watch how the monkey reacts. They appear skeptical yet willing to engage with the animal. The figures are framed within an architectural feature that suggests civilization within a densely-vegetated environment. The veranda continues off to the right of the canvas, but ends on the left, before the monkey's tail, in the direction where we assume he's entered. The composition spirals in Fibonacci sequence outward from the orange to the monkey's face, to the woman's right hand, then back through the sleeve of her blue shirt to the primate's tail, and around the tall leaves that crown the brunette woman. The three are connected in this circular arrangement as a reminder that all living things have a connection.



Little One

2018, Oil on linen, 6 3/4 x 4 1/2 inches

A pensive woman standing in profile, gazing off the edge of the small canvas. Immediately behind her is ghoulish gray figure staring at or beyond the viewer. The color of her eye matches the pewter hue of the creature. The title of the painting suggests that this little figure belongs to the woman, and we assume this allegorical extension of her subconscious is the reason for her expression. The term “little one” refers to a psychological theory that most people have a big and little view of themselves – the little one being responsible for producing negative emotions, such as self-doubt. The theory suggests that when we recognize we are letting our little one run the show, we can reframe our thinking, and allow our big one to take over.



Eddie's Brother

2018, Oil on linen, 8 x 6 inches

Holding a package with both hands and peering at the viewer from the side of his head – as if we've interrupted him – the man in a red hat appears to be guarding whatever he's carrying. The title convolutes the mystery of this narrative – we do not know who the artist refers to as Eddie, let alone his brother. Since the title excludes the figure's name, we assume that he is less important than what he's carrying.

The dominating feature of the painting is the large, unmarked negative space – the package. One interpretation may be a comment on our culture's fetishism with objects over relationships. We tend to hold tightly onto our material possessions and falsely assume they are the key to happiness.

Interestingly, the artist based this painting off of a sketch that he made in 1997. Something about this figure and his possessive nature over what he carries resonated with the artist enough to return to the easel over twenty years later.



Eddie's Brother #1
1996, Pencil on graph paper, 5 x 3 1/4 inches



Nadine with a Cigarette

2018, Oil on linen, 9 1/2 x 7 inches

Nadine sits in profile, resting her left arm on a table. She holds a lit cigarette that expels a single wisp of smoke. She is looking at someone out of the frame. Her posture is relaxed but not reclined, which would suggest that she's in a conversation. She's listening and waiting. The ashtray suggests that smoking was a conscious decision during this conversation. People often have trouble pausing between events, and smokers find it to be a convenient time to focus on their cigarette. For those of us that don't smoke, we are given an opportunity to reflect on how we deal with silence. In the age of constant entertainment, many people find stillness difficult, and awareness of oneself in uncomfortable situations can prevent self-destructive behavior.





Haley Smoking

2018, Oil on linen, 7 1/2 x 6 inches



Woman Burning a Photo

2018, Oil on linen, 12 1/2 x 10 inches

Andrew Stevovich (b. 1948)

A noted contemporary figurative painter, Stevovich grew up in Washington, D.C. He spent time roaming the halls of the National Gallery of Art, where he was particularly drawn to the Renaissance paintings that would come to inform his work. His images depict ordinary men and women in everyday situations and locations — in restaurants and bars, at the beach, on public transportation — but they convey a sense of mystery, creating more questions than they answer. Although Stevovich's paintings are set in the contemporary world, their crisp design, brilliant color and meticulous surface finishes recall the Renaissance works he loved as a child. He works in oil and pastel, and is also an accomplished printmaker and etcher. Stevovich holds degrees from the Rhode Island School of Design and the Massachusetts College of Art, and is represented in many important public and private collections. His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions across the United States as well as abroad.



Andrew in his Studio, Photo by Dillon Buss

Selected Solo Exhibitions

Adelson Galleries, New York, 1992, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2015
Adelson Galleries Boston, 2012, 2015
Alpha Gallery, Boston, 1971, 1973, 1976, 1978
Boca Raton Museum of Art, Boca Raton, Florida 2009
Clark Gallery, Lincoln, Massachusetts, 1985, 1990, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2007
Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1980
Coe Kerr Gallery, New York, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1990
Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, Massachusetts, 1999, 2007
Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York 2008 – 2009
Impressions Gallery, Boston, 1982
Loft Gallery, Huntsville, Alabama, 1999
Mitsukoshi Gallery, Ebisu, Tokyo, 1996
New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut, 1975
Pisa Galleries, Tokyo, Japan, 1992
Tatistcheff-Rogers Gallery, Santa Monica, California, 1989, 1993
Terrence Rogers Fine Art, Santa Monica, California, 2000
Virginia Lynch Gallery, Tiverton, Rhode Island, 1992, 2002

Public Collections

Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts
Boston Athenaeum
Boston Public Library
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC
Danforth Museum, Framingham, Massachusetts
DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts
Estonian Art Museum (Eesti Kuntstimuuseumi), Tallin, Estonia
Florence Griswold Musuem, Old Lyme, Connecticut
Fuller Art Museum, Brockton, Massachusetts
Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut
Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine

Selected Group Exhibitions

Approaches to Narrative, DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, 2007
Annual Salon Show, Clark Gallery, MA, 1993-2009
New Acquisitions, DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, 2003
Treasure, Terrence Rogers Fine Art, Santa Monica, CA, 2002
Virginia Lynch: A Curatorial Retrospective, Rhode Island Foundation, Providence, RI, 2000
Figurative Works of Art, Virginia Lynch Gallery, Tiverton, RI, 2000
Twenty Prints from Fifty Boston Years: 1949-1999
(Collection of the Boston Public Library), MPG, Boston, MA, 1999
The Cutting Edge: A Short History of the Woodcut, Portland Museum of Art, ME, 1995
Self-aMUSEd: The Contemporary Artist as Observer & Observed, Fitchburg Art Museum, MA, 1993
Group Exhibition, Tatistcheff-Rogers Gallery, Santa Monica, CA, 1991
Recent Acquisitions, Portland Museum of Art, ME, 1991
Group Exhibition, Virginia Lynch Gallery, 1991, 1993
Contemporary Paintings, Coe Kerr Gallery, NY 1990
The Art of Love, Riverside Art Museum, CA, 1990
Common Roots/Diverse Objectives: Rhode Island School of Design
Alumni in Boston, Fuller Art Museum, Brockton, MA, 1989
Art/L.A., Los Angeles, 1989
The Art of Printmaking, Fitchburg Art Museum, MA, 1988,
and the Galerie Kunst in Turm, Kleve, Germany, 1989
Modern Works on Paper, Fergus-Jean Gallery, Columbus, OH, 1988
20th Century American Realism from the Blum Collection,
Aetna Art Institute Gallery, Hartford, CT, 1988
Chicago International Art Exposition, Chicago, Illinois, 1988, 1987, 1985, 1984
Modern and Contemporary Paintings, Coe Kerr Gallery, New York, 1984
Bathers, Coe Kerr Gallery, New York, 1984
Contemporary Paintings, Gallery of Lancaster, PA, 1984
Realistic Directions, Zoller Gallery, Pennsylvania State University, 1983
American Realism, Coe Kerr Gallery, New York, 1983
20th Century American Art, Coe Kerr Gallery, NY 1982
American Realism, Coe Kerr Gallery, New York, 1982
20th Anniversary Exhibition, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1981
Boston Artists' Work on Paper, Boston University Gallery, 1981
Brockton Triennial, Fuller Art Museum, 1978
New Talent, Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, 1977
Patron's Choice, DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, 1976
Arita / Reichert / Stevovich, Woods-Gerry Art Gallery,
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, 1970
Home on the Range (West by East), Woods-Gerry Gallery,
Rhode Island School of Design, 1970
Open Painting, Providence Art Club, RI, 1970, 1969

Published on the occasion of the exhibition

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Back Cover: In The Clay Room

Inside Front Cover: Two Women Feeding a Monkey, Detail

Inside Back Cover: Contemplating a Sculpture, Detail

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