



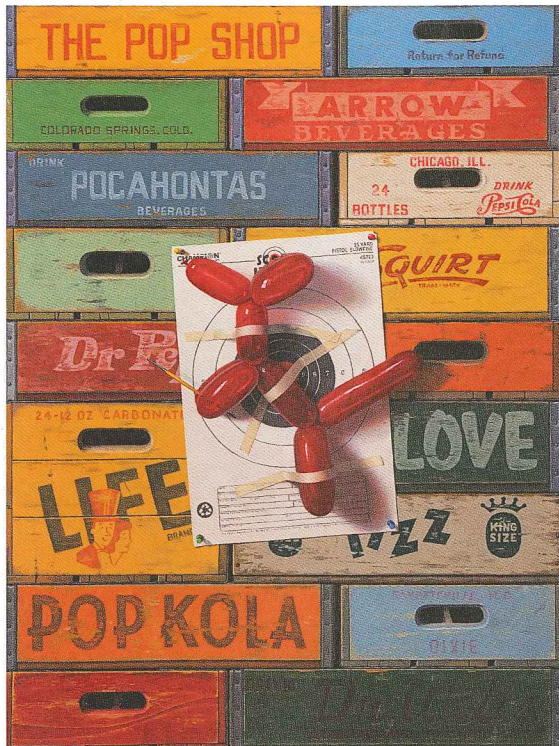
Reality Check: Contemporary American Trompe l'Oeil

September 11 – November 18, 2010



Alan Magee, *After Linnaeus*, 2006, acrylic and oil on panel. Collection of the artist.

Robert C. Jackson, *Target the Artist*, 2009, oil on linen. Collection of the artist.



The Brandywine River Museum's collection includes numerous examples of the realist tradition known as trompe l'oeil. A French term meaning "fool the eye," trompe l'oeil describes art that cleverly fools viewers into thinking they are looking at the actual object rather than a representation of it. Part of a long tradition of illusionism dating to antiquity, trompe l'oeil's popular appeal has endured through centuries. In American art, a period in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a particularly fertile time for this type of painting, and the Museum owns one of the strongest collections of such work, including fine examples by William Michael Harnett, John Frederick Peto, John Haberle, Alexander Pope, George Cope and many others. Given the popularity that contemporary trompe l'oeil painting currently enjoys, it is fitting that the Museum explore the genre as it has developed in the late 20th and early 21st century.

This exhibition presents the work of 22 contemporary artists working in the genre. Demonstrating a high degree of technical mastery, the artists entice viewers to become immersed in the act of looking, drawing them in with the trickery and deception inherent in trompe l'oeil. While these artists represent a link to earlier American masters of trompe l'oeil, each is striving to distinguish his or her work from the past and to offer audiences something meaningful beyond the temporary pleasure associated with deception.

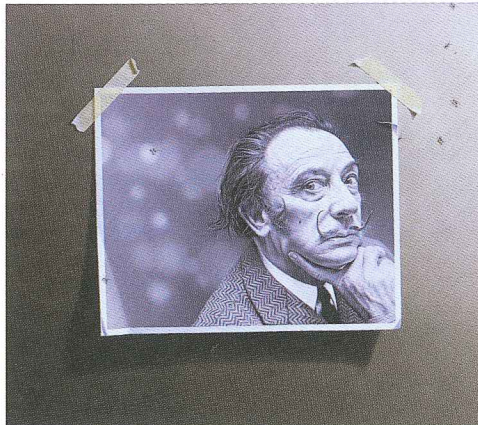
Among the artists featured is Alan Magee, who is adamant that he does not create his paintings as technical feats, but as works that will invite the viewer to feel something new in encountering a familiar subject. He lures the viewer into stopping, lingering, and becoming absorbed in the subject portrayed. Robert Jackson offers a pop art sensibility as the backdrop for his trompe l'oeil work. In *Target the Artist*, he suggests the vulnerability of being an artist in the face of critics and the public. Otto Duecker creates masterful trompe l'oeil portraits that play with our perceptions. Taking iconic images, he paints them as though they are photographs taped to cracked and weathered walls.

Scott Fraser's paintings combine unlikely objects, creating mysterious images that seem to be puzzles for viewers to solve. Mikel Glass produces dynamic images

EXHIBITIONS



LEFT: Otto Duecker, *Salvador Dali*, circa 2007, oil on board, 20 1/2 x 23 inches. Collection of the artist.



RIGHT: Scott Fraser, *Catenary Curve*, 2008, oil on canvas, 59 x 71 1/2 inches. Private collection.



that appear to literally leap from the canvas. He addresses issues of creativity, anxiety, and frustration. Sarah Lamb works within the classical tradition of trompe l'oeil in terms of subject and composition, looking back to the Dutch masters and creating images inspired by nature.

Debra Teare's work follows the conventions of traditional trompe l'oeil in the use of the box or cabinet as a structure in which to display objects that protrude into the viewer's space, but her subjects are contemporary. In *Must Move Forward*, she draws from pop culture with her combination of toys and memorabilia from childhood. Will Wilson's trompe l'oeil paintings often involve an intrusion into the viewer's space. A number of illusionistic devices are at work in *Convexed*. There is the figure reaching out of the canvas, blurring the distinction between the fictive space of the picture and the real space of the viewer; there is the trompe l'oeil frame – in the process of being created by the artist; and there is the illusion of the distortion made by the convex "mirror" that reveals the scene.



The exhibition consists of over 40 works borrowed from private and public collections across the United States. In addition to the artists mentioned above, it includes fine work by Eric Conklin, Gary T. Erbe, Christopher Gallego, Woody Gwyn, Steve Mills, G. Daniel Massad, Janet Monafó, Greg Mort, Charles Pfahl, Ron Rizk, Nelson Shanks, Daniel Sprick, Michael Theise, and Gregory D. West.

This exhibition is supported by the Museum's Davenport Family Foundation Fund for Exhibitions.

Audrey Lewis
Associate Curator

For information on special programs related to the exhibition, please turn to page 10.

MIDDLE LEFT: Mikel Glass, *Emergence*, 2000, oil on panel, 80 x 41 inches. Private collection.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Will Wilson, *Convexed*, 2004-2005, oil on linen, 24 inches diameter. Private collection.

LEFT: Sarah Lamb, *Mrs. Cooch's Blueberries*, 2010, oil on linen, 17 x 13 inches. Collection of the artist.

RIGHT: Debra Teare, *Must Move Forward*, 2005, oil on canvas, 12 x 10 inches. Collection of the artist.

