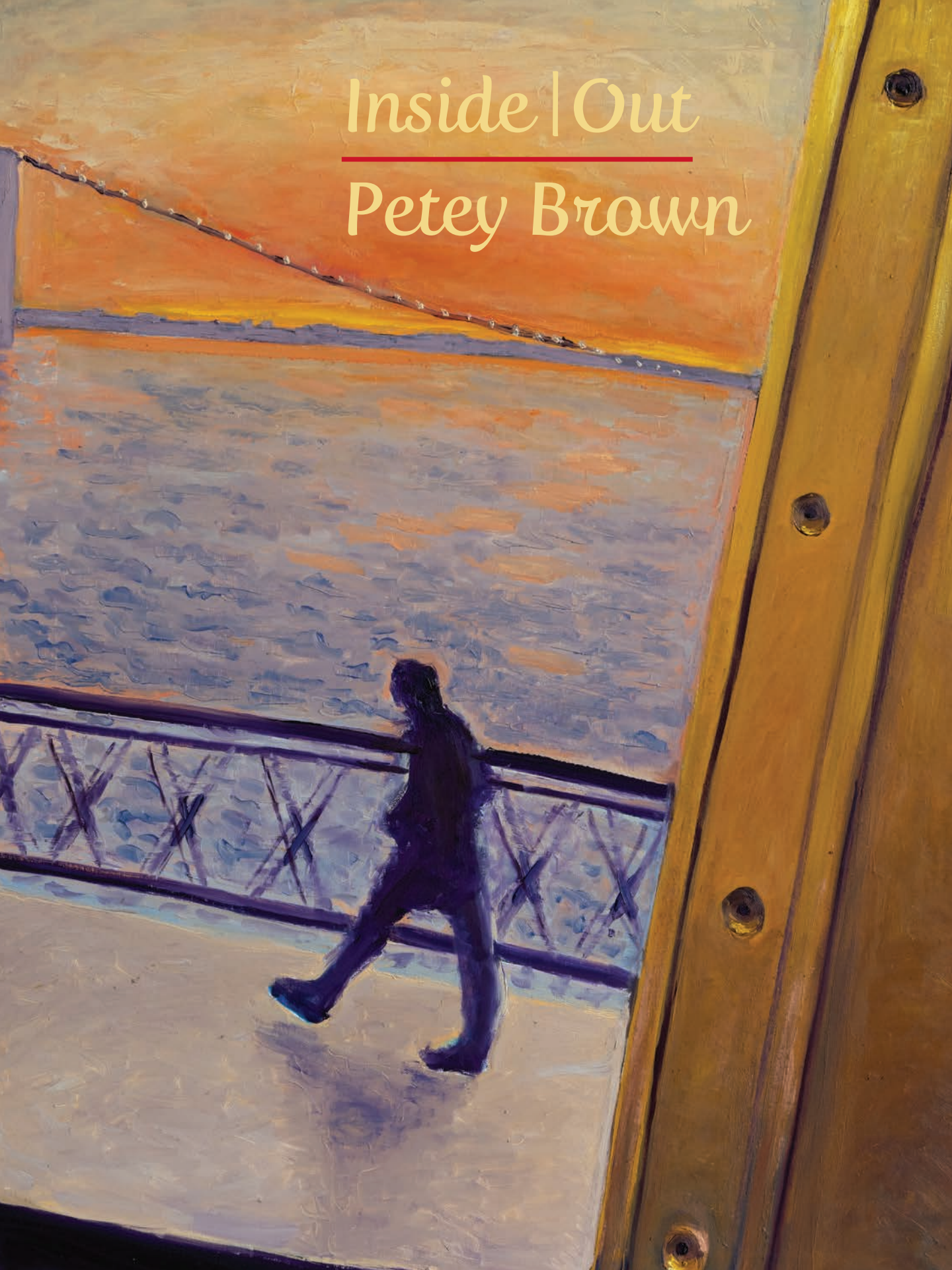


*Inside | Out*  

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*Petey Brown*







ABOVE: *Q Train Sunset 1*, 2022, Oil on canvas, 36 x 30 inches

FRONT COVER: *Q Train Sunset 4*, 2022, Oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches

# *Inside | Out*

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# *Petey Brown*

*Essay by Jonathan Santlofer*



This catalogue represents Petey Brown in  
a dual exhibition with Arthur Levine at  
Alexander/Heath Contemporary, Roanoke, Virginia



*Sunset F Train*, 2022, Flashe on linen, 10 x 8 inches



*Sunset F Train 2*, 2022, Flashe on linen, 10 x 8 inches





*Q Train Night*, 2023, Oil on linen, 24 x 30 inches



*Studio View*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 16 x 12 inches





*Studio Sunset 2*, 2023, Oil on linen, 30 x 24 inches



*Q Train Sunset*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 20 x 16 inches





*Selfie*, 2021–23, Oil on linen, 30 x 30 inches

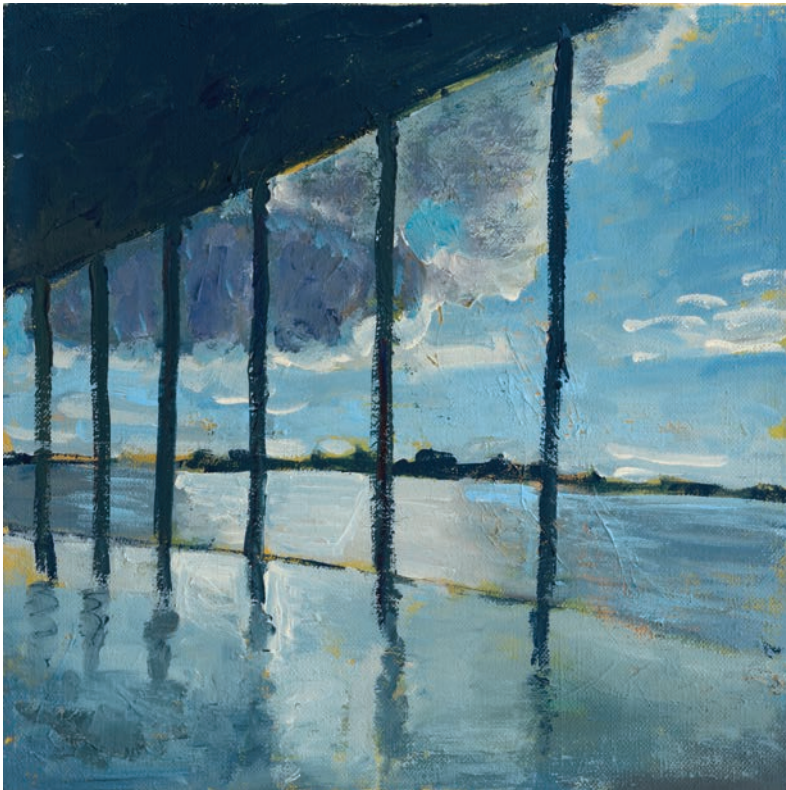


*Westside Highway*, 2023, Oil on linen, 20 x 16 inches





*Q Train Morning*, 2023, Flashe on panel, 10 x 8 inches



*View of NJ from the Whitney*, 2023, Flashe on panel, 12 x 12 inches

“The day of the sun is like the day of a king.  
It is a promenade in the morning, a sitting on the throne at noon,  
a pageant in the evening.”

—WALLACE STEVENS





*Q Train Sunset 6*, 2023, Oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches





*Night*, 2022, Oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches





*Armoire*, 2022, Oil on linen, 30 x 24 inches



*North View*, 2022, Flashe on linen, 12 x 9 inches





*Out*, 2022, Oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches



*Beam Me Up 5*, 2022, Oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches



## *Inside|Out: Petey Brown's New Work*

**Petey Brown's** new paintings are all about point-of-view, looking in or looking out, glimpses of a world framed by the edge of a subway or car window, a half-drawn shade or a parted curtain, doors about to open or close.

For me, a writer of mostly fiction (but with an art school background), I can't help but see the multitude of narratives suggested in Brown's paintings, stories just beginning or in progress, a man in mid-step walking along the river, a doll's feet dangling into a painting's frame, a subway dweller's head at the edge of a painting, ear-phoned and eyes closed as if dreaming the painting, city lights flickering on the glass implying a world outside the interior, just out of reach. Sometimes the narrative is more tangible. The acidic blue-green interior of a car in *Westside Highway* with the merest suggestion of a driver, another tiny car just ahead viewed through the windshield, an entire painting within a painting, the tiny car's back lights, two shimmering red dots, the only warmth in a cool painting. Reflections of buildings tremble on the car's side window, every element made concrete by the artist's heavy impasto, formed, and trapped within the paint, everything solid but in motion, the drive and journey we are taking along with the artist.

In all the work there is an awareness of the artist's hand, powerful and purposeful, the heavy pigment a record of painting and repainting, ladling on or scraping away to capture and create subject matter. At first glance it appears Brown does not care about elegance or charm or beauty, though it is everywhere, idiosyncratic: light filtering through her dense paint like it does in a Monet haystack or dragged across the surface as in a late Philip Guston.

Brown's past series of loosely painted dancers and swimmers have made way for canvases with single figures in motion or architecture framing bits of city

and landscape, people hovering in doorways or reflected in mirrors, there and not there, once again implying nonspecific narrative. When there is no figure, the artist positions the viewer in her point-of-view, staring up at a ceiling or down at the floor, so, like a second-person narrator *you* become keenly aware of the space *you* are inhabiting, the two of *you*, artist and viewer co-authoring the painted story.

Those figureless interiors—the *Beam Me Up* paintings in particular—are vertiginous but “safe,” the architecture painted with such an assured hand, the landscape seen through the glass grounding. Brown finds ways of investing that architecture—which she so obviously loves—with subtle unexpected color, flesh-toned ochres and violets, to play against the bright bursts of green and blue landscape that bring to mind painters like Neil Welliver and Marsden Hartley, with more than a casual nod to Diebenkorn’s early interiors, which in turn reminds us of Matisse, an artist both painters so clearly admire.

For a few years now, Brown has been recording the daily route between her Brooklyn home and Soho studio, a painter’s diary of evanescent sunsets glimpsed through train windows crossing bridges or views through her studio window, the time of day and weather affecting light and color like an Impressionist, and in the tactile paint handling (I can’t help but think of Monet’s paintings of *Rouen Cathedral*). Brown pushes her color, the dazzling orange in two *Studio Sunset* skies, or a pink one in *Studio View*. In the subway paintings, *Q Trains Sunset 1* and *Q Trains Sunset 6*, where the curved window serves as frame, Brown is both observer and chronicler of these fleeting moments, capturing temporary striations of blue and yellow and orange in a sky or peach-colored reflections in water.

When Brown moves indoors her color might become subdued as it does in *Out*, a brilliantly composed canvas of paintings leaning against a wall, a mantel, and a mirror, pictures within pictures, worlds within worlds. Here, an Olive Oyl doll (who appears in a series of Brown’s paintings), is collapsed on the mantel beside two other dolls about to tumble, Olive Oyl as substantial as a real live sitter, her feet casting a trompe l’oeil shadow that adds another level to her reality. By placing a painting of a curtained window on top of the half-hidden painted mirror, Brown ups the narrative ante then heightens it again by placing yet another painting on top of the last, this one of a staircase and a window. Each painting moves closer to the picture plane, all of them alluding to egress or escape. Only Olive Oyl stays behind, waiting for the child who left her behind or the mother to clean up and make an appearance in the painted mirror, Velasquez style.

Olive Oyl appears again in *Shadow*, just her feet this time, as if the artist has zoomed in and cut out a detail from the larger painting, but in doing so shows



us how little it takes to suggest a human presence, the cartoon character's feet taking on portraiture status. The simple painting has about it an unsettled, jittery quality, encouraged by Brown's flickering brushwork, the movement here almost as much the subject as the doll's feet.

Brown tackles interior again in *Armoire* and *Selfie*. The color in the first subdued though once again the artist's brushwork enlivens walls and floors, so they refuse to stand still. The bold red of *Selfie* makes it nearly impossible not to think of Matisse's *The Red Studio*, an obvious homage. In both paintings, Brown cleverly uses doorways and mirrors. In *Armoire*, a doorway reflected in a mirror opens to let us sneak out the back of the painting. In *Selfie*, a bright orange door

opening toward us invites us into a curved stairwell with a small painting on the wall, both paintings suggesting flight into other rooms, other worlds.

Filled with their own natural means of escape, the outside worlds that Brown paints are held in, bordered and framed by architecture. In *Q Train Morning* the edge of the subway window and part of the bridge blocks but holds the landscape in place. In her most impressionistic and romantic landscape, *View of NJ from the Whitney*, sky, water, and architecture bleed into each other held in place only by inky blue verticals and a dark triangle above that echoes a light one at bottom, a device to subtly contain the painting while allowing it to breathe.

As a storyteller I keep coming back to that lone figure making its way across the bridge in *Q Train Sunset 4*, a dark blue-black silhouette, all determination and motion, one foot airborne ready to take the next step

to continue his journey, which we see through the subway window with Brown. The artist may have her nose pressed up against the glass, but we are the lucky ones because she has given us her seat for the best view.

**Jonathan Santlofer**  
March 2023



*Q Train Sunset 4*, 2022, Oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches

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**Jonathan Santlofer** is the author of six novels; a memoir, *The Widower's Notebook*; and editor of six anthologies including *The New York Times* Notable Book *It Occurs to Me That I Am America*. His novel, *The Lost Van Gogh*, will be published in January 2024.

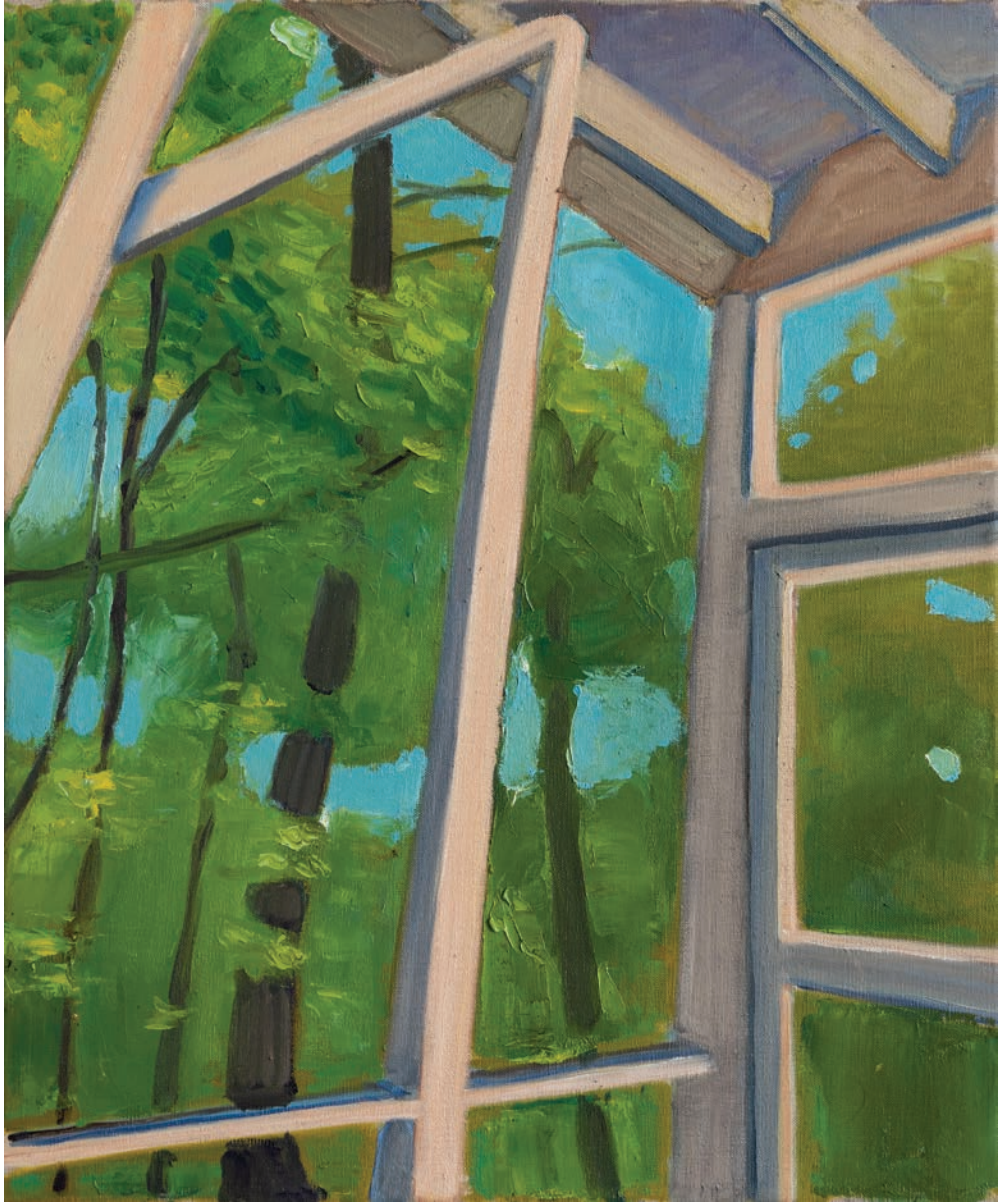


*Beam Me Up 4*, 2022, Oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches





*Independent Garden 2*, 2022–23, Oil on linen, 30 x 24 inches



*Beam Me Up 5, 2022, Oil on linen, 24 x 20 inches*



# Petey Brown

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EMAIL: petey@peteybrown.com / WEBSITE: peteybrown.com / INSTAGRAM: @petey.brown

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Bowery Gallery, New York, NY / *Invitational*
- 2014 A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn, NY / *Invitational*
- 2009 SUNY, Morrisville, NY
- 1989 Hunsaker/Schlesinger Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 1987 David Brown Gallery, Provincetown, MA
- 1986 Patricia Heesy Gallery, New York, NY  
David Brown Gallery, Provincetown, MA
- 1985 Patricia Heesy Gallery, New York, NY
- 1984 Newton Arts Center, Newton, MA
- 1983 Helen Shlein Gallery, Boston, MA
- 1981 Newton Arts Center, Newton, MA

## TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Alexander/Heath Contemporary, Roanoke, VA / *Arthur Levine and Petey Brown*

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 Zurcher Gallery, New York, NY / *Eleven Women of Spirit*
- 2022 Birdhouse Gallery, Hancock, NY / *Flowers That Bloom Forever*  
Equity Gallery, New York, NY / *Among Friends*
- 2021 Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, NY / *Drawing Challenge/Artsy* / virtual  
Yellow Chair Salon / Truro Center for the Arts / virtual  
SFA Projects, New York, NY / *Home Sweet Home*  
Equity Gallery New York, NY / *Members Invitational*
- 2020 Flatfile Gallery / virtual
- 2019 VanDeb Editions, Long Island City, NY / *National Women's History Month Invitational*  
The Painting Center, New York, NY / *Anniversary Show, Invitational*  
Prince Street Gallery, New York, NY / Lori Bookstein, juror  
Site:Brooklyn, Brooklyn, NY / *Works on Paper*  
The Art Garage, Cooperstown, NY / *Blue*  
Among Friends Invitational, Brooklyn, NY  
M. David & Co., Brooklyn, NY
- 2018 Among Friends Invitational, Brooklyn, NY  
Le Art Garage, Cooperstown, NY / *Splash*  
Friday Studio Gallery, Brooklyn, NY / Sharilyn Neidhardt, curator  
DSC Gallery, Brooklyn, NY / *Yellow Chair Spectacular*  
Blue Mountain Gallery, New York, NY / Betty Cuningham, curator  
Bowery Gallery, New York, NY / Karen Wilkin, curator  
Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn, NY / *Greatest Show on Earth*
- 2017 Gallery North, Setauket, NY / *Portraits and Figures*  
Drawing Rooms, Jersey City, NJ / *Big Small Show*  
David&Schweitzer, New York, NY / *Selections from the Flatfile*  
Mishkin Gallery, New York, NY / *Small Works Show* / Richard Timperio, curator  
Westbeth, New York, NY / *On the Shoulders of Giants* / Thaddeus Raddell, curator
- 2016 First Street Gallery, New York, NY / *Juried Show* / Lori Bookstein, juror  
Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, NY / *Art From The Boros 1V*  
Prince Street Gallery, New York, NY / *Juried Show* / Graham Nickson, curator  
Baruch College, New York, NY / *Juried Show* / Richard Timperio, curator
- 2014 Boston University, Boston, MA / *Alumnae Show*

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (CONTINUED)

- 2008 Prince Street Gallery, New York, NY  
2006 National Academy of Design, New York, NY / *Invitational*  
2003 I-20 Gallery, New York, NY  
2001 A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY  
1996 Gallery 148, New York, NY  
1992 Artists Space, New York, NY  
Kerygma Gallery, Ridgewood, NJ  
1990 OIA Gallery, New York, NY  
1989 City University, New York, NY  
Hunsaker/Schlesinger Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
Gallery 99, Miami, FL  
1988 Van Straaten Gallery, Chicago, IL  
1987 Patricia Heesy Gallery, New York, NY  
Hunsaker/Schlesinger Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
1986 Patricia Heesy Gallery, New York, NY  
Helander Gallery, Palm Beach, FL  
Edison Community College, Fort Meyers, FL  
Appalachian State University, Boone, NC  
Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD  
1985 Patricia Heesy Gallery, New York, NY  
1984 John Christian Gallery, New York, NY  
Berkshire Art Museum, Pittsfield, MA  
Provincetown Group Gallery, Provincetown, MA / *Invitational*  
Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA  
1983 Boston Visual Artists Union, Boston, MA  
DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA  
West End Gallery, Provincetown, MA  
Provincetown Art Association, Provincetown, MA  
1982 Helen Shlien Gallery, Boston, MA  
1981 Danforth Museum, Framingham, MA  
Northeastern University, Boston, MA  
1979 Federal Reserve Bank, Boston, MA  
1978 Keene State College, Keene, NH  
Cambridge Art Association, Cambridge, MA  
1977 Salem State College, Salem, NH

## COMMISSIONS

Marriot Hotel, Tampa, FL  
Embassy Suites Hotel, Parsippany, NJ  
Phyllis Miriam Residence, New York, NY  
Loews Hotel, Santa Monica, CA  
Four Walls Eight Windows Publishing Co., New York, NY  
The Floridian Hotel, Vero Beach, FL  
Conrad Hotel, Uruguay

## PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Library of Congress, Washington, DC  
Coca-Cola USA, Atlanta, GA  
DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA  
Principal Financial Group, Des Moines, IA  
Robinson's Department Stores, Los Angeles, CA  
Checkers Hotel, Santa Monica, CA  
Southeast Banking Corporation, Miami, FL  
Westin Hotel, Westin Hotel, Kauai, HI  
Four Seasons Resort Club, Carlsbad, CA

## REVIEWS

*Delicious Line*, June 2017, Ashley Norwood Cooper  
*New York Times*, April 19, 1985, Grace Glueck  
*Boston Globe*, December 13, 1984, Christine Temin  
*Boston Globe*, "Critic's Tip," December 6, 1984, Robert Taylor  
*Art New England*, March 1983, Eugene Narrett  
*Boston Globe*, "Critic's Tip," June 1983, Christine Temin  
*Art New England*, May 1981, Katherine Nahum  
*Newton Times*, January 1977, Katherine Nahum

## EDUCATION

Wheaton College, Norton, MA  
Boston University School of Fine & Applied Arts, BFA 1976





ABOVE: *Shadow*, 2022, Oil on linen, 9 x 12 inches

BACK COVER: *Gilbert Lake*, 2022, Oil on linen, 40 x 30 inches

PHOTOGRAPHY: Jenny Gorman

CATALOG DESIGN: Rita Lascaro



