

Painters Painting and Paintings by Megan Euker at Linda Warren

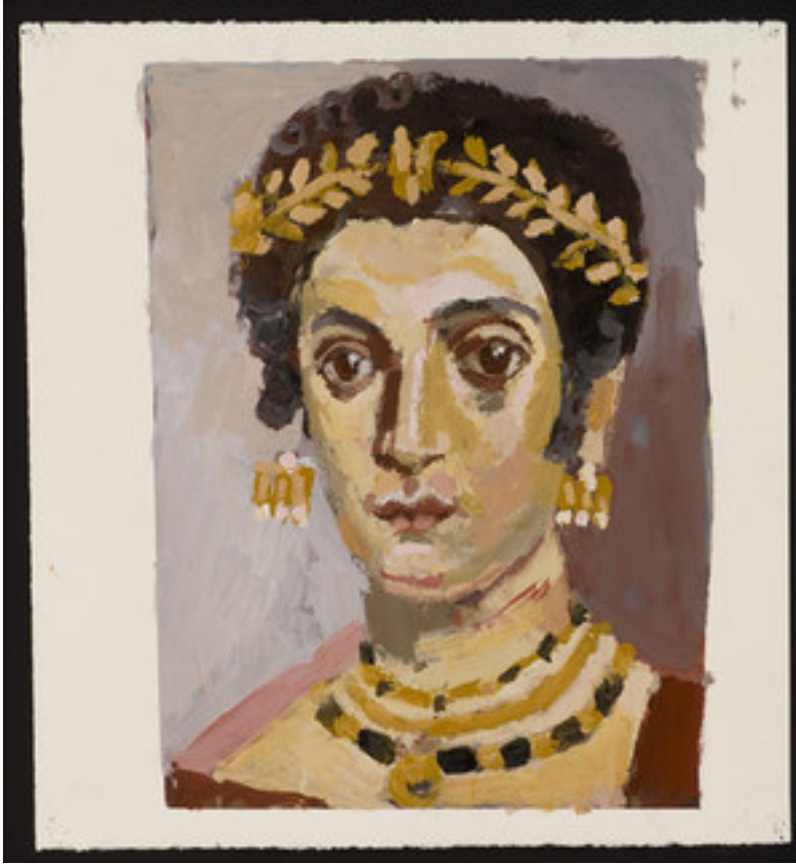
by Jeriah Hildwine



Linda Warren is one of my favorite gallerists in Chicago, and I'm always excited when she has a new show opening. The current show, *Painters Painting* (with *Paintings by Megan Euker* in the project space) was particularly tantalizing; I am a painter in my own studio practice, and reserve the right to a certain bias in favor of my chosen medium. When I stopped by this afternoon for a sneak preview, I was not disappointed.



Stanley Lewis is a fine example of a painter who can also teach: the other artists in *Painters Painting*, Jeremy Long and Don Southard, as well as Megan Euker, have all studied under Lewis at some point. Stanley Lewis has several fine works in this show, but by far my favorite is his *North Hampton Parking Lot* from 2007. In reproduction this work looks much like any other expertly executed urban landscape, with cars, buildings, and trees rendered with gritty specificity. In person, however, Lewis' work (like Staples' at 65 Grand) takes on another physical dimension. The substrate seems built up of layered, collaged canvas, covered with oil paint laid on so thickly its gobs have shriveled as they dried. The entire surface has the wrinkled quality of an elephant's knee, an elbow, or a scrotum, which does not take away at all from the reality of the whole. The overall effect is one of the finest pieces of contemporary painting I've seen in recent memory.



Don Southard brings a modernist flatness to his subject matter of still lives and references to the Old Masters, Ingres, and Fayum mummy paintings. By far my favorites were his Fayum mummy paintings; the flat acrylic paint and restrained, subdued palette perfectly evokes the waxy encaustic surface of the originals from Roman Egypt. I recently saw an original example of these at the Milwaukee Art Museum, and Southard's renditions are an excellent homage.



Jeremy Long's large-scale realist compositions are closest to my own sensibility, and they are indeed impressive. More than mere verisimilitude, Long arranges elaborate domestic dramas and then uses them as a stage on which to play out spatial paradoxes, modernist compositional elements, and an awesome display of varied painting techniques. The surface varies from figures rendered with the layered care of the best traditional techniques, combined with some areas of the environment given only the most cursory surface of thin or uneven paint, without in any way feeling unresolved. The spitted chickens and the underlit bearded man in *The Delivery* (2009) are particularly compelling.



Megan Euker's New Paintings in the project space are also worth seeing. Like Southard, their subject matter is representational but rendered with a modernist hand. Her looseness is evocative of Eric Fischl, and her colors bright and nuanced. She is an excellent rounding-out of this excellent show of paintings, one of the best exhibitions I've seen in Chicago recently, and one of Linda Warren's best yet.