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Editor E. Gibbons
Art Historian Grady Harp
Copy Editors Paul Rybarczyk
Layout, Design, Production E. Gibbons
Reader David Jarrett
Design Consultants Dana Ranning, Paul Rybarczyk
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Right: Meyer, *Pivot*, oil on board, 12 x 48 in.
Cover: Itschert, *The Dream of Jean Luc*, oil on canvas 100 x 70 cm.
Rear Cover: Horst, *Brothers no. 31*, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 in.

Meyer, *Makings of the Sun*, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 in.

Joshua Meyer

"Every piece emerges from struggle and re-evaluation," according to Professor Sharrona Pearl, "producing arresting and original images that pulse with life." Joshua Meyer's intensely painted works have been shown around the world, notably in "Tohu VaVohu", a major exhibition at Hebrew College, and "Becoming", which was shown at both Yale and NYU. "A luscious yet somehow soothing visual feast, concludes Pearl, "Meyer's works engage the viewers, even as the viewers engage the works—together creating, building and, ultimately and always, becoming."

Since studying art at Yale University and the Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem, Meyer's figure paintings have lingered between order and chaos. One of the delights of his work is the transformation of the physical material of paint into seemingly living breathing figures inhabiting an interior life.

Meyer has been recognized with awards and honors, including a Pollock-Krasner Fellowship (2008), a Massachusetts Cultural Council Painting Fellowship (2010), and The Sustainable Arts Foundation Award (2011). Meyer is represented by the Dolby Chadwick Gallery in San Francisco and the Rice/Polak Gallery in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Born in Lubbock, Texas, Joshua Meyer can now be found in his Cambridge, Massachusetts studio painting, drinking coffee, and singing off-key.

Art Of Man: What do you find difficult to capture as an artist?
Joshua Meyer: I like to get lost in my paintings, so then the difficult part is always fighting my way back out. I paint people and I paint the things around me, but ultimately I am trying to paint my experience of the world. So to be honest, everything is difficult to paint, or else it would not be worth painting.

AOM: So is it important for you to paint people?
J.M.: I only paint from life. It forces me to be honest and responsive. On some fundamental level I am trying to explore and understand what it means to be alive in this time and place. The paintings would be hard to relate to if they didn't have people anchoring them down—imagine a novel without a main character. When I said before that I fight my way back out, it is a process of looking for structure and meaning within a chaotic environment. The people in my pictures ground the paintings in the real world. And in fact the people in my studio ground me in the real world as well.

The paintings must be representational enough for you to connect to them on a human level, but if they stop there, they would be flat and lifeless. From time to time, we can read the figures as people we have relationships with, other times, they become stand-ins for ourselves. And of course they can be both.

Meyer, *And Then Again*, oil on canvas, 28 x 36 in.

AOM: Where do you find your models, and what do you look for in a model?
J.M.: I paint people—not just forms and bodies—but people I know well and people I care about. I am not just celebrating the physical form, these are my close friends and also my family. So we are digging into the relationships between the artist and the model, the painter and the paint, and of course the relationship between the painting and you, the viewer: the tensions, frictions, reverberations, complications, electricity, resonance, and dissonance in relationships—and everything in between.

AOM: What is the process like for your models?
J.M.: One model described it as a free weekly therapy session, and another has given up once or twice after describing it as torturous. I'm certain that it is very different for each person. Some are very quiet and still, others talk and gesticulate wildly. Sometimes we get into deep conversations

Meyer, *Accidents That Always Happen,* oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in.

as time elapses, and sometimes we listen to music together. But all my models are phenomenally dedicated. Most come every week on a regular schedule for a few hours at a time. This goes on almost infinitely, so my models must be people willing to put up with me! They return each week as I battle on with the picture at hand.

AOM: It sounds like working from life is critical to your work.

J.M.: Live models—real people—change from week to week. I am not painting Greek Ideal Forms. I love to see people's quirks and attitudes. I love to see how they change over time. A model who is depressed one session may be ecstatic the next

Meyer, *Whirling*, oil on canvas, 38 x 49 in.

time around. All of the moods and dialogues and ideas that make it into the studio will also make it into the paintings. Sometimes a painting continues pre- and post-haircut. The most extreme example is a painting I am working on right now. I had a pregnant model, and mid-way through the painting the baby was born. I am still hoping to finish the picture, but of course her body is now completely transformed. It isn't done yet though, so I have no idea where the painting will take me.

AOM: In the end, doesn't that create confusion?
J.M.: Yes, that is the beauty! I love the ambiguity of it all. The person, the paint, and the painting always push back at me. The paintings should change every time you approach them, just as time changes the people I paint, and just as time and circumstance change the way I see, and experience the world. I hope that opens up the image so that you can have a richer experience of it all. And so that you can live with it over time. The painting offers you, the viewer, more, but also forces you to enter into it and make some decisions of your own. These pictures need to ask more questions then they answer.

Meyer, *Hockney's Green*, oil on canvas, 12 x 12 in.

AOM: Why do you paint the male form?
J.M.: Curiosity, really. I want to know who people are and how they understand the world. I want to know how they are different from me and I want to know how they are the same as me. Watching the way someone carries their body just speaks volumes.

When I see a film or read a book, I am trying to understand the story from the point of view of the characters, or sometimes from the point of view of the storyteller. Either way, I want to discover something fundamentally human. The men in my paintings play the same role. They are a door into the artwork.

Meyer, *Scattered Syllables*, oil on canvas, 30 x 30 in.

AOM: How long does it take you to finish a painting?
J.M.: The paintings go on for months and months, and sometimes years, though I am usually painting several pictures in parallel. With each day that I paint, new ideas accumulate on the canvas. The paintings, like the models, refuse to be static. I never want to freeze a moment of time. Instead, I try to collect time, layer upon layer. The final image is not accurate to one day in the model's life, it represents many months of our relationship.

AOM: So is time your friend or is it your enemy?
J.M.: When I am inside of a painting, time moves in fits and spurts. Orderly rhythms are out the window, ideas move at their own paces, and contradictory rhythms overlap and intertwine. What I mean is that time is really chaotic and unwieldy for a painter. If I were in a band, there would be a drummer, marking time with rhythm. If I were making films, images would flow as the seconds marched on. But instead I am frighteningly free of the flow and order of time. Paintings don't have endings or beginnings. So the result is that paintings collect and collapse events that take place over days, weeks, months, and generations.

AOM: Have you always worked in the style you do now—can you tell us a bit about your technique?
J.M.: The language I use comes out of necessity. I like to dive right in without too many preconceived notions of a finished painting, so I need to be able to move quickly. But then the paintings rarely resolve themselves as easily as all that, so layers accumulate. I usually paint with a knife because it helps me both to move quickly, and also to think in measured increments.

I like the idea that the layers tell the history of the painting—I am not trying to fool anyone into thinking that these paintings were born of ease with masterful, bravura strokes. I struggle with the paint. I struggle with the figures, and that is part of the story I am trying to tell. I leave my paintings' surfaces raw and open so that you can see how they were made—how the images emerge over time. Each painting tells its own history through its layers, marks, and revisions.

Meyer, *Missing*, oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in.

Meyer, *Another Lament*, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in.

You can find out more about Joshua Meyer by visiting his website: www.joshua-meyer.com or see his work in person at the Dolby Chadwick Gallery in San Francisco, or the Rice/Polak Gallery in Provincetown, MA.