Art & Literacy

Artist List

Brian Kershisnik (1962–) Kanosh, Utah
Flight Practice with Instructor **2000**
oil on canvas, 108″ x 136″

Robert Leroy Marshall (1944–) Springville, Utah
Iridescence **1994**
oil on canvas, 48″ x 72″

Paul Salisbury (1903–1979) Richfield/Provo, Utah
Mountain Solitude **1961**
oil on canvas, 28″ x 36″

Bruce H. Smith (1936–) Springville, Utah
Jacob and Leah **1990**
oil on canvas
48″ x 60″
Courtesy of LDS Museum of Church History and Art

Minerva K. Teichert (1888– 1976) North Ogden, Utah
Hereford Roundup **1956**
oil on canvas
62″ x 108-1/2″

Sam D. Wilson (1943–) Salt Lake City, Utah
A Tension to Detail **1982**
watercolor
22-1/2″ x 29-3/4″

ARTIST: **Brian Kershisnik (1962–) Kanosh, Utah**
TITLE: ***Flight Practice with Instructor*** **2000**
MEDIA: **oil on canvas**
SIZE: **108″ x 136″**

Brian T. Kershisnik was born July 6, 1962, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Because of his father's employment as a petroleum geologist, he spent his childhood in various cities around the world including Luanda, Angola; Bangkok, Thailand; Conroe, Texas; and he graduated from high school in Islamabad, Pakistan (although in "absentia" because of an emergency evacuation due to the burning of the U.S. embassy).

Kershisnik completed his first year of college at the University of Utah before serving an LDS mission in Denmark. After living with his family in Bergen, Norway, for a time, he returned to the States to pursue his studies at Brigham Young University. While attending BYU, he received a grant to study in London for six months. In 1987, he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting and married Suzanne B. Christensen. Brian and Suzanne moved to Austin, Texas, in 1989, where he earned his Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Texas. They currently reside in Kanosh, Utah, with their two children and a black dog.

During his youth, Brian didn't know any artists, and he was in college before the thought occurred to him to make art his career. However, when he started studying art, the seeds of his current work were almost immediately sown, perhaps because they were partially innate and were partially due to his childhood exposure to native arts. Kershisnik's love of antiquity and of native art appears both in overt devices, such as his periodic use of the frontal eye on profiles and also in less overt ways such as in his use of the human figure as a symbol that leads the viewer into the story the painting depicts or reminds us of. As well, there are certain qualities in the paint itself—muted colors, a softness of line, a glaze—which convey a sense of timelessness.

One characteristic of primitive artists that Kershisnik approves of and consciously tries to emulate is the position they take of being watchers and not participators in the scenes they portray. Brian believes it would be arrogant and presumptuous to paint as if he were a participant in marvelous or grievous happenings. Therefore, his painting of the Atonement is not of an agonized Christ; instead, it's painted as if he were a viewer of the apostles sleeping under the tree. He feels some artists are too free, are almost voyeurs, while primitive artists make no claim of having seen the events. They keep the art obviously surreal; they make the art a reminder of a story, an invitation to go reread the story.

Kershisnik's pieces are narrative, but it is important to him to maintain that same element of surrealism in his mind, so he doesn't necessarily have to use historically accurate details. Fallen Icarus in the Park (an idea taken from a Heironymous Bosche painting), like much of his work, tells a story, a truth Kershisnik hopes will increase our awareness—that critical events, extreme situations happen, but no one pays attention or understands, just as the people in the park go about their lives in ignorance of Icarus' fall from the sky.

Brian Kershisnik, *Fallen Icarus in the Park*

Kershisnik doesn't think about his ideas for paintings too much ahead of time; he believes if he did, his paintings would be less honest. He says he gets his ideas serendipitously—from painting mishaps or from something he heard, even possibly heard wrong (the wrongness doesn't matter, it is where the idea takes him, how it arbitrarily gets him thinking along a certain line). One time he was working on a painting and realized the hand he had painted was the best hand he had ever painted but wasn't in the correct position, so he changed the painting to make the well-painted hand be in the right place. Another time, too much red paint became the focal point of a work instead of a mistake.

Brian Kershisnik,
The Difficult Part

Kershisnik is introspective but also whimsical. These two characteristics are evident in his painting The Difficult Part in which a couple are dancing in an impossible position. The painting is fanciful yet also is a metaphor for the whole man–woman relationship, suggesting the relationship can be both dangerous and also paradoxical. Using metaphors and symbols that mean several things at one time, Kershisnik's paintings have an element that prods us, as viewers, to reexamine the meaningful and deep parts of our lives, to look again, to use our accumulated knowledge to understand a little more, to at least look for more within ourselves, and to examine who we are as defined by our understanding of the human experience.

Brian Kershisnik doesn't paint from life—he doesn't use models—but a viewer once commented to him that he believes Brian does paint from life, even more than those artists who use models because he paints "the real essence of life." Kershisnik refers to Jackson Pollack, who said he paints from nature because "I am nature." Although Brian thinks Pollack's statement

is rather arrogant, he does agree his own art is "from life" because of how the paintings develop out of his experiences and ideas.

Paintings should be beautiful, be inviting, create a desire in the viewer to spend the time needed to learn what one should from the artwork, according to Kershisnik. However, he also believes artists shouldn't bow to the lowest common denominator of producing pretty art. In addition, Brian doesn't believe art should be weapon-like, even if it is about some ugliness in life such as rape or the murder of children. All art needs some affection for the viewer, some compassion for the victims; it should be humanizing and should move humanity forward. Whatever the trials in our lives, Kershisnik says, what is most important is how we continue, what we learn from our experiences. He states:

> There is great importance in becoming human, in striving to fully understand others, ourselves and God. The process is difficult and filled with awkward discoveries and happy encounters, dreadful sorrow and unmitigated joy—sometimes at the same time. I believe art should facilitate this truth rather than simply decorate it, or worse, distract us from it. It should remind us of what we have forgotten, illuminate what we know, or teach us new things. Through art we can come to feel and understand and love more completely—we become more human. The artists I admire—obscure, famous or anonymous—have contributed to my humanity through their whimsy, their devotion, their tragedy, their bliss or their quiescence. I seek to be such an artist.
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> As nearly as I can trace, my paintings emerge from living with people (and my dog) and from affection for the processes I use to make pictures. Although my skills of observation and craft are good, there is a fundamental element that makes a picture succeed that is outside of my control. It is a gift of grace every time it occurs and is as surprising to me as it is to any viewer taken by an image. This element eludes me every time I try to control it. I firmly believe that when a painting succeeds, I have not created it, but have rather participated in it. I paint because I love and because I love to paint. The better I become at both, the more readily accessed and identified is this grace, and the better will be my contribution.

The artworld is acknowledging Kershisnik's ability to "participate" in paintings. He has had eight solo exhibitions in galleries that range from the Dolores Chase Fine Art Gallery in Salt Lake City, Utah, to galleries in Texas, Washington, and Oregon. In addition, he has participated in group shows at the Salt Lake Art Canter, the Kimball Art Center in Park City, galleries in Texas, Utah, and New York, has exhibited and won awards at the Springville Museum of Art's Spring Salon and at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts on the University of Utah campus; Brian's work was also selected for official exhibition during the state visit of Queen Elizabeth II, at Austin, Texas.

Brian Kershisnik's paintings are in permanent collections at Brigham Young University, including a painting in the Tanner Law Library, at the University of Ohio, Illinois State University, the Springville Museum of Art, the Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake County, The State of Utah, and are owned by Delta Airlines and Nordstroms.

He has recently published the book Painting From Life and his artwork can be viewed on the web at: http://www.kershisnik.com/
http://www.guild.com/servlet/Guild/ArtTeamPage?atid=1810

ARTIST: **Robert Leroy Marshall (1944–) Springville, Utah**
TITLE: ***Iridescence*** **1994**
MEDIA: **oil on canvas**
SIZE: **48″ x 72″**

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Robert Marshall was born in Mesquite, Nevada. He attended Brigham Young University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1966 and a Master of Arts in 1968. He began teaching soon after graduation at Fullerton College in California. In 1969, he moved to Utah to join the studio art faculty at BYU. He has served as chairman of the art department for 12 years and as director of study abroad programs in London and in Madrid. Marshall believes that, as a professor, he can give back to humankind some of what he has been given. Part of the fulfillment he finds in teaching comes from being able to share in the creative processes of others.

Marshall is an accomplished draftsman and is knowledgeable in color theory, film making, and in contemporary art history. As a painter, he originally was best known for his watercolor landscapes, but after a time he felt the need to grow and progress, and he took a leave of absence from the university and began working in oils on large canvases. Since that time, he has gone from painting his children and patterns and objects in his house, to a series of paintings of pottery, to a series combining pottery and fabric—he felt the need to add some rectangles and sharp edges to the ovals and the ellipses of the pots. He says he got very interested in the folds of the fabric—the paintings became like little landscapes to him. The next move, from painting fabric to actual landscapes, came naturally.

Bob Marshall, unlike some contemporary artists, is convinced "that the land-

scape tradition is still a viable option and has a justifiable place in contemporary painting." For Marshall,

> Awareness of the intrinsic (and I believe lasting) beauty of a particular location is always intensified through private rather than collective discovery. Quiet hikes into the landscape intensify our connection with the land in a way that standing on the periphery and observing the obvious can never accomplish.

In both his watercolors and his more recent oils, Marshall shares his discoveries and invites us into his "private dialogue with the patterns, colors and textures that usually go unnoticed." His watercolors have a sense of intimacy of place that have been intensified in his latest works—large, richly colored canvases entitled "The Wetland Series." These paintings are often praised for their beauty, although Marshall says the paintings are of areas many people would pass by without noticing. Unconventional landscapes, they are tightly focused examinations of the cycle of life in the wetlands—growth, death, and decay—an intense look at the natural elements where land and water meet.

Marshall's paintings are influenced by both Abstract Expressionism and Realism. In the simplest sense, Marshall's paintings are about surface, color, and form. On a more complex level, they are descriptions of realities. Through the contrast of illusionary three-dimensional form and the two-dimensionality of the paints, Marshall hopes to engage and momentarily dislocate the viewer. He tells us,

> Interlocking passages of color areas simultaneously confirm and deny the flatness of the picture plane as forms emerge from the paint. I am not, however, dealing with contradictions, but rather I want each painting to be delicious and inviting—a confirmation of multiple layers of reality.

Marshall is interested in helping the viewer to meditate and ask questions that perhaps they would not otherwise have asked. This kind of dimensional interplay is one way of accomplishing this goal. In addition, the sheer beauty of his paintings attract us—they are visual feasts to live with, to return to over and over again.

Robert Marshall, *Snow Canyon*

ARTIST: **Paul Salisbury (1903–1979) Richfield/Provo, Utah**
TITLE: ***Mountain Solitude*** **1961**
MEDIA: **oil on canvas**
SIZE: **28″ x 36″**

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Western realist Paul Salisbury has achieved more notability as a cowboy/western painter than any other Utah artist of these scenes. His oil paintings represent nature and its inhabitants with subtle realism. Throughout his life, Salisbury was devoted to regional landscapes and to scenes of the American Indian and the Western cowboy.

Salisbury's early years were spent on his father's ranch in Richfield, Utah, near the Kanosh Indian Reservation. There he gained a sympathetic awareness and understanding of the western landscape and its inhabitants. During his younger years, he worked for his father on the family ranch; but, as often as possible, Paul took off and spent his time drawing the scenery and animals around him.

Salisbury received formal art training under his uncle, Cornelius Salisbury, who encouraged him in his artistic pursuits. Paul continued his education at Brigham Young University under B. F. Larsen and E. H. Eastman. He also was privately instructed by LeConte Stewart, a noted Utah landscape artist. Despite his early training as an artist, he made his living as a musician, and it was not until the early 1950s that Salisbury was able to work continuously as a painter. When he did, he attracted a great deal of attention.

The growing trend during the 1950s and 1960s toward cowboy/western art manifested itself in the paintings of Paul Salisbury of Provo. He was Utah's first significant "Cowboy and Indian" artist. As one of Utah's very few professional artists, he worked full time on his art and was not affiliated with a university or another occupation, but occasionally taught workshops and classes in painting.

Salisbury's painting, Mountain Solitude, demonstrates that there are no harsh colors in nature. Here, he has rendered the desert valley in muted earthtones and the mountains in gentle blue grays. These delicate colors and the use of short brushstrokes create a soft texture that combine with his treatment of light to enhance the calm atmosphere in the painting.

Salisbury's success as a painter is due in part to his conservative painting style, which is perfectly suited to traditional Utah tastes. Another factor in his success is his ability to create unity in his paintings by using a consistent tonality and bold composition.

ARTIST: **Bruce H. Smith (1936–) Springville, Utah**
TITLE: ***Jacob and Leah*** **1990**
MEDIA: **oil on canvas**
SIZE: **48" x 60"**
Courtesy of LDS Museum of Church History and Art

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Bruce Hixon Smith, a graduate of both Brigham Young University and the University of Utah, teaches drawing and painting at BYU. He currently lives in Springville with his family. While attending college, he studied with both Douglas Snow and Alvin Gittins. At that time, Bruce's works leaned heavily toward non-objective art; however, after several often-frustrating years spent exploring abstract art, Smith shifted his focus.

Currently, he is pursuing the spiritual in a style he calls academic objective realism. Bruce Smith relies heavily on repetition, often painting objects two or three times on the same canvas. He begins his work in a relaxed, uninhibited manner. He draws and redraws contour lines, making no attempt to cover up the first lines. These lines create a sense of movement, as if the person has paused momentarily or the fabric might move in the breeze. Smith brushes colors on thinly and briskly. He then moves from general to specific, usually concentrating on one focal point, building up colors, textures, and details, but leaving some areas gestural.

Although painting is a private experience for Smith—visitors to his studio will find his easel facing away from the door and objects, that almost seem randomly distributed blocking the path—he deliberately leaves his paintings "open-ended, " inviting viewers in. Smith's use of symbols contributes to this open door sensation—the meanings of some of the symbols he uses are discernable but layered. Other symbols are obscure: a ribbon, a bottle of fruit, a piece of cloth. Smith says sometimes he doesn't know the meaning of the symbols he uses. Not because he picks them randomly, but because he chooses the symbols intuitively, happy to let them remain undefined. He explains, "When they seem right, I put them in and purposely keep it a little bit vague, even to me; so they are not illustration, where everything is understandable. I want to have the possibility of going deeper—I prefer not to know exactly what they signify."

Smith says all his paintings are about art, which is in a constant state of flux. Modernism did away with the old attitudes and ideas about art, but now Modernism itself is over. Smith seeks to incorporate some of the older attitudes about art and still have his work

retain some of the brand new things Modern Art tried to do, including being a means of "ditching" the old. Bruce has a real allegiance to what art was prior to Modernism, which he believes is common. What he doesn't think is common is also having a feeling for Modernism. He is convinced that art before Modernism has value today, but that Modernism has elements of worth as well. The problem, he says, is to mix those qualities.

The open-endedness of his works is certainly a Modernist trait; conversely, over the last few years, Smith has configured many of his paintings in ways that harken back to Italian religious works of the Renaissance. Those early multipaneled altarpieces consist of a principal central panel with secondary side and/or top panels, and a predella. The predella is a small strip of paintings which forms the lower edge of the altarpiece and usually has narrative scenes from the lives of the saints who are represented in the panels above, or a portrait of the person who commissioned the artwork. Some of Smith's paintings have one smaller canvas below the main canvas, like an individual predella; others have a large central canvas with smaller ones above and below. And some, like *The Street (Center of Snow)*, are themselves a series of paintings with another group below. Whatever the exact configuration, the allusion to Renaissance art is clear: and, like the symbols he uses, this reference gives depth to the artworks.

But unlike David Hockney, who creates panoramic views, Bruce Smith uses multiple views and techniques like repetition to make his paintings offer us a wider view of ourselves. The artworks also invite us to ponder, to have "a growth of awareness. . . a refinement of self-understanding." The painting *Jacob and Leah*, like all of Bruce Smith's work, is a visual image that means more, and is more, visually than it ever will if we try to capture too closely that meaning in words.

ARTIST: **Minerva K. Teichert (1888– 1976) North Ogden, Utah/Cokeville, Wyoming**
TITLE: ***Hereford Roundup*** **1956**
MEDIA: **oil on canvas**
SIZE: **62" x 108-1/2"**

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Minerva Bernetta Kohlhepp Teichert was born August 28, 1888, in North Ogden, Utah. She grew up on a remote ranch in Idaho, the second of ten children. Her mother, Ella Hickman, was the daughter of one of the bodyguards of Brigham Young. Her father, Frederick John Kohlhepp, had been disowned by his prominent family when he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From her parents she gained a knowledge of the scriptural stories she would later portray as well as the indefatigable spirit that would characterize her life.

In addition to her formal schooling, Minerva was taught by her parents to love reading and to appreciate good music, literature, drama, and art. She and her sister acted out plays in a willow copse on their ranch. When Minerva was four years old, her mother gave her a set of watercolors, and from that time forth, Minerva considered herself an artist. She carried sketch pad and charcoal with her constantly, sketching even the wild horses that were brought in to the corrals. After she was married, she drew everything, including fresh-caught fish before cooking them. Her skilled rendering of life and action is the result of this early preoccupation with drawing.

When Minerva was 14, she went to San Francisco to work as a nursemaid for a wealthy family. During this time she was able to observe great paintings at the Mark Hopkins Art School. After she returned home and graduated from Pocatello High School at age 16, she taught school at Davisville, Idaho, saving money to attend the Art Institute of Chicago. When the time came for her to leave for Chicago, her father refused to let her travel alone.

After being "set apart" as an LDS Church missionary, she traveled east with a church group, the first woman to be sent for art lessons with the official blessing of the LDS Church leadership.

In Chicago, she studied under John Vanderpoel, a master of the academic school of painting. She returned home periodically to earn money by teaching or by working in the fields so she could continue her studies. When her studies in Chicago were completed, she returned to Idaho to "prove-up" her own isolated homestead, living by herself and sleeping with a revolver under her pillow. She was courted by two young men, one wealthy (whom she rejected) and the other, a cowboy. When she received a scholarship and left for New York City to study at the Art Student's League, she told the cowboy, Herman Teichert, to marry someone else.

The League was one of the most important art centers in the world, and Minerva studied under Robert Henri and George Bridgeman, eminent realist art instructors of the time. She periodically used various skills to pay her way. She sketched cadavers for medical schools, illustrated children's books, painted portraits, and performed rope tricks and Indian dances on the New York stage. While in New York she, and other students, had paintings exhibited in the immigrant receiving station on Ellis Island.

Minerva became close friends with her mentor, Robert Henri, who called her "Miss Idaho." Although her artistic subjects and interests were very different from Henri's, she did develop a vigorous style with broad brush strokes that owes an obvious debt to his bold technique. Though rated with the top artists of the time, she returned to Idaho instead of taking advantage of an opportunity to study in Europe or of stepping into a professional career. Her teacher, Robert Henri, told her to go home and paint the history of the Mormon people. She returned to the West feeling she had a mission to perform.

Minerva married Herman Teichert, kept books for the ranch, cooked for the hands, raised their five children, and painted. Her studio was their narrow living room, where she tacked up her canvases to paint. The room was too small for some of her works, which had to be folded as she painted. Since she could not get far enough away from her large paintings to get the correct perspective, she looked at her work through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars. Teichert sent her children to bed at eight o'clock each night and then painted until midnight. Some nights, she set the clock ahead so she could send the children to bed earlier and have a little more time to paint.

Minerva painted on everything she could find: boards, aprons, flour sacks, the margins of books, walls and doors, and on brown paper bags. She loved to paint the western wilderness with its predominance of blues and grays, but seldom painted just the land. Human figures and work animals, usually in a narrative, were her most common subjects. She used neighbors and family members as models, providing herself with a wide variety even though she lived in a rural area.

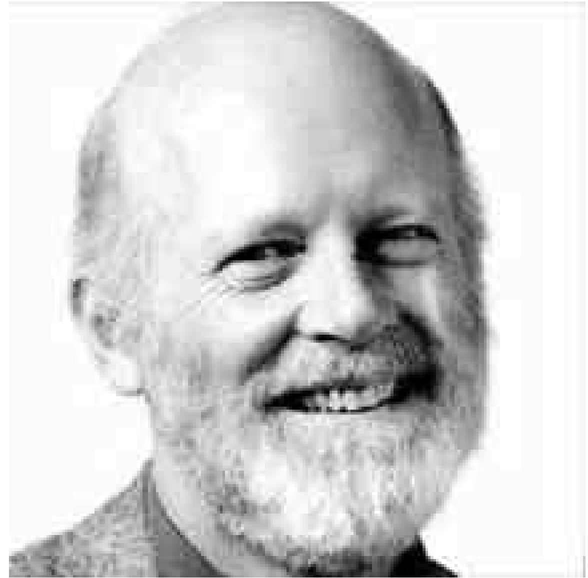
Although Teichert's colors are generally subdued, she frequently used bright red paint to emphasize the central character or focal point. Her paintings are large and mural like, to be viewed from a distance. The strong composition and draftsmanship combine with delicate colors and lines and compelling narrative to produce powerful works of art, which she hoped would motivate people "to build Zion."

Women figure prominently in Teichert's works. She also did smaller paintings of flowers, still lifes, and scenery, which were usually intended as gifts.

Teichert was a prolific painter, painting more pioneer and Indian subjects than any other Utah artist. Today, her best-known works are those published on
the covers and in LDS magazines and lesson manuals and her Book of Mormon series of over 40 paintings—which can be seen at Brigham Young University—and the huge mural in the World Room of the Manti LDS temple. In addition, the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City owns several large pieces, including Madonna of 1847.

Pinborough, Jan Underwood. 1989 "Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert: With a Bold Brush." Ensign. April. pp. 34-41: Salt Lake City
St. George Art Museum Brochure. 1992. " A Touch of Minerva Teichert." St. George.
Swanson, Vern G., Robert S. Olpin, and William C. Seifrit. 1991 Utah Art. Layton: Gibbs Smith
Information also provided by Miriam Wardle, a descendent of Minerva Teichert

ARTIST: **Roger D. "Sam" Wilson (1943-) Salt Lake City, Utah**
TITLE: ***A Tension to Detail*** **1982**
MEDIA: **watercolor**
SIZE: **22-1/2" x 29-3/4"**



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Sam Wilson was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1943; then his family moved west, living first in Golden, Colorado, and eventually staying in the Los Angeles, California area, mostly in Long Beach. He graduated from high school in 1961, an experience he says is ". . . best forgotten. I was too young to be a Beatnik and too old to be a Hippie. I owe my career to Lyndon Baines Johnson. I went to school without much direction. I guess it was partly to avoid getting drafted. I was drafted. After service, mostly in Barstow, California and Viet Nam (Barstow was the scary place), I resumed my education with the crucial G.I. Bill. My education was completed with a Masters from California State University, Long Beach."

Currently, Sam Wilson is an Associate Professor, soon to be a full professor, in the University of Utah Department of Art. His varied career includes a number of teaching positions in California and Colorado, being an illustrator for Carl Sagen's Cosmos on PBS, a "Magician" with Paramount Pictures, and working in stage design, construction, and silkscreening for Silent Running for Universal Studios. Wilson's work has been exhibited throughout the Intermountain Region and in California, earning him numerous awards. He spent 16 months doing the interior of the Cathedral of the Madeline in Salt Lake City, Utah. He enjoyed working there because, "They let me do 'Wilson' stuff."

Talking about his work, Wilson said:

> "Since I never could figure out the right way to start a painting, I would look at a piece of 'stuff,' thinking that it may be a way of generating a picture. It's like those horse-cart, chicken-egg questions. Do I collect stuff to paint or do I paint to collect stuff?
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> "By way of paint or pencil, I display objects both exotic and mundane on desk tops or in caves. This stuff I use may be replicas of other cultures or junk and tools from my work place. Masks may be people, people are animals or a rock is a place—it doesn't matter. I entertain myself and satisfy my curiosities by accumulating and arranging the items on the surface of the picture in a manner as unpredictable as possible. I believe that these oblique references and nonsense relationships open to me (and you) greater possibilities, more surprises and a justification for such a quiet and solitary entertainment.

I use the techniques of realism and illusionism as a medium to present these harmless dramas. The pictures are just hanging around on the wall—I mean they are static. I assume the role of magician to add a helpful tension. The game of what's 'real' or not is a ploy, a device to catch your eye.

The final result of this labor would be, for you, a trip with no passport, a contest with no clock and a visual snack without the predictable flavor of a franchised fun house.