

FABRIK MAGAZINE

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LORA SCHLESINGER GALLERY

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WORDS PETER FRANK

COMING OUT: Richard Bruland, New Paintings, and Keira Kotler, “I Look for Light” (November 3 – December 29)



RICHARD BRULAND • LONGRONDO, 2012 • ACRYLIC ON PANEL • 24 X 60 INCHES

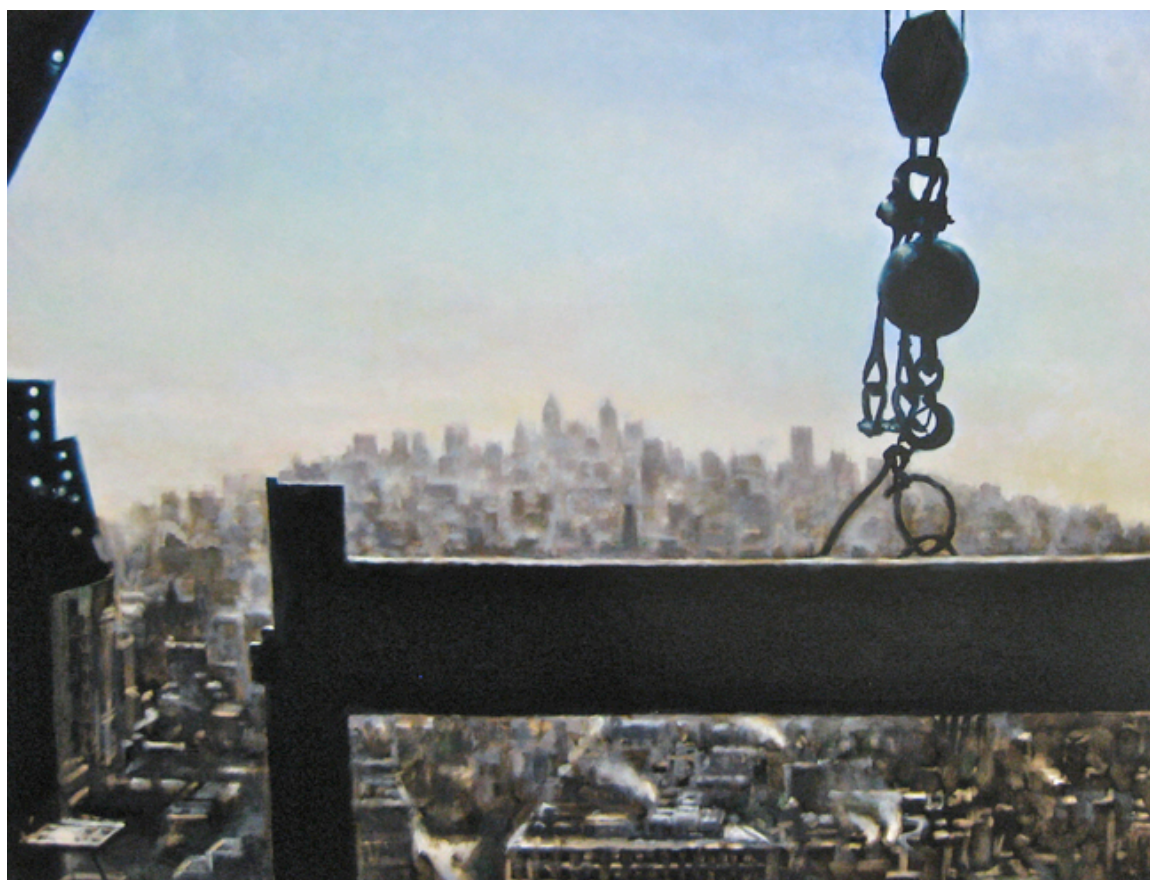
Reproduction does little favor to most painting, but Richard Bruland's are especially ill-served, losing all the magic of their detail, their luster, their exquisite color transitions and their scale when not seen in person. Photographs of his canvases suggest atmospheric hue-clouds and that is indeed an effect available in Bruland's recent paintings (at least from a certain distance). But what Bruland truly paints are vast, detailed networks of little lines, their color vibrating in contrast to the color on which they lay, the combination buzzing into delicious, often incredible harmony – and then transiting across the canvas from light to dark, blue to red, infinite to superficial and back again without losing that resonance. The color shifts constantly threaten to throw off the harmonic stability Bruland has clearly worked so hard to achieve; but that's the magician's trick, seeming to sabotage himself only to get the element of danger to enhance the sense of suspension and the ultimate sense of accomplishment. Keira Kotler achieves similar magic, albeit in a more modest and familiar way.

Kotler builds up layer upon layer of urethane and varnish on smallish square acrylic supports, resulting in translucent plaques whose monochrome presents itself at first a solid color, then starts evading the eye's – well, the mind's – need to pin down that color, to define it as a particular kind of green or violet. Kotler's panels are no particular green or violet or whatever other hue your eye might be trying to register. Your mind's effort at labeling is futile, and is better turned to examining – and luxuriating in – the nuances that have built up inside the paintings. In terms of both procedure and effect Kotler is very much a light-and-space artist; but, like other painters who seek to capture – or, more accurately, embody – the ephemerality of ambient light, she knows that the pursuit is fraught with ambiguity and slippage, and the art lies in that very imprecision.

GOING ON: Lawrence Gipe, “Salon”, through February 23

Lawrence Gipe has long mused on the nature of cultural and political history, specifically its relationship to personal recollection and social construction. His images, normally drawn from sources and contexts both readily identifiable – LIFE magazine, prewar billboards – and vaguely familiar – Cold War propaganda (from both sides), newsreel shots of obscure wars – fairly reek of nostalgia. But it's not the pictures themselves that conjure memories – memories we only think we have – so much as it is Gipe's velvet treatment of them spurring a condition of poignant recollection. We find ourselves gazing at his paintings, certain we had seen the original documents they draw on when we were kids, or in some used bookstore or theme restaurant or at the very least posted for grins on someone's Facebook timeline after they'd mined some free-access Website for 20th-century arcana. As Gipe's crowded, relentless collection of small paintings here demonstrates, history is most dangerous when it escapes its own record and becomes a tool of manipulation.

What carries over from the socialist realism, world's-fair posters and calendar illustrations he draws upon is not the fatuousness of their content – although their banality does become at once grinding and hilarious – but upon their layer of fabrication and how that layers penetrates our post-modern skepticism. We fancy ourselves resistant to the blandishments of current commercialist and political harangue (even if we have to resort to TiVO to bolster our immunity); but the “old stuff” moves us because it haunts our reclamations of childhood and pretends to be something else than consumerist or community harangue. In Gipe's hands it isn't really, but it is at the same time, frozen as it is in a painterly ambergris, a slight fuzziness that optically manifests the passage of time and the – supposed – degenerations of pictorial potency.



LAWRENCE GIPE • PANEL NO. 11 FROM SALON (NEW YORK, 1929) • 2012 OIL ON PANEL • 18 X 24 INCHES