

Artifice and The Ideal: Classical Figuration Today

An Overview by Elsie Russell

The approach to the term "classical" is one of syncretism, and not limited to post-modern neo-classicism, but encompassing and reconciling the various ways artists use the language of Greco-Roman civilization imaginatively to express the human condition. This includes Baroque and Romantic influences, born out of Hellenistic Greece, and not merely the quiet rationalism of 5th century Athens that engendered the neo-classicism of the eighteenth century, which often narrowly identifies classically inspired art now. What does Classical Art Today mean? Classical art is not art that is dependent on Greek and Roman imagery or merely on reviving the styles of the past, in other words, Classical art is not "pictures of idealized people in togas". A painting's figure can just as easily be dressed in athletic shoes and shorts, or a bikini, (or much less), as in fantastic golden robes. They may have idealized features, or they may be uniquely homely, radiating sublime inner qualities. Classical art is, however, based on the esthetic and philosophical principles established by the Greco-Roman civilization that is the wellspring of our modern culture. Art, music and literature today are all in some way dependent on systems devised and evolved by this culture so many years ago. Modernism, Hipness and Irony may rule arts now, but contemporary artists committed to the classical tradition are still to be found the world over, with critically recognized movements based in the United States and in Italy. Whether isolated iconoclasts or established members of a cohesive body, these artists deliberately work in this tradition, integrating it to the multi-faceted realities of modern life, enriching their art with the lessons of the past though not slavishly imitating them. However "modern" or "eccentric" it may seem on the surface, their work does spring from a classical foundation, from which artists build their own language.

The definition of "classical art" and classicism in general is ever open to interpretation. Webster's definition for Classicism states that "the principles and characteristics of a formal standard originally of Greek and Roman Art embodying lucidity, simplicity and dignity are what narrowly define the term". But "Classical Art" historically covers all of the art produced by Greco-Roman culture from the archaic period in Greece to the time of the Emperor Constantine (280?-337). This covers an enormous geographical territory from India to the British Isles and encompasses many stylistic varieties through the blending of local customs and beliefs. The art, culture and thought of this period are the foundation of western civilization, of our language, laws, literature and science, as well as much of our visual art. We all know how in late medieval times, a new awareness of Greco-Roman art and culture jumpstarted the Renaissance, leading to great technological and cultural innovations. Early Renaissance artists like Giotto(1266?-1337) and Masaccio, (1401-1428) released pictorial space from the flatly gilded niches framing stylized saints of Byzantine art into a believable three dimensional space with architecture and nature (thanks to the classical science of perspective), inhabited by characters naturally going about the business of life.

During the High Renaissance, the influence of Greco-Roman art and thought became pervasive, and its canons were thoroughly studied and re-interpreted to create art with an even broader scope. This art evolved rapidly, as influenced by geopolitical conditions and the natural vacillations of human taste. The many artistic styles evolving out of this flowering or "rebirth" can still be called "classical", since they have as their foundation an understanding of, and are about, a re-interpretation of the art of Greece and Rome. Works like those of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, that most closely follow the Greco-Roman models are called "Classic" by the great art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, who died in 1945 at the age of eighty one, long before the word "classic" became trivialized and corrupted by the advertising industry. Classical art, with its language evolving from a broad range Greco-Roman

sources, embraces a family of related styles that reach far back in history, and continue in our own day to furnish a viable language for artists. (With this understanding, I would reach back as far as the Minoan civilization in Crete, from which the mainland culture borrowed freely, adding to the formal solidity and strength of early Greek art more graceful, joyous qualities. A small ivory statuette of a snake goddess in The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, with her finely chiseled, classically proportioned features, bears witness as early as 1500 BC to this vital contribution.

Recent Contemporary Classical Art

"Contemporary Classical Art", under the umbrella of Postmodernism, has not been totally ignored by galleries and the media. Recent group exhibitions have limited their coverage to reflect the popular trends found in blue chip galleries. These have included every kind of art, from minimalism to pop art, but art that is trendy, inherently controversial, unorthodox, unsettling, and above all, ironic, is what attracts attention today. Artists exploring marginal, complex styles or using truly eccentric and imaginative content are avoided by the high profile galleries who depend on a steady stream of sellable works by a select group of recognized artists to stay in business. These artists are then unable or unwilling to take the risks and the creative opportunities of their maverick brethren for fear of market consequences. This distillation of the available art by the utilitarian concerns of the commercial art world narrows our understanding of what is really happening in the artistic community and of the role art plays for humanity today. Throughout the 1970's and until the mid 1980's, however, exhibits of contemporary classical art were regularly organized by galleries such as the Robert Schoelkopf Gallery and the Tatistcheff Gallery, showing a variety of classical artists, often in conjunction with various state and university museums. The travelling exhibit "Toward a Renewal of Classicism", 1979, organized by Peter Tatistcheff of the Tatistcheff Gallery, New York, and by Dr. David B. Lawall, director of the Bayley Museum, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, is an early example. In 1986 Boise Gallery of Art's "Modern Myths: Classical Renewal", curated by Sandy Harthorn, Boise, Idaho, traveling throughout the West, was also varied and comprehensive. Group shows of this nature, including young, obscure, or independent artists as well as famous name artists, disappeared after the art market "crash" of 1989. These were taken over by the status quo, showing an established elite of marketable and critically or academically acclaimed artists, making it nearly impossible to find and appreciate the work of these lesser known original talents.

Classical Figurative Painting: A Short History

We are defining Classical art and painting in a "literary" rather than a traditionally art historical or "literal" fashion. This syncretism allows us to cover stylistic sub-categories that have been at odds through the years, as is too often the case with competing disciplines.

From its roots in the pre-homeric civilization of Bronze Age Crete to rise of eastern Byzantium, Classical Art has nourished European art. During the Dark Ages, Christianity's labyrinth of symbolism and continuing use of roman artistic techniques, from mosaic tesserae to fresco, had preserved many links to greco-roman civilization. This fragmentary knowledge, combined with extensive architectural remains, provided a foundation for scholars, craftsmen and emancipated aristocrats at the dawn of the Renaissance to build their vision of a classical world, accomodating the needs of christianity into the classical ideals of platonic humanism. This led to a gradual shift of focus from the will of an implacable God governing the actions of mankind towards one of human autonomy, where, in theory at least, the innate dignity of humanity was respected, as were the pursuits of discovery and invention. In art, and more particularly in painting, the study of perspective, atmospheric phenomena, anatomy, chemistry, and physics all contributed to representing reality in more a naturalistic manner. Artists like

Giotto (1266?-1337) and Masaccio, (1401-1428) released pictorial space from the flatly gilded niches framing stylized saints of Byzantine art into a believable three dimensional space, inhabited by characters naturally going about the business of life. Masaccio's solid forms and mastery of one point perspective enabled him represent complex classical architecture with miraculous three-dimensionality.

Tiziano Vecellio(1488-1576)

The discovery by Renaissance artists of the dramatic Hellenistic sculptures housed in the Vatican's papal residence in Rome, helped to develop this classical vision with a heroic vocabulary well suited to the expanding empire of the Catholic Church and its humanist philosophy.

During the sixteenth century a new esthetic canon based on classical ideals expressing dignity, strength, spaciousness, clarity and unity of design developed. The condensed monumentality of Michelangelo and the dramatic chromaticism of Titian exemplify this new vision. In the next century, artists throughout Europe build on the dramatic monumentality and spontaneous, flowing forms of Italian High Classicism developing the new language of the Baroque. Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) expresses this style at it's most monumentally fluid, and was to be a major influence on painters of the Romantic Movement in the nineteenth century. But the Baroque era was not only about expansive virtuoso pirotechnics. The classical ideals of expressive restraint, poetic subtlety, and clarity and unity of design were also developed during this period in different manners, from the chromatic realism of Velasquez, evolving out of Caravaggio and Titian to the serene luminism of Jan Vermeer. But it was Nicolas Poussin, (1594-1665), the French expatriate painter living in Rome, and who's interpretation of ancient roman life, history, and mythology became the standard for academic pictorial composition for years to come, who best represents this alternate view.

It was during this period, at the close of the 17th century, that the divisive attitude among classical artists escalated into all out war, with the followers of Nicolas Poussin, pitted against the followers Rubens, in a battle that rages to this day. Their argument was about the technical and visual merits of "Poussiniste" drawing, versus those of "Rubeniste" color, of calm versus movement, of the "rational" versus the "irrational", of compositions with fewer active figures versus crowds. The greater battle was between discipline and morality and extreme emotional expression through color and technique. This argument goes back to the Renaissance with the debate over the importance of drawing stressed by the Florentine Raphael Sanzio (1483-1520) versus the importance of color emphasized by Titian (1488-1576), as documented by Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574). But the principles of this argument goes back even further to classical antiquity, where in the 5th century, ideal beauty was represented either calm repose, evolving into the monumentality and exuberant drama the Hellenistic Age. This duality between the Apollo and Dionysus, between the intuitive, subconscious, irrational, chaotic forces of the earth as compared to the solar forces of clarity, order, mathematical precision and rationality of the universe is primal. The successful combination of these divergent qualities has been an obsession with artists throughout western history. Salvador Dali summed it up with this statement "Le dur et le mou doivent être équivalents dans l'oeuvre classique". (Dali de Gala, Robert Déscharnes, 1962, Edita, Lausanne) ("The hard and the soft must be equal in classical works"). To clarify this point, Dali had his photo taken holding a porpoise in his left hand and a large stone of the same general shape in his right hand. The archetypal belief is that the "soft", irrational, left, or Ida, healing, feminine moon side of the body in esoteric Indian kundalini Yoga, and Yin in Chinese Taoism exists in balance with its opposite, the "hard", rational, aggressive, masculine sun side or Pingala in Yoga and Yang in Taoism. As Dali goes on to say, "S'ils sont en plus parallèles, ils atteignent la perfection courtoise des structures palladiennes". ("If these [qualities] are parallel, they attain the courtly perfection of Palladian structures"). In other words, the balance between the hard and the soft begets the harmonious ideal of

High Renaissance Paladdian Classicism. When the pendulum swings to one direction or another according to the vicissitudes of artistic taste, we are merely witnessing the natural adjustments of a much larger force. After all, Titian and Raphael were equally influenced by the classicism of Greece and Rome, as were Poussin and Rubens, Ingres and Delacroix. All these artists espoused a humanistic vision of the cosmos based on classical Greco-Roman and Renaissance philosophy and can therefore ultimately be considered "Classical" artists, as they are by such pre-eminent art historians as Heinrich Wölfflin. ("Classic Art; An introduction to the Italian Renaissance), and Walter Friedländer" (David to Delacroix"), who provided much of the material for this section on the Poussinist debate.

Revolution and Neoclassicism Louis XIV's royal decree of 1664 rigidly graded the different genres of art according to their perceived status within the academy. The highest status, with the tightest stylistic control, was reserved for History and Religious painting, gradually loosening in the "inferior" arts of landscape, genre scenes and still life. Jean Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806,) and Jean Siméon Chardin (1699-1779), who focused on the "lower" forms of painting like landscape, genre scenes, and still life, were the artists who produced the liveliest and most original work in this restrictive creative climate. With them, the classical spirit went "underground", but managed to keep its vitality, as Watteau demonstrates in his gem "Jupiter and Antiope" in the Louvre, a thirty inch oval painting that is as eloquent an example of the "Sleeping nymph" theme as any by Titian or Poussin.

The excitement that accompanied the discovery of site of Pompeii in 1748 sparked a new interest in the classicism of Greece and Rome that quickly spread throughout Europe. Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1778), the archaeologist, art historian and moral philosopher, became a major force, codifying this new classicism with an esthetic taste focusing on the ideal of tranquil beauty found in fifth century Athens, as being the embodiment of moral purity and nobility of being. This dogma was faithfully put into practice by his disciple, the German-Roman Anton Raphael Mengs, who led a group of artists that included the multitalented Swiss artist Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807) and a number of English students. Although Mengs' art was a lifeless pastiche of Raphael's style, with added decorative greco-roman elements, he and his followers did influence the burgeoning classicism embodied by Jacques Louis David (1748-1825) through their use of heroic classical themes. The strict moral virtuousness promoted by Winckelmann was diluted emotional sentimentality by artists like Jean Baptiste Greuse (1725-1805), as seen in his theatrical Poussinist composition "The Father's Curse", and in his hugely popular vignettes of tearful, sulking maidens.

Artists throughout Europe then were experimenting with the new classical style or using classical themes. Apart from the European academic status quo, many artists were approaching art in new and unusual ways without relinquishing their classical foundations. As the "Age of Reason" dawned, so did the modern phenomenon of "Alienation" accompanied by interest in psychology, dreams, the "Supernatural and "Madness", especially "Melancholia", "Mania" and pathological suicide. No longer attributed to various "humors", evil spirits, or even the wrath of God, these afflictions, as well as such qualities as "... the soul, the mind, genius, imagination, memory, and all sensations..." were now seen as originating from the brain, as documented by Robert James in his Medical Dictionary of 1743. Even supreme rationalist Jacques Louis David turned his interest to this phenomenon with a series of meticulously rendered pencil portraits of asylum inmates. This new interest and acceptance of the irrational as a by-product of civilization and post-agricultural commercial industrial culture, opened the gates for the establishment of Romanticism, and more universally, to the modern age. As Michel Foucault says in his "Madness and Civilization - A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, "Madness has become man's possibility of abolishing both man and the world - and even those images that challenge the the world and deform man. It is far beyond dreams, beyond the nightmare of bestiality,

the last recourse, the end and the beginning of everything... and this madness that links and divides time, that twists the world into a ring of a single night - does it not transmit - to those able to receive it, those barely audible voices of classical unreason, in which it is always a question of nothingness and night, but amplifying them now to shrieks and frenzy?" Great Spanish painter Francisco Goya Y Lucentes (1746-1828) had a firm foundation in the art of Italy; he had gone to study in Rome in 1771, and was influenced by the grandiose luminescent Baroque-Rococo frescoes of Gianbattista Tiepolo (1696-1770), who spent his last days working in Madrid, painting the ceilings of the Royal Palace. (Goya was also aware of Tiepolo's series of etchings and drawings on the bizarre; of mythological and magical scenes, and satirical caricatures of Venetian carnival personages later when he made his "Los caprichos" in the late 1790's). Goya distilled the luminescence and intricacies of the Rococo, the realm of Velazquez and the somber, sublime mystery of Rembrandt with the neoclassical simplicity practised by Mengs according to the doctrine of Winckelmann. Goya's famous "Naked Maja" and "Clothed Maja" (of 1800-05) are a revolutionary new twist on the reclining Venus theme. Along with Goya's complex official career during the tumultuous turn of the nineteenth century with Napoleon's invasion of Spain, which engendered the monumental series of etchings "Los desastres de la guerra" that so inspired Manet. It was in those uncommissioned works like the etchings and the "Black Paintings" that decorated his summer house that Goya was able to fully express what his talents for "observation" "fantasy" and "invention". The graphic representations of nightmaric visions in the "Black Paintings"; the Ghoulish "Saturn Devouring his Children", brings back a primal energy to classical mythology, especially the pre-Olympian tales with all their vestiges of prehistoric chaos. It took the daring introspection of early Romantic iconoclasts like Goya to confront the reality of classical mythology and literature in all its complex, gory magnificence. The classical world was not a grassy realm of diaphanous dancing maidens and pondering sages, as painters like Anton Mengs would have us believe, as it was the tragic hysteria of Electra, the subterfuge of Odysseus, the bestial rages of the Minotaur; all living in the depths of man's psyche.

Unlike the authentic force of Goya's artistic vision, the eccentric academic Swiss painter Johannes Heinrich Füssli (1741-1825) selfconsciously lived out this modern role of the "manic", divinely inspired "genius", governed by his capricious imagination and egotistic ambitions. He is best known for his "Nightmare" (c.1782) and the series of paintings filled with faeries and other magical beings based on Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's dream". Füssli's limited technique and genuinely neurotic personality were more of a hindrance than a hindrance as he developed his intriguing and original oeuvre. His fierce ambition made him a very public pioneer for the Romantic Movement in its rebellion against eighteenth century rationalism and an icon for the Symbolists later in the nineteenth century. Füssli settled in Britain and became a fellow of the Royal Academy where he became friendly with many British artists and writers, including the young visionary William Blake. William Blake (1757-1827) is now acknowledged as the greatest independent eccentric artist of the period, and was deeply rooted in the classicism of Michelangelo as gleaned through engravings, as well as the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. Blake was born in the Soho section of London, of humble craftsman origins, and spent his entire life in or near London. He wanted to be an artist from an early age, and began attending the drawing school of Henry Pars at age 10, in 1767 and in 1772 was apprenticed to engraver James Basire, who was a thorough teacher encouraging the young Blake in his studies. In 1779 Blake entered the Royal Academy, not as a history painter, which it was his dream to become, but as an engraver. He found himself in violent opposition to Sir Joshua Reynolds and the fashionable upper class artists whose patrons were then in control of British art. Blake did come into contact with like minds such as sculptor John Flaxman and the painter Thomas Stothard. But it is Heinrich Füssli with whom he would develop his most complex lifelong relationship. Initially, Blake found inspiration in this ambitious older artist, who would later plunder Blake's authentic and bottomless imagination, while publically speaking ill of him at every opportunity, but this was ultimately to be a professional tragedy for Blake.

American Painter Benjamin West (1738-1820) and James Barry (1741-1806) were the neoclassical painters whose work Blake came into contact with early on, becoming models for him in his ambitions as a history painter. Unfortunately, the complex nature of Blake's art, personality and artisan status prevented him from attracting the patronage necessary for this kind of august career. Still, he never ceased to develop his ideas on a grand scale, however modest their executed size. It is Blake's mystical and totally alien imagination that transports his art into the stratosphere, and it is this timeless, placeless realm that vividly inhabits our imaginations today. From an early age Blake was prone to visions. These visions were interpreted in grand "biblical" formats, and some of these were actual scenes from the Bible as in "The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun"(1806-9) from "Revelations". Poetry, like Dante Alighieri's (1265-1321) "Divine Comedy" or John Milton's (1608-1658) "Paradise Lost" was another source. But many of Blake's works were original inventions, often including Milton, Nelson, or Newton in a philosophical context. Blake also built an original cosmogeny, inspired partially by texts of eccentric neo-Celtic folklore as well as various radical popular freethinking ideas. He wove these into elaborate poems accompanied by his images in a revolutionary technique of either wood block or copper plate engraving, painted over in watercolors as in "The Songs of Innocence", "The Ancient of Days" from "Europe, a Prophecy", "The Book of Urizen" among others. These are perhaps Blake's most inscrutable works. But just enigmatic, were the less grandiose works directly illustrating Blake's visions of spirits come from other dimensions to instruct and give solace, like the spirit of his departed younger brother, Robert, or the eerily otherworldly "Man who Taught Blake Painting". The tiny tempera gem "Ghost of a Flea", with its background of fantastic stars and comets was painted around 1819 for friend and astrologer John Varley from one of these visions. This is a "spiritual portrait" of the anthropomorphised spirit of a flea, as it skulks by, thirstily contemplating a bowl of fresh blood.

Pierre Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823) was another artist favored by Napoleon, for whom he painted his famous "Portrait of the Empress Joséphine" in 1805. Prud'hon began his academic studies in Dijon but was not to find his true direction until a stay in Rome in 1784. There, he became acquainted with Antonio Canova (1757-1822) and discovered the work of Leonardo da Vinci and Correggio, whose delicate modeling and soft sfumato gave Prud'hon's painting a unique mystery, and a radically different appearance from the clearly defined compositions of David and his circle. This vaporous mystery and melodramatic sentimentalism, as seen in his most celebrated work, "Crime Pursued by Vengeance and Justice" (1808), would help usher in the Romanticism that would take over the remainder of the century.

But Jacques Louis David's (1748-1825) classicism was of a different order, as heralded by his study "Patroclus"(1777), of a male nude back, in a pose similar to the Hellenistic "Dying Gaul" now in the National Museum in Rome. This early painting, done in Rome, contains all the plasticity, simplicity and muted tragedy of his revolutionary "Oath of the Horatii" (1784), a work that caused a tremendous uproar when it was exhibited, and was the rallying point for the unfulfilled ideals and hopes that developed into the French Revolution. His "Socrates drinking Hemlock"(1787), now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, addressed social injustice at the hands of the state, and also caused quite a stir. David went on to be the official court painter to Napoleon Bonaparte with his "Coronation of Napoleon and Josephine" and its encyclopedic group portrait that even included the pope, who was held hostage for the ceremony. Napoleon had co-opted classicism for his own political purposes, employing David's favorite pupil, Antoine Jean Gros to pillage the art of Italy for the benefit of the new regime. His virile documentations of the life of Napoleon, Particularly "The Plague at Jaffa"(1804), which greatly influenced the young Delacroix.

It was Jean Dominique Ingres 1780-1867, another pupil of David's, who was to inherit the mantle of Neoclassicism). For Ingres, Raphael, not the classical world of Greece and Rome, held the secrets of classicism. Ingres's great love was the line, especially in drawing, but also in design, in the rhythm that make up a pictorial surface, breaking it up or weaving it together, leading the eye according to the artist's desires. The musical interpretation of pictorial composition, (he was an accomplished violin player), which Ingres developed into a personal language, was to influence many modern artists, like Picasso, Matisse and Modigliani, well into the next century. Today, it is Ingres' portraits that are admired for their simple abstract qualities, the miraculous rendering of materials, and restrained but astute psychological insight. All this is true, of course, and one can stand forever before these portraits in a time-suspended trance. Ingres' multi-figure compositions are more difficult to grasp, and overlooked by the general public and most modern artists, in favor of his single figure paintings. His bathers and odalisques, with their exaggerated anatomy and sensuously undulating curves, are forever popular. The "Bather of Valpinçon"(1808) is of a design so deceptively simple and condensed, with its gentle contrapposto, broad surfaces of infinite subtlety and luminosity, and intertwining movement of cloth and limb, that it is no wonder that it reigns alongside the great Venuses of classical Greece. In contrast, Ingres's "Grande Odalisque"(1814), takes the theme of the reclining Venus or courtesan into an oriental harem. Now we have entered a dangerous, ambiguous world. The odalisque's long, Alexandrian, mannerist, body-type is pulled and twisted as she slowly turns your way and meets your gaze with heavy-lidded opiate weariness. David's classicism here is a remote fog, with solidity only suggested under the pillows and tumbling silks, and the background an impenetrable void into which you are half invited by this jaded sorceress. In the monstrous "Jupiter and Thetis"(1811), (a composition inspired by Greek vases and ancient cameos), the diminutive sea nymph Thetis kneels before the enormous blocklike Jupiter in a gesture of supplication for her warring son Achilles in a desperate effort to soften the implacable, patriarchal will. Picasso found in the radical abstract pose of Thetis the perfect expression for the indiscriminate terror that the will of men (or gods?) wreak upon the innocent. Ingres' unfinished mural in the Chateau de Dampierre southwest of Paris is an extravagant description of the "Golden Age" of Greek Antiquity, where the grassy hills and valleys of "Arcadia" are peopled with carefree, nude figures, who sing, dance and loll around eating fruit and drinking milk and honey. A rabbit nibbles grass undisturbed by the toddler who crawls his way from beside a cascading brook. Orange trees laden with fruit and winged genies sprinkle flowers, as gods mingle with mortals in one big happy family. But this painting is encyclopedic in its allegories. The three Graces dance with Venus, Hebe and the Hours, and Astraea, the personification of justice, performs a marriage ceremony in the wings. In the "Golden Age", figures and poses have been incorporated from all areas of classical art, such as Poussin's Fruitbearing satyr in "The Triumph of Pan" in the National Gallery, London, as well as the extensive academic repertoire and that of Ingres' own oeuvre. Ingres's "Golden Age" has given a wealth of inspiration to numerous modern painters, from Édouard Manet (1832-1883) with his "Dejeuner sur L'herbe, to Henri Matisse (1864-1954) with his "Joy of Life", to George Seurat (1859-1891) with his "La Grande Jatte" and with much of the oeuvre of both Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) and Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). Today, the influence of "Golden Age" is most striking in the paintings of Milet Andrejevic and in the series of "Idylls" by American painter Lennart Anderson (b.1928).

It is impossible to discuss Ingres without mention of Delacroix (1798-1863), who was reviled by the "Poussinistes" for his loose handling of form and his use of color to dissolve boundaries and express emotion. But Delacroix is a "classical" artist very bit as much as Ingres, and may have understood the spirit of greco-roman culture more deeply, even when covering Shakespeare, Dante the exotic east or contemporary events, than his "classicist", or Academic counterparts. Born in 1798 into a distinguished and cultivated family of artisans and diplomats, (with the added possibility that his biological father was really the great 19th century statesman Talleyrand (1754-1838), Eugène Delacroix occupies a

central position in the culture of nineteenth century France and the development of Romanticism. He was close friend to both Frédéric Chopin and George Sand, whose portraits he painted, as well as poet and critic Charles Baudelaire, who wrote about Delacroix's work in his *Curiosités Esthétiques* (1868) and in *L'Art Romantique* (1868). Delacroix began his studies with academic painter Baron Pierre-Narcisse Guérin in 1815, but it was the violent romanticism of another Guerin student, Théodore Géricault (1791-1824), born of Michelangelo and Baroque art, that would influence the young Delacroix most. Delacroix posed for one of the figures in Géricault's Monumental "The Raft of the Medusa" (1818-19), visiting his good friend's studio often. "The Raft of the Medusa" inspired Delacroix in his "Dante and Virgil in Hell" which he painted for his debut at the Paris Salon of 1822. Here, to the baroque massiveness and emotion of Géricault, are added the powerful forms of Michelangelo, the rich colour and vitality of Rubens and the tragic classical pathos of Dante's Divine Comedy. After the unpopular "Massacre at Chios", Delacroix was ready to tackle the "massacre" theme again inspired by Byron's play "Sardanapalus", written in Italy in 1820. In "The Death of Sardanapalus" (1827, Louvre), the violent and voluptuous orgy of killing where women, slaves and animals are slaughtered by the sultan's eunuchs among tumbling folds of red silk and jewels as he looks on, must be one of the most graphic depictions of cruelty ever painted. In 1830 Delacroix painted what has to become his most popular painting, "Liberty Leading the People", or "Liberty on the Barricades" (Louvre), in commemoration of the Louis-Philippe's July Revolution. This monumental canvas is dominated by the sturdy figure of "La Liberté", as she strides towards the viewer, brandishing banner and bayonnette, followed by her ragged band of revolutionaries. Here, Delacroix has successfully combined the idealism of the high baroque with contemporary realism. Delacroix's "Goddess of Liberty" is no Olympian deity. She has greasy hair, washerwoman arms, a heavy gait and large maternal breasts; she also has the heroic spirit, and a true leader's presence of mind, as she plows through with her troops to freedom. In 1832 Delacroix toured in Algeria, Spain, and Morocco with the Count de Mornay, the royal ambassador to the sultan of Morocco. North Africa was a revelation to Delacroix, who found in the dignity and simplicity of the population a living culture very much like the Homeric Greeks, authentically classical in spirit, and unlike the insipid neoclassical representations of academic painting. This part of the world was to become his main inspiration for years to come, as in his "Women of Algiers in Their Apartment" (1834) and "Jewish Wedding" (1839). Delacroix's later work is also infused with the scintillating, broken color he had discovered earlier in the landscapes of John Constable (1776-1837), and developed into a unique style that was to be of primary importance for the Impressionists later in the century.

Theodore Chasseriau (1819-1856), was a devoted Ingres student, yet he readily grasped the loose colorism of Delacroix, and perhaps came nearest a happy reconciliation of the two warring styles. His most celebrated work is his double portrait of his two sisters, which is both striking in its psychological insight, serene classical monumentality and bold use of color, especially the use of optical red and green in the Sister's shawls and the wall behind them. One of Chasseriau's most unusual compositions is his mural "Peace"(Louvre), with its archaic composition and monochromatic background figures, reminiscent of Pompeian Wall painting.

Thomas Couture (1815-1879) was an independent academic painter whose major legacy is as the teacher of Édouard Manet, Puvis de Chavannes and Henri Fantin-Latour. His highly coloured classical compositions are now all but forgotten, with the exception of his notorious "The Romans of the Decadence" (1847), a display of the Roman Empire's debauchery as imagined by mid nineteenth century Parisians, and a painting so famous in its day it eclipsed all others of the century. For us today, this work symbolizes the excesses of the Roman Empire, Hollywood style, and has tarnished our culture's understanding of this era, which, for all its faults, produced great scholars, historians, poets and philosophers, as well as massive engineering projects from Asia to Africa to Britain. Couture's

teaching, however, is still a living tradition in some academies and furnishes a solid foundation from which to explore painting. Manet distilled Couture's sketch technique, and by flattening planes and reducing the number of values, he developed his own revolutionary style. Puvis de Chavannes also developed a reduced palette technique from this great teacher.

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) studied with both Thomas Couture and Eugène Delacroix developing a style that differed radically from both, based on his love of Antiquity and study of fresco effects, with their simplified flat forms, rhythmic lines, and pale, chalky surfaces. Although a successful decorator of public buildings, and Salon regular, Puvis maintained an independence from the major trends of the French artworld and was friendly with many diverse artists, from the impressionists to the symbolists (like Gustave Moreau), and writers like Charles Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier. His "Prodigal Son" (1879) and "Poor Fisherman" (1881) not only were admired by the Symbolists, but later were to be instrumental in Picasso's early development. Today, his composition, his simplicity and freshness and his innovative and thoroughly modern pictorial surfaces are what draw painters, from Balthus to Lennart Anderson, Milet Andrejevic and Edward Schmidt.

Camille Corot (1796-1875) came from a wealthy bourgeois family. His Swiss-born mother owned a fashionable milliner's shop, and his father was a draper. But Corot decided early on, not having an aptitude for his parents' business world, to become an artist, and studied with Achille-Etna Michallon and Jean-Victor Bertin, followers of Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes, the famed landscape painter. In 1825 Corot went to Rome, spending three years there painting the city and the surrounding Campagna outdoors on small panels. His stay in Rome, and the series of plein air paintings done there then were instrumental in Corot's development, and in the development of landscape painting, inspiring painters even today with his solid, succinct capturing of the immediate scene. His mastery of tonal values was always more important to him than choice of color, and he developed after his early sunlit Roman works and his return, a unique silvery quality that captures the light of France and more particularly, Paris, with its "eternal gray lid" as Baudelaire called it. Corot became quite successful with the large studio works, either dreamy landscapes or wooded mythological scenes, and scores of small pictures of nymphs, reclining or dancing. These are not as highly regarded today as his "plein air" works or his insightful portraits of friends and neighbors, often dressed in fanciful "gypsy" or "Italian" costumes which have an austere classical form but evoke a poetic otherworldliness. "Woman with a Pearl" (1868-70) has often been compared to the "Mona Lisa", and in her book on Corot of 1984, Madeleine Hours reports that the two were hung together in the Louvre in 1952 by Germain Bazin, the renowned Corot scholar and chief conservateur of paintings at the museum. Mme Hours also says, "Rarely do we find a painting in which the values are subtler than those in this portrait", which is basically a study in grays. Young Berthe Goldschmidt's gaze has the penetrating psychological insight of an intelligent young girl acquainted with the vast array of humanity as encountered across the store counter. Corot's "Fair Maid of Gascony" (1850), is the iconic muse of his studio, as he had this little picture hanging prominently in each of his studios throughout his career. Her clear, smiling eyes and majestic form express the classical ideal more truly than all the pouting academic clones crowding the salon walls. Corot's influence on artists of his day cannot be overemphasized, as he helped pave the way for the impressionists, as well as helping artists in need like the caustic realist Honoré Daumier, through his warm-hearted generosity.

Edgar Hilaire-Germain Degas (1834-1917) was born into a powerful bourgeois family with ties to international banking and commerce, and, like any good son of the haute bourgeoisie, started out studying law, slated for an illustrious banking career. He soon, however, joined the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, entering the atelier of Ingres student of Louis Lamoignon. There, Degas mastered drawing, which was to become the basis for his entire oeuvre. His mastery of drawing led to the revolutionary

codifying of complex forms with a few deft calligraphic lines, one of the major artistic discoveries of the century. His experiments with the academic ebauche, or primary laying in of the major elements of a painting in diluted rubbed colors with visible brush drawing acting as a guide for the subsequent steps in the academic procedure.

Degas distilled this part of the procedure into a personal style, which he exhibited first in his Salon debut of 1860 with his "Young Spartans". This large canvas, though of a classical subject, with the philosopher Lysurgus, author of the Spartan Laws in the background group and with a balanced frieze-like composition, is anything but classical as understood in nineteenth century France. The nude figures of adolescents not only have the varied un-idealized features of Parisian street urchins, but they are gesturing in loud, aggressive ways unthinkable in the poised arcadian settings accepted by the Salon. The barren landscape also is contrary to accepted notions of Arcadia as a flowering Eden, although it is closer to the actual modern topography of the Peloponnesus. These young Spartans could easily be practising for their co-ed soccer team, as perhaps they did back in the days of Lysurgus's proto-Marxist state. Degas worked on this picture from 1860 until 1880, and often displayed it in his studio, even though it is to this day "unfinished". After 1861, and the painting of "Semiramis Founding Babylon", Degas gave up historical subjects for scenes of contemporary Parisian life, using increasingly daring diagonal viewpoints adapted from the Japanese prints popular at that time and scintillating, fragmented color, capturing motion and fleeting moments. Today, Degas is still most famous for his encyclopaedic series about the ballet; its dancers, productions, endless lessons and rehearsals; its insular world. Degas mythologised this microcosm through direct, obsessive observation, synthesizing the fairytale image with quotidian reality, creating an even more fantastic spectacle and a transcendent, immortal art. Degas has been a great influence to both contemporary realists and classicists in our time, and often acts as a portal for art students by establishing a love of drawing and of the alchemy of subtle paint and brush manipulation. His lessons are there for artists of any age and accomplishment.

Gustave Moreau (1820-1898) came from a cultivated and artistic bourgeois family. His father was a neoclassical architect and his mother an amateur pianist. Moreau developed a passion for art from his extensive family library, that included the illustrated "Metamorphoses" of Ovid, books of engravings of works by Primaticcio and Niccolo Dell' Abate of the Ecole de Fontainebleau, and the engravings of sculptor John Flaxman, (1755-1826) on Homer, Aeschylus, and Dante. After earning his Baccalaureat Moreau entered the atelier of aged neoclassical painter Francois-Edouard Picot around 1844. Although a talented student, Moreau failed after two attempts to win the prestigious "Prix de Rome", and in 1849 left the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. In the fall of 1857 Moreau went to Rome to study and copy the great Renaissance artists, staying on the Via Frattina near the Spanish steps. In Rome, Moreau became friends with the young Edgar Degas for whom he would become a guide and mentor, and affirmed his desire to painted great works to rival those of the Italian masters. Intent on breathing new life into the stifled genre of history and historical painting, stifled by the pompous and unimaginative third Empire academy, Moreau let loose his imagination with a new emotional depth and intensity, nourished by researches into iconography and world art forms, particularly those of the near east. His "Oedipus and The Sphinx" (1864) is radically different from Ingres's polite dialogue. Here, Oedipus, a tentative, willowy youth, has travelled through deep Leonardesque ravines to visit the eternal enigma and is finally confronted, transfixed, but not swayed, by the hypnotic creature crumpled to his chest by her claws. The psychological tension is palpable, and the hierarchic symbolism takes on a primary role. In 1865 Moreau exhibited "Jason", with a majestic Leonardesque Medea guiding the young Jason through a rocky chasm. This picture was inspired as much by the legend of the Argonauts as by the contemporary poet Jose Marie de Heredia's "Jason et Medee" where "the enchanted air, thick with perfumed poisons, disperses Medea's powerful magic spells". Late in life, Moreau would revisit this theme on a large scale, in "The Argonauts", part of a triptych extolling the triumph of youth. The center

of this immense project, "Les Pretendants", worked on throughout Moreau's life has the bloody carnage engendered by Minerva in the battles of Ulysses, the third painting of the triptych has "Tyrteus", the Greek poet, who by the power of his song, led the Spartan troops to victory. It is, however, in his vast oriental extravaganzas, as in his series of paintings of Salome; "The Apparition", and "Dance of Salome" of 1876 that Moreau reaches new heights in phantasmagorical spectacle culminating in The "Jupiter and Sémélé" of his last years. These accretions of jeweled figures, cinematic scaled architecture, and calligraphic abstract design, splashes of color contain a gold mine of material to inspire artists in the next century including Matisse (1869-1954) Georges Rouault (1871-1958). Edouard Manet (1832-1883) studied in the atelier of Thomas Couture, where he learned the basics of academic technique

Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901) was a symbolist artist steeped in the underbelly of Greco-Roman myth as interpreted by his neurotic northern sensibility. Arnold Böcklin was born in Basel and educated throughout northern Europe, but settled in Italy, where he found his true inspiration in the Italian landscape with its variety of pines and rocky, moss covered glens still inhabited by the sylvan deities of the unconscious imagination. Böcklin rose to fame with his large mural "Pan in the Bulrushes"(1857) which caught the eye of Ludwig, the "mad" king of Bavaria. His "Battle of the Centaurs"(1873) combines the brute force of rutting stallions with the wanton violence particular to humanity. Böcklin's fearless exploration of man's dark side was a great source for 20th-century Metaphysical and Surrealist artists, fascinated by the "Freudian" elements in his work. His "Isle of the Dead", with its Italian cypresses, and lone figure crossing the water, reminiscent of a dream crossing of the Venetian lagoon to the Isola San Michele cemetery, is probably the best known work by this enigmatic artist.

The Dawn of Modernism

In mid-nineteenth century France, august classical themes and polished, old master techniques were still considered supreme by the Académie des Beaux Arts, with a profusion of hackneyed, formulaic pictures filling the Salon exhibits. At the same time, evolving from the spontaneity of the academic sketch and the growing popularity of "plein air" landscape painting, (paintings worked on in nature from direct observation), a new group of artists were finding a place on the Salon walls. Realists like Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) would avoid classical material altogether in his figure compositions, turning exclusively to scenes of quotidian contemporary reality, which the impressionists would continue to focus on and transform with their revolution of light and color). However, many of these groundbreaking contemporary artists did find inspiration in the classical world. Camille Corot (1795-1875), Edgar Degas (1834-1919), Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898) and Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) would reinterpret classical themes and styles, transforming the idiom in new and unusual ways, giving it a new poetry and vitality that was to be seminal to artists in the next century.

Classical Art of the 20th Century

The beginning of the century had an enormously popular classical revival, thanks in part to the Russian impresario Sergei Diaghlev (1872-1929) and his Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo. The classical themes of his cutting edge ballets had sets designed by major artists of the day and music by such visceral modernist pioneers as Igor Stravinsky, (1882-1971) and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). This gave a shot in the arm to the classical genre. At the same time, Richard Strauss's (1864-1949) "Electra", an opera based on the Greek tragedy by Sophocles was quite popular, as was Alexander Scriabin's (1873-1915) Prometheus and the work of Isadora Duncan (1878-1927) and her painter brother Raymond. A change of taste away from the intertwining growths of Art Nouveau and the romantic decadence of symbolist art, towards a simpler, more clarified style emulating the early Greeks was welcomed in educated

fashionable circles. Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-1973) was already an important artist (since his Symbolist Blue and Rose period) when he became friends with both Diaghlev and Stravinsky. With his usual all consuming enthusiasm, Picasso embraced this tide, establishing a radically new approach to the interpretation of the Classical idiom, which influences artists to this day. His paintings of the 1920's, with their monochromatic solidity and simplicity, revived those long forgotten qualities of 4th and 5th century Greek Sculpture, especially those of the pensive funerary stele, and of Greek vases, particularly Lekythos white ground funerary vases. Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-1898), with his fresco-like utopian scenes, which relate directly to 5th century Greek art, must also have inspired Picasso. Later, when he got involved with printmaking, Picasso drew inspiration from a wider variety of Greek vases and from the savage mythology of the Minotaur and the Metamorphoses of Ovid, with their licentious tales of nymphs and satyrs, and the (usually) tragic interactions between gods and mortals. After having fully explored the mysteries of "primitive" African Art, Picasso was ideally prepared for reinterpreting the ferocious world of the arcadian deities, whose tales were, after all, based on a culture as "primitive" as those African tribes whose art inspired the "Demoiselles d'Avignon". This shamanistic understanding of the underpinnings of classical art cannot be underestimated, and is often overlooked in the analyses of Picasso's classical period, which focus on form. In the first quarter of the 20th century, many artists, especially sculptors, explored the stylistic possibilities offered by the art of Greece and Rome. Aristide Maillol's maidens are an early example, as are Gaston Lachaise's heroic viragos, or the gentle iconic works of Eli Nedelman.

Surrealism and the Classical Tradition

Later, the Surrealists were influenced not only by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), but also by the increasingly influential psychoanalytical theories of Carl Jung (1875-1961) and his concept of the collective unconscious, and by the new interpretations of world mythology found in "The Golden Bough" by James George Frazer (1854-1941). This prompted many of them to explore the native mythologies of world cultures, including a renewed interest in the pre-Olympian beliefs of ancient Greece, as well as in the re-interpretation of classical myths and literature in light of these new theories of anthropology and psychoanalysis.

This influence is evident in André Breton's magazine "Gradiva" of the 1930's that used a Greco-Roman frieze on its cover and were named after a fictional Pompeiian muse from Wilhelm Jensen's novel of the same name. The mythic figure of Gradiva, which had been analyzed by Freud, was used by Breton, André Masson, Dali, Eluard and others as a means of symbolically demonstrating the dynamism of repressed erotic desire and as a myth of metamorphosis perceived in the women of the Surrealist circle. These included, among others, Picasso's wife, the photographer Dora Maar, and Gala Dali, wife and muse of the great Surrealist superstar, Salvador Dali. Salvador Dali used the classical language with the same facility as Picasso in his paintings of dream inspired fantasies, but in a more ironic tongue in cheek manner, as in his famous sculpture of the Venus de Milo with "Freudian" drawers sliding out of various parts of her body. Dali used not only the language of Greco Roman Antiquity, but also of the language of classical painting from various periods. In the 1950's he embraced classical ideals fully in reaction to the chaos resulting from Second World War and the detonation of the atom bomb. Works such as the Leda Atomica and the self-portrait are examples of how Dali integrated surrealist elements with classical compositions. Later he became involved in an intensely personal and very Spanish Catholicism, led by the hand of Velasquez and by the spiritual philosophy, poetry, and histories of the Spanish mystic saints St John of the Cross and his soul-mate, St Theresa of Avila. Dali's exquisite draftsmanship and meticulous technique led him to exploit any traditional method and subject with characteristic insouciance.

Giorgio De Chirico (1888-1978) endowed his deserted Italian piazzas with the existential angst of the modern wasteland, and the barren architecture of Fascist Italy, using the oneiric symbolism that had evolved from the new theories in psychology. He gave classical sculpture and the wooden mannequins used by artists the roles of protagonists in these devastating theatrical tableaux, with a supporting cast of odd miscellaneous objects such as rubber gloves. Later in his career, De Chirico explored Italian Mannerism and the c Baroque in a more extroverted, bravura style of grandiose sweep. Another surrealist painter with a great debt to Classicism is Paul Delvaux, who's mysterious dreamscapes of sleepwalking nude women and trains, in settings of classical gardens and architecture, also evoke Italian mannerism and the École de Fontainebleau, and are filled with Freudian innuendoes of unresolved libidinous content.

Classical Art in the 21st Century

Post-modern neo-classicism is the term used by critics and historians now for contemporary classical art. This narrow, derivative term: neo-classicism is confusing, as it recalls the neo-classicism of the Napoleonic era or the classical experiments of the early 20th century. But contemporary classical artists can be considered Post-modern as these artists find inspiration and guidance from areas of our culture as diverse as Asia and Africa, from Paleolithic cave painting to the cosmic discoveries of modern science and virtual reality. But their inspiration also comes out of the artists' personal and oneiric experience, as well as from the traditional world mythologies that are an eternal wellspring for artists and storytellers throughout time and the world over. As Jean Cocteau remarked about his own use of mythology in his art (which was very influenced by his good friend Picasso); "The re-interpretation of myths is essential if they are to survive. They are handed down from one generation to another like certain stories that are transmitted orally. In the process, they are constantly embellished or they lose their meaning; in any case, they are altered by every narrator. The great myths are not very many in number, Racine, Goethe, Shakespeare, knew very well why their use was so effective: myth is like a key that opens the most unsympathetic soul to writing (or to the arts). I have always preferred myth to history, because history consists of truths which turn into lies, while myth consists of lies which turn into truths."

At the same time, this dizzying array of choices leads us away from what it means to work in a classical manner or with traditional methods to express the human experience today. We live in a culture based increasingly on text with an emphasis on conceptual thinking, but addicted to images through the use of photography and film in all-pervasive advertising. We are bombarded by the mind-numbing tenets of a popular culture driven by a consumer economy, where everything has a price, is available in multiples, and is disposable once the sheen of novelty has worn off. This credo is anathema for the creation and appreciation of works of art of any lasting meaning and esthetic value, placing artists today in a difficult position. That may be one reason why some contemporary artists have chosen the classical idiom, which has been in use since the days of Apelles, to create art that is both vital and relevant today, and is not dependent on the capricious hierarchies of mass media's consumer culture. The New Classicism is about human beings as modern, self-conscious and self-aware products of their time -- but also of human beings as timeless spiritual creatures of the world.

The Art, The Artists and their Biographies

Lennart Anderson

Lennart Anderson was born August 22, 1928. He got his Bachelor of Arts degree at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1952 and his master's degree from Cranbrook in 1954. After moving to New York in 1953,

Anderson studied at the Art Student's League with Edwin Dickinson, among others. He was at that time obsessed with two major artists: Edgar Degas and Willem De Kooning. Both of these artists work is dependant on drawing as the basis for painting, even though De Kooning could be considered a direct heir to Rubens, not only because of his swashbuckling brushwork, but for his vital interpretation of woman as a theme in his art. Anderson is more directly the heir of his other hero, Degas, in his tentative style and austere restraint. In 1995 Hilton Kramer called Anderson "A Degas for our time" in a review of his chef d'oeuvre series of "Idylls" which Anderson had been working on for over 25 years. I was visiting Anderson's studio in 1977 with fellow painter and ex-student of his Edward Schmidt, when Lennart pointed to a small picture of a group of classically clad figures which he had painted in Rome after winning the Rome Prize in 1958. Anderson mused on how he painted this picture in jest, yet twenty years later, and but several feet away on an easel, was the enormous canvas of one of the monumental Idyll series, inspired by that very sketch, and which he was working on at the time. This picture was no joke. Its presence left as indelible a mark on those who saw it then in the studio as it has in the many exhibits and articles since. The influence of Ingre's "L'Âge D'or" mural in the Château Dampierre, 20 miles southwest of Paris, as well as the oeuvre of Poussin, Titian and Raphael could easily be felt here, albeit with gentle pastel tonalities and spatial relationships closer to the impressionists and to Balthus of the Villa Medici years. Lennart Anderson has also achieved wide acclaim for his enigmatic still-lives and portraits, both of which are approached with the same uncompromising discipline. Lennart Anderson has taught art at Pratt Institute, The Art Students League, and Brooklyn College, CUNY, among others, and has influenced and guided scores of students through the years with an understanding of painting which, though firmly based on formal modernist principles, also has strong ties to the great traditions of classical art, from Greece, Rome, and the Italian Renaissance to Ingres and Corot. Anderson has won numerous awards and his work has been covered in many books and publications, including the seminal work by Charles Jencks, *Post Modernism: The New Classicism in Art and Architecture*, 1987. Lennart Anderson is represented by Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York

Milet Andrejevic

Milet Andrejevic was a colleague of Lennart Anderson and Alfred Russell at Brooklyn College, and also was deeply inspired by Greco-Roman art, Italian art and Nicolas Poussin, but his approach was of an entirely different nature.

Milet Andrejevic, born in 1925, grew up in Yugoslavia and had his first exhibition in Belgrade in 1956. When he moved to New York at the age of 33, he was working with Geometric Abstraction and exhibited with the Green Gallery, whose stable included Mark di Suvero, Lucas Samaras, and George Segal. In the 1960s Andrejevic became a Pop artist, and by the 1970s, his work took a radical turn, and he began painting his Arcadian Vision - a world that had deep connections with history and nature. Andrejevic brought utopian landscapes like those of Puvis de Chavannes, together with the contemporary figure, in order to show that the traditions of human behavior are as old the gods themselves. Of his painting, Hilton Kramer wrote: "His strongest affinities are obviously with painters of an earlier age, and while his subject matter is unquestionably contemporary, his attitude is not. This is fundamentally Modernist in spirit, and yet never shirks traditional obligation of realism to give us a persuasive account of the concrete world 'out there'." (Penelope Hunter-Steibel from the catalogue "In Human Terms", 1991)

Milet Andrejevic was also blessed with a gentle yet very perceptive temperament. He spent many years painting in Central Park, watching the unfolding human drama: couples interacting in the grass, groups of children playing by the edge of a lake, or a musician in running shorts surrounded by listeners on a

summer afternoon. And the mythological corollaries never escaped him. He saw the musician as Apollo, an athletic young woman with a ball in the air as his sister Diana, and the young man with a dog on a leash ogling her as Acteon, soon to be punished for his crime of lust. His compositions have the rational serenity and perfection of late Poussin, with landscape as an integral element, although he also uses some of the ritualistic stylization of Piero della Francesca. His wide use of egg tempera also lends an early Renaissance clarity, and gives his paintings a fresco-like surface, albeit with a shimmering translucence not found in this medium. His work is in many private and public collections, including the Hirschorn Museum in Washington, D.C. Edward Lucie-Smith covers his work in the recent book on contemporary art entitled *Art Today*, by Phaidon Press, 1995.

Balthus

Another major artistic force (and a heroic figure to many of the artists in this exhibit) is Balthus, or Balthazar Klossowski de Rola who was born in Paris in 1908. His upbringing was bohemian, and his mother, Baladine, an artist and muse to the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, introduced him to the artistic elite of the day. Balthus's long career as an enigmatic observer of humanity, (particularly, adolescent girls, began with a book of drawings in 1922 entitled "Mitsou" with preface by his mentor Rilke. But the craft and poetry of painting, he learned by copying Poussin and Piero della Francesca, beginning his long love affair with Italy and its art treasures. His debt to Italy deepened after 1961 when he was appointed head of the Villa Medici, The French Academy in Rome, which had housed and inspired many of the great French artists of the 19th century, From Jacques Louis David (1748-1845) to Ingres. Balthus undertook a complete restoration of the building, which had fallen into a sorry state of neglect. During his tenure at the Villa Medici, the art and architecture of Rome, the textures and colors of its walls, the hazy golden light spreading over the city, were all to be an unending source of inspiration for Balthus. Earlier in his career, Balthus's, distillation of early Italian Renaissance fresco composition and tonalities, with their archetypal simplicity of gesture and flatly geometric abstract areas, become the framework for his modern figurative realism. This realism evolved out of André Derain (1880-1954) and the eroticism of Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), which Balthus transformed into a more suggestive, sadistic genre, focusing on adolescent girls in various stages of undress and distress, often suggesting some recent violation. The distancing of the viewer, through the use of formal Renaissance elements, separates it from the merely pornographic, although the voyeuristic elements are always apparent. In 1967 Balthus married the Japanese painter Setsuko Ideta and fused many of the formal and design elements of traditional Japanese painting with the textures and colors developed over the years in Italy, while retaining his voyeuristic subject matter. Balthus is a controversial artist even now in the year of his death at 92, and since his funeral in February, he has been eulogized by scholars as well as by the rock stars he liked to frequent. (Bono of the group U2 sang at the ceremony). Other scholars and social scientists condemn him as an abomination, judging only his complex and perhaps flawed character. Ultimately, Balthus is best appreciated by other artists, who appreciate him for his uncompromising approach to art, and as a nexus, opening windows on the past, while validating the present, using those scandalous elements in a calculated effort to maintain his position within a rapidly changing world.

Alan Feltus

Alan Feltus was born in 1943 in Washington, D.C. and from 1961 to 1962 studied at the Tyler School of Fine Arts, Temple University, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He went on to earn his B.F.A. from Cooper Union in New York and his M.F.A. from Yale University in 1968. He has taught at the Dayton Art Institute and was associate professor at American University in Washington, D.C. from 1972 until 1984. In 1987 he and his family moved to Italy and settled in Assisi. Feltus was awarded the Rome Prize in 1970, and has been the recipient of numerous prestigious awards since then. His deep love and

knowledge of both Italian Renaissance painting, particularly Giotto, Piero della Francesca, and Paolo Uccello, and the work of more modern masters such as Picasso, Balthus and Modigliani, have nourished Feltus in his quest for a style of classical purity yet still modern in form and content. His exploration of oblique narrative using the most succinct of figurative frameworks, with stylized figures and gestures suggesting the tense, intertwined relationships between the figures in his compositions. These imaginary, primarily female figures reveal their individuality more by their implied emotional timbre than by their idealized appearance and ritualized gestures, which have the poignant clarity of archaic Greek friezes or early Renaissance frescoes.

Lani Irwin

Lani Irwin was born in 1947 in Annapolis, Maryland, and went to the University of Maryland, and studied abroad in France and Germany. She received her Bachelor's and Master's Fine Art's degrees at the American University in Washington, D.C. Irwin and her spouse, painter Alan Feltus live in Assisi, Italy with their two sons. Her work had a fathomless surreal quality even in her early still lifes of starkly lit mysterious objects; isolated, concrete symbols stripped of their sentimentality. The complex symbolic language and enigmatic relationships between the figures in her more recent compositions continue this search for uncompromising archetypal truth, much as Frida Kahlo's work does, but with a mischievous playfulness, psychological interactivity and mastery of classical composition, color and form not found in this great Mexican surrealist. The symbiotic relationship that Irwin and Feltus have between them in their approach to art is a mutually enhancing dance, her sorcery coiling around Feltus's introspective sagacity. The legacy of Italian art and culture enriches Irwin's work as it does Feltus's, although instead of the ordered austerity of Piero della Francesca, we find a more primeval, pagan expression, closer to the tone found in Mantegna or Cosimo Tura. This indigenous Italian spirit is still found in the vernacular of the Venetian carnival, the divinatory arts, and in regional folklore. Irwin uses such ancient elements throughout her work, affirming the continuity of that holistic world culture established in Neolithic times and surviving now in the labyrinth of symbolic iconography through mythology, world folklore and in the human subconscious.

David Ligare

David Ligare was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1945. His family moved to Los Angeles in 1951, where he got his artistic education at the Art Center College of Design. He has lived and painted in the enchanted hills of California's Monterey County most of his adult life. In his painting, Ligare has made the area around Big Sur and his home in "The Pastures of Heaven" near Salinas into a timeless realm, just as Poussin and Claude had done of the Roman Campagna. This is a place to sing of the ancient myths and find the divine spirit springing from the rocks, from the trees, from the Pacific Ocean, and in the fresh faced Californians who pose as the mythical deities of Ligare's classical world. Ligare began to explore the classical viewpoint through a series of flying draperies suspended above an off balance azure sea. The configurations of the cloth in a changing space revealed to him the secrets of classical composition through the balance of opposites as perceived in the chaotic, off kilter sea, representation of the forces of Dionysos and the underlying structure representing Apollo or the forces of order and integration. Ligare began developing large figure compositions implimenting his discoveries, including mythological and philosophical narrative content to express his form of "Recurrent Classicism" and his belief in the Pythagorean theory that Nature is built from the harmoniously integrated relationships between all things, including those of social interactions. Of particular importance to Ligare are the theories of ideal proportions used in Greek art and architecture, as refined by the 5th century sculptor Polykleitos, who fused knowledge of geometry with the philosophical ideas of Plato and Aristotle.

These philosophers revealed much of the esoteric teachings of Pythagoras, which were otherwise only available through secret oral transmissions within the Pythagorean Society.

One of David Ligare's most well known paintings is his "Hercules Protecting the Balance Between Pleasure and Virtue" of 1993 about the choice of Hercules when confronted with the dual natures of Virtue and responsibility in action and the self-indulgent passivity of Pleasure. Historically, the hero must choose one or the other, but Ligare found an alternate treatment of the myth in an engraving by Albrecht Durer (1471-1528) where a choice is made to incorporate both principles to ensure balance in life. This idea of measure and balance in all things is intrinsic to classical thought, though not exclusive to it, as all great cultures have their "Middle Way" as it is called in esoteric Buddhism and "Le Juste Milieu" by 17th century French philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592). Montaigne, in his "Essais", tried to reconcile the arguments of the Epicurean with those of the Stoic Greek philosophers, and believed that life should be conducted with moderation as well as with a certain "joie de vivre" in order to be complete. Fellow Frenchman Nicolas Poussin followed this sage philosophy throughout his expatriate life in Rome, taking pensive morning walks in the Pincio gardens before the day's labors. David Ligare expresses this same clarity and thoughtful optimism in all his paintings, whether they are narratives, landscapes or still lifes. The serene "Penelope" of (1984) exemplifies this approach to Classicism. In this portrait, the wife of Odysseus is sitting in a modern chair based on an ancient Greek design, called a "Klismos" chair, against the calm horizon of the Aegean as she awaits the return of her long lost husband with patient determination. The composition recalls the stele frieze monuments most often showing a standing or seated woman in pensive meditation.

Carlo Maria Mariani

Carlo Maria Mariani was born in Rome in 1931 and studied at the Academia delle Belle Arti there. He is considered more a conceptual artist than a classical one, and his uses of the language of French neoclassical painting of the Napoleonic era and 19th century romanticism are steeped in the irony and the philosophy of Post modern European culture. His paintings can be whimsically decorative, but also astute commentaries on our confusing time. In 1982, at the documenta exhibit in Kassel, where the avant-garde of the contemporary art world unite to present all that is "cutting edge", one painter showing there, whose work was the very antithesis of the current mood was Mariani. His large group portrait of entitled "The School of Rome", caused a sensation not only because of its caustic criticism of the art world, but because it defied Modernism through its self-conscious use of the neo-classical idiom favored by Jacques Louis David and Paul Prudhon. Mariani employs these forms and the repertoire of classicism and of classical mythology to express a conceptual postmodern message with layers of meanings and a play of words that go far beyond the initial attributes of the painting. In that sense Mariani is kin to those neoplatonic philosopher painters of the early high Renaissance like Botticelli, Mantegna, Carpaccio and Signorelli, whose enigmatic allegories, both secular and Christian, were well informed by the discussions of the *intelligentia* in the aristocratic court circles they frequented. The rarified nature of the discussions and interests of educated fashionable upperclass is not lost on Mariani, who is as adept at courting as he is at court jesting, and brings a breath of fresh air and sardonic humor into a milieu which the general population find insufferably pretentious and pedantic. Although Mariani's classicism is remote from "nature" and direct observation, it does follow the precepts of "beauty" as coded by Johannes Winkelman, and his delicate and refined images become very real once they are processed within the recesses of our mind. Classicism here is at the service of conceptualism, reminding us that the classical language is used to a new end, much as Salvador Dali did using classicism in his explorations of the subconscious world of dreams. Mariani invests his paintings with multiple symbols to express his literal poetry. In "Monument to Poetry", an allegory of neoclassical painting itself, an idealized female nude swings in midair on a swing made of two of

Canova's Pauline Bonaparte sculptures, with the ropes of the suspended swing tied to the sculptures' necks. Tongue in cheek symbolism like this abound in all of Mariani's works, and make them all the more entertaining and disturbing. In the painting "Eroica", two putti joust wearing masks, one of an antique goddess, the other of a Picasso sculpture of Marie Therese Walter and these cherubs symbolize the battle between ancient and modern forms of beauty. It is suggested that it is a draw and there is no winner, that an eternal dialogue must be maintained to ensure balance, which is, after all the "Ideal" espoused by those forces of "Serene" Classicism which Mariani has brought to the mainstream of the Avant-garde.

Odd Nerdrum

Odd Nerdrum has an entirely different approach to painting than many of the artists coming out of this tradition. His art, though rooted in the classical humanism of the Renaissance, is of a deeply personal nature, using his own neuroses and narcissism to fuel a grandiose vision of despair and redemption. Donald Kuspit has called him a "perverse humanist", saying that he is "a special sort of contradiction: an existential humanist and a morbid pervert in one. That is, his art affirms the constancy of humanity in an inhuman world", His is an intensely dramatic and disturbing approach, which uses the great archetypes and timeless symbolic themes to express the human condition with terrifying impact. Hilton Kramer wrote in 1995: His (Nerdrum's) "paintings do not seem to belong to the contemporary world at all. Yet they do not belong to the past, either - despite resemblances they obviously bear to the work of certain Old Masters. They reject the present and exploit the past in favor of pictorial fable, allegory, and myth that offers the viewer a grim symbolic account of the human condition in extremis". His great facility with the techniques of the old masters, from Titian (1477-1576) and Caravaggio (1569-1609) to Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), as well as his piercing dramatic sense, give his idiosyncratic visions a disturbing immediacy, regardless of whether they are placed in a recognizable contemporary milieu. Odd Nerdrum, who was born in 1944 in Sweden, was educated in the Rudolph Steiner theosophist school system as a child in Oslo, and has made Oslo, Norway his home for many years. Although critics or historians consider this iconoclastic artist traditional, even conservative, they would never consider him to be a "classical" artist at all because of the extreme nature of his art. There are numerous antecedents, however, from Titian's "Flaying of Marsyas" to the many horrific deaths imposed on Christian martyrs and dealt with by the Old Masters in the classical manner. Nerdrum's roots are in the stark realism of Caravaggio and the unfathomable spirituality of Rembrandt, yet both of these are steeped in the classical painting tradition as well as in the humanist ethos of the Renaissance and its interpretations of the Old and New Testaments. Until the early 1980s, Nerdrum's work, while rejecting modernism entirely, dealt with the more controversial socio-political issues of the day, using the figurative realism of Caravaggio combined with the fluid brush work of fellow northerners Rubens and Rembrandt, but with a language closer to the French Romantics or to Francisco Goya (1746-1828) or even Theodore Gericault (1791-1824). In the Early 1980s Nerdrum had a sort of epiphany. He found that in turning to mythology and inwardly to a deeply personal interpretation of the human condition based on the use of traditional world archetypes, modern literary works such as "The Wasteland" by T.S. Elliot, and films, he could forge a unique symbolic language to express his vision. Although Ingmar Bergman's use of mythic language in "The Seventh Seal" is similar to Nerdrum's, it is more recent films such as the cult status "Mad Max" "Road Warrior" series, that relate more directly to Nerdrum's view of the world. In these popular Hollywood films set in a post-apocalyptic future, scattered tribes try to re-build a rudimentary humanistic culture in a desert plagued with barbaric marauders. Nerdrum, in his somber allegories, uses this contemporary zeitgeist and ancient symbolism to describe his catastrophic vision of the world as it unfolds on a timeless mythical plane with poetry of a Homeric vastness.

Odd Nerdrum is the subject of two books, *Odd Nerdrum, Paintings* by Jan-Eric Ebbestad Hansen, 1994, and *Odd Nerdrum, Storyteller and Self-Revealer*, by Jan Åke Petterson, 1998. Odd Nerdrum is represented by Forum Gallery in New York. www.martinahamilton.com

Richard Piccolo

Richard Piccolo was born in 1943 in Hartford Connecticut, but has deep roots in Italy, and has made Italy his home since the early 1970's, with residences in Rome and Umbria, where he has renovated a farmhouse in the rolling hills of Umbertide. He received his BID from Pratt Institute, and studied at the Art Students League before receiving his MFA from Brooklyn College in 1968, where he studied with Alfred Russell, among others, and developed a lasting friendship with this seminal figure. Piccolo is a renowned expert on Italian engraving as well as a respected professor at the various University foreign study programs in Rome, and he was the director of the Pratt Institute Rome Program from 1978 to 1995. Richard Piccolo has progressed from "Carravagisti" realism in the 1970's towards a lighter, brighter palette, with more expressive brushwork in the tradition of the great Italian Baroque painters like Annibale Carracci, Luca Giordano and Giovanni Batista Tiepolo. Piccolo works in many genres, (his still life-in-landscape series of the late 70s were particularly interesting), and he has a history of public mural works. His recent monumental mural series of "The Four Elements" for the US Bank Plaza building in Sacramento, California, is a work on the scale of his beloved Italian Baroque artists. This series of allegorical landscapes depicting the effects of the four elements against a backdrop of the spectacular Sacramento area topography was begun in 1990 and completed in 1994. Piccolo worked on this monumental project entirely in his studios in Italy, using the sketches he made during trips to California as models. Aer was the first tryptych of the series, and in this work, Piccolo introduces the themes that are to tie the entire mural project together. In this allegorical composition, dominated by landscapes transformed by the play of wind and clouds, two independent figures are themselves experiencing the effects of the element Aer. In one, a boy blowing bubbles that gently float away into an idyllic Poussinesque distance, the other a young woman, leaning against a windblown tree, the folds of her skirt swirling in the wind as she looks away in reverie. The third of the triptych is a river landscape with a magnificent passenger balloon flying off into a dramatic golden sky.

Alfred Russell

Alfred Russell was born in 1920 in Chicago, Illinois and received his MFA from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, then went to The Art Student's League of New York. He embarked on an Art History doctorate at Columbia University, while teaching at Brooklyn College, where he would remain for twenty five years, guiding and inspiring scores of young artists seeking him out from all over the world. A quote from David Carbone in the catalog from Alfred Russell's latest exhibition at the Hackett-Freedman Gallery in San Francisco in 1997 best describes this painter. "Alfred Russell is an enigmatic maverick. He is a complex and difficult artist to classify: being at once a figurative painter and an abstractionist, a classicist who is entirely un-academic, an expressionist who is grounded in the study of mathematics, a colorist who often works in grisaille. Over a period of more than fifty years, he has developed a range of of personal metaphors that are reflected in both his abstraction and his figuration. Above all, he is a nonconformist who has chosen to live a life of introspection and isolation, shunning material gain and recognition, to safeguard his own creative activity and sense of self worth. Like most singular American Artists, Russell's work has an appeal that is directly related to his individuality and the disturbing queerness of its expression." (Carbone has also written an extraordinary article about Alfred Russell's art in the *British Quarterly Modern Painters* in 1991, volume 4, and number 2.)

Salvador Dali once declared in a statement to his friend and collaborator Robert Descharnes, "There are only three truly great artists in the 20th century: Picasso, Alfred Russell, and me, Salvador Dali!" Alfred Russell, Picasso and Dali, have explored numerous styles and approaches, and approached classicism from different perspectives. In 1947, Russell was included in "Abstract and Surrealist Painting in America" at the Art Institute of Chicago. He quickly became a rising star in the avant-garde of abstract expressionism on both sides of the Atlantic, friendly with Willhem de Kooning, Ad Rhinehart, and Mark Rothko among others and exhibiting. From 1944 until 1952 Russell exhibited in all the most important shows of the postwar period on both sides of the Atlantic and had three solo shows at the Peridot Gallery in New York and one at Colette Allendy's Gallery in Paris. His work was bought by the Whitney Museum, the Brooklyn Museum and the Detroit Institute of Arts, as well as by many high profile collectors such as Leo Castelli. Russell also became involved in the great Atelier 17; the printmaking workshop-laboratory founded by Stanley William Hayter, when the atelier was transplanted from 1945 to 1950 to Greenwich Village, and he developed a lasting friendship with this central Modernist catalyst. Hayter's amiable personality and extraordinary knowledge of chemistry and various forms of printmaking made him a figure many artists had gravitated to since 1933, when he first opened the Atelier 17. Picasso learned engraving here from Hayter and did many works at the Paris atelier. Hayter, although considered an abstract Surrealist, had illustrated a work on Greek mythology, and often used titles culled from these sources in his work. Russell's knowledge of Greek art, philosophy and mathematics was probably the most extensive of any artist of his generation, and the interest in non-Euclidean geometry and modern physics that he shared with Hayter, is a major factor in the development of his interpretation of the cosmos. Alfred Russell's fierce and critical personality did not endear him to the powerful forces then shaping the art world, forces bent on as he calls it, "the bureaucratization of the avant-garde", with the beginnings "MOM-ism" and the commodification of Art as we know it. This uncompromising stance encouraged the critical silence and open hostility that played such a large part in Russell's prolonged obscurity after his public denunciation of abstraction as a standardized academic careerist track he felt it had become. It was his doctoral studies at Columbia University with the great Art historian Margarethe Bieber, the world authority on Hellenistic sculpture, that opened up to Russell the possibilities of Classical Hellenistic art for expressing the alienation inherent in the human condition as interpreted in existential philosophy. A friend of Albert Camus, Russell saw man not so much as a nihilistic wanderer in Elliott's Wasteland as he saw an estranged, battling creature sucked through a space-time vortex into endless dimensions of soul-shredding Chaos. The terrible sculptures of the "Gigantomachy" frieze of the "Great Altar" of Pergamon with its battling Gods and Pre-Olympian Titans had as deep an impact on Russell as The "Laocoon", had on Michelangelo 500 years earlier. This epiphany, extensive travels through Europe, as well as his disillusionment with the direction Abstract painting was taking in the early 1950's launched a new direction for Russell. This was the use of classical imagery in modern art that was not inspired by the 5th century, but by more mannerist and baroque examples characteristic of periods of expansion and upheaval. Another side of Alfred Russell has a deep admiration for Nicolas Poussin, having copied his "Rape of the Sabines" (as had Degas before him) and "Et in Arcadia Ego" at the Louvre. Also of significance are the Elegiac allegories of Mantegna and especially of Luca Signorelli and his (1442-1523) "The Education of Pan" (destroyed in World War II). Alfred Russell continues to work in several styles, however, switching from a painterly geometric abstraction to the fictive geometric spaces that are the stage for enigmatic eruptions of mythic hysteria and pathos, to an improvisatory late Romantic figuration with miasmas of free falling female figures and horses. All these compositional styles, both abstract and representational, express a metaphysical reality in which the pre-socratic conception of a universe in constant flux is reaffirmed in light of modern physics, that "art is the reality underlying the unreality of the everyday world". By understanding this, it becomes clear that there is nothing new, that all possibilities are open, that "now is the time to paint the wrong picture in the wrong century and the wrong place, (to) paint Diana of Ephesus."

Today Alfred Russell's influence is most strongly felt in the work of the scores of students who came from all parts of the globe to study with him at Brooklyn College, CUNY, where he taught for 25 years. Unlike many forceful professors, he did not encourage slavish imitation, supporting instead a thorough and individual understanding of art both past and present, the mastery of technique, especially drawing, and the pursuit of creative independence, these all being necessary to avoid the pitfalls of academicism and commercial careerism, which are anathema to the true artist.

Edward Schmidt

Edward Schmidt is an artist firmly rooted in the academic Beaux-Arts tradition. He was born in Ann Arbor Michigan in 1946, and earned his Bachelor of Art's degree from Pratt institute, where he studied with Lennart Anderson and Martha Mayor Erlebacher. He earned his Master's degree from Brooklyn College, CUNY, where he studied with Alfred Russell and Phillip Pearlstein, among others. Schmidt also spent the tumultuous year 1968 studying at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, witnessing first hand the large scale vandalism of this venerable institution.

Schmidt's natural facility and intense training have resulted in great technical virtuosity, particularly in drawing. Schmidt's thorough study of old master techniques and philosophical timbres, enables him to express a vision of a traditionally classical nature, integrating it with an understanding of the modernist idiom, creating modern works with a unique lyrical presence.

Edward Schmidt's earliest works were stylized Balthus inspired "accident" street scenes" and industrial cityscapes painted in a solid technique reminiscent of Corot's plein air sketches. An Albertian architectural fantasy painted in egg tempera style entitled "Ideal City" is an unusual example of Schmidt's exploration of past techniques. In the early 1970's Schmidt discovered the south of France and its sun-drenched villages, resulting in a series of small landscapes reminiscent of Ingre's views from the Villa Medici in Rome, further developing Corot's technique. In the latter half of the decade, he turned his attention away from landscape to the figure, settling into a style based on the classicism of Poussin and the Italian High Renaissance, a style also explored by several close friends at the time. Schmidt moved to Paris again in 1978, planning to study with Stanley William Hayter, the seminal 20th century force who taught Picasso as well as Alfred Russell, (Schmidt's professor at Brooklyn College and close friend), printmaking. Alfred Russell's daughter Elsie introduced Schmidt to Hayter and the Atelier 17, where he spent the ensuing months learning the craft of engraving, perfecting Hayter's sweeping automatic modernist gestures, and absorbing once again the treasures of the Paris museums. Returning to the States later that year to copy paintings at the National Gallery of Art and teach at Catholic University in Washington D.C., Schmidt applied for the Rome Prize, which another of his professors, Lennart Anderson, had won some years earlier, as had his friend Alan Feltus. He won the prize, and was to spend over a year in Rome completing this formative period of foreign assimilation.

Schmidt returned to New York and began his stellar teaching career at the newly established New York Academy of Art. At this time he also began receiving numerous commissions for murals, including the "Clos Pegasus" murals with architect Michael Graves. Edward Schmidt's recent paintings have incorporated compositional elements from modern masters like Picasso, Balthus, and Modigliani, into a classical vision firmly based on the Greco-Roman ideology espoused by Nicolas Poussin, and on models like Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian, David and Ingres. His technical virtuosity in both drawing and painting enable him to use a personal shorthand of the language of the old masters to define the monumental draped figures that are developed directly on the work surface. In this manner Edward Schmidt re-interprets the classical cosmogony from a modern psychoanalytical viewpoint with

nostalgia and resigned pessimism, yet expressing this melancholy vision with poetry of an exceptional lyricism.

The New York Academy of Art

Edward Schmidt, Milet Andrejevic and Elsie Russell, among others, shared the dream of an art academy in the tradition of the pre-1968 École des Beaux Arts. Andrejevic and Schmidt were instrumental in the founding of the New York Drawing Association in 1980, by the prominent collector of French 19th century academic art, Stuart Pivar. In 1982 the New York Drawing Association was expanded and renamed the New York Academy of Art. This was a watershed event in the history of Art Education, effectively re-establishing the extinct beaux art curriculum. In this course of study, students began with the copying of casts of classical sculpture, graduating to the live model and only launching into painting and sculpture after the art of drawing had been mastered. The Academy began with an advisory board that included many noted artists and art historians, such as Albert Boime, author of "The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century", (Phaidon Press, 1971), and Andy Warhol, who was also exploring classicism at that time and was Pivar's closest friend. The first curriculum was established by Stuart Pivar and organized and implemented by his assistant Elsie Russell, who was familiar with the pre-World War II beaux art curriculum through the teaching of her mother, still life painter Andrée Déscharnes and École des Beaux Arts graduate. Following the example of the New York Academy of Art, Art Schools and Universities across the country have resumed programs that prepare young artists with a firm foundation in these traditional techniques. It is then up to the individual artist to make sure they use their knowledge with the surprising innovation that is so vital to art.

Morgan Taylor

Morgan Taylor was born in 1954, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and went to the University of Oklahoma, before attending the Skowhegan School of Art in Skowhegan, Maine, after which he settled in New York, studying at The New York Studio School and earning his M.F.A. Queens College, C.U.N.Y. in 1982. Taylor has taught art, art history and drawing at various New York universities, including the New York Academy Of Art and Parsons School of Design, as well as dealing 19th and twentieth century art and being a frequent lecturer and forum panelist in this city. He is the recipient of a number of prestigious awards including the Benjamin Altman Prize for figure as well as for landscape painting. Presently, Taylor teaches Art History at the College of Staten Island, Staten Island, NY and is represented by Blue Mountain Gallery in New York.

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