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The Impermanent Collection III – Curator Cathy Nan Quinlan



The 'temporary Museum of Painting

The 'temporary Museum of Painting likes to pretend that there are no visual arts other than painting and drawing and that these fundamentally create what we see. Its wall space is reserved for those artists that are largely oblivious to the technologies of instant image collection and continue to create individual artworks, by hand, with or without pecuniary gain.

Our ideal visitor shows up at the actual museum, pays two dollars, drinks tea and contemplates the paintings, either silently or while engaging in a spirited discussion of their merits or lack thereof—we are extremely interested in whatever they have to say. (We are a little embarrassed by our beautiful website, which seems to suggest that paintings can be experienced in any other way than in the flesh.)

In a recent *New Yorker* article, Calvin Tompkins described MoMA founder Alfred Barr's feelings as follows "(He) felt that the museum should stay a certain distance behind the art market, rather than trying to discover the new..." The founder of 'tMoP also feels that we "should stay at a certain distance" from the art market—not just behind it, but also in front and mostly well off to the side.

The museum is located in the beautiful Hecla Ironworks Building. To quote the Landmarks Preservation Commission, "It is one of the most significant industrial buildings in Brooklyn, and exhibits the transitional point between traditional masonry construction and the steel framed curtain wall construction of early skyscrapers."

Curator's Note: Charging admission does not, in and of itself, make a museum. But what does exactly? I mean besides holdings, trustees and an endowment, none of which the 'temporary has or seems likely to have.

Perhaps showing work in an historical context? Since the paintings are current and the historical context is the very recent past and the immediate present, this is obviously a matter of speculation and shots in the dark. Please offer suggestions.

One of my working theories is that the real history of painting is not just about individual artists and masterpieces. I think of the painters of a given period as constituting a group mind that constructs an image of the world. Particularly of note in our era is the explosion in the number of painters currently at work.

Eschewing the grouping of work into the normal categories of figuration and abstraction seems to make sense: they may be irrelevant to contemporary painting. I've shown some canvases simply because I'm drawn to them and others to try to understand the motivation of the painter. Then I look and invite others to look for connections in what are essentially arbitrary combinations of paintings. These are "The Impermanent Collection(s)."

The Metropolitan Museum's Van Gogh drawing show inspired the show "A Painting and a Drawing." It was a show of artists who use drawings as a basis for their paintings. "The Square Show: nomen est omen," and currently showing, "Early and Recent Works." "By the Beautiful Sea" was an attempt to make visitors slightly seasick.

I suppose that I will consider 'tMoP a success if painters become interested in it, an outcome that is by no means assured; they seem as numbed as everyone else by the sheer number of images in the modern world. That being said, paintings last for a long time, they are created for a larger audience and that audience plays a role of almost equal importance in determining their meaning and value.

Gallery view, left to right:

THE REALM OF SADNESS SERIES #4

Mathew R. Weaver
1997, 50" x 58", oil on canvas

MY CAR CRASH

Brent Ridge
2004, 26" x 21", acrylic on canvas

FOR MAGRITTE

Laura Newman
2003, 40" x 32", acrylic on canvas