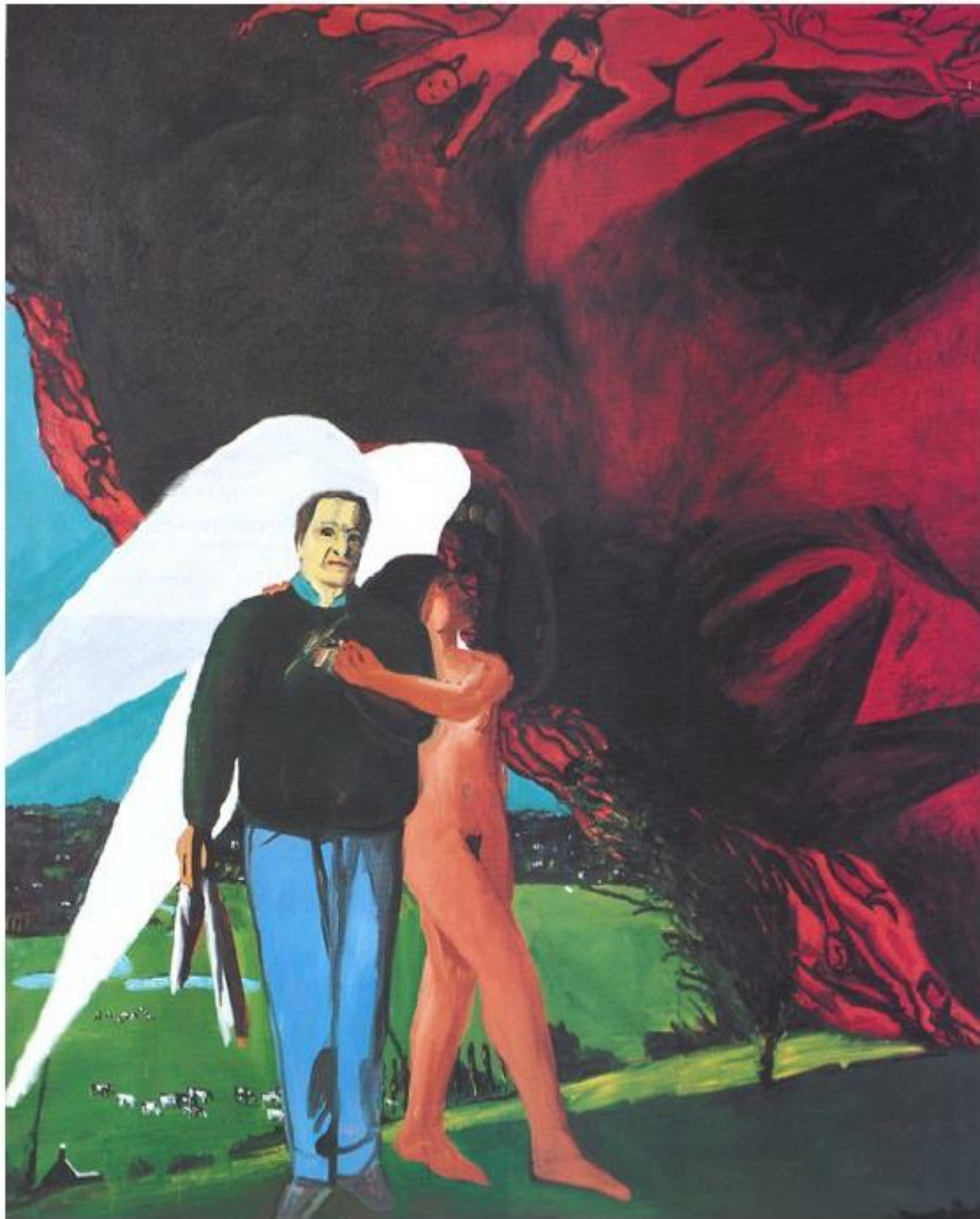



**SIMON
LEE**

Art in America
Brooks Adams, 'A Fighter by His Trade'
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A Fighter by His Trade

Known for his independent, combative stance, the figurative painter Paul Georges has, over the past 50 years, produced a surprisingly diverse body of work that includes history paintings, floral studies, mythological scenes and even '50s-style semiabstractions.

BY BROOKS ADAMS

For more than five decades—the entirety of his career—the painter Paul Georges has been perceived as a lone, defiant figure on the battlefields of contemporary art. His gruff, blustering persona, together with the declarative, often wildly flamboyant, often bellicose brio of his work, tends to conjure up an image of the artist as George C. Scott's General Patton. Indeed, his serial attacks on certain subjects, be they flowering trees or allegories of encroaching blindness, suggest a bullheaded tenacity. That the 77-year-old painter currently divides his year between New York City and an old farmhouse in Normandy, France, 10 minutes by car from Omaha Beach, seems somehow more than incidentally meaningful (even after one learns that Georges earned his Purple Heart and his Bronze Star for valorous service in the Pacific, not Europe, during World War II).

Two recent New York shows provided ample opportunity for those familiar with his work to muse on his changing fortunes, and for those new to his art, an all-too-rare chance to take the measure of an important figure. At Salander-O'Reilly, a varied selection of recent work, the full panoply of the artist's genres from small flower paintings to big history paintings both naturalistic and allegorical, made a strong case for the artist, on the one hand, as a figurative muralist and, on the other, as an intimist on a grand scale. At the newly opened Center for Figurative Painting in midtown Manhattan, a mini-retrospective, "Paul Georges: The Big Idea," presented many fascinating older paintings I had only heard about. The show also fleshed out the complexity of his oeuvre with examples of such semi-forgotten genres as 1950s studio allegories and 1970s political painting. It also sampled his career up to the present.

It should be stated straight out that Georges's fighting days are like so much ancient history: they have to be reconstructed, and without the

benefit of a full-dress retrospective (the Center show included solely figurative work, with an emphasis on female nudes), this is a relativistic venture at best. For the record, I've witnessed only the last decade of Georges's work unfolding firsthand. But having visited his bare-bones Tribeca studio with its tanky, timbered two-story space as well as his farmhouse/studio in France, I've gotten a sense of the genius loci of Georges's recent art. It has links both to the mythic New York bohemia of yore, with its raunchy bars and life-drawing classes (one of which still takes place during the winter months in Georges's studio), and to the Norman landscape, with its chateaux, churches and World War II burial grounds. His paintings bespeak the Ab-Ex arena and the medieval *hortus conclusus* (the walled garden is an important subject of many of his '90s works); they seem to lay claim to a place both in European art history and in the unfolding of the New York School. His most recent muralistic flower paintings (seen at Salander-O'Reilly) reveal their deep roots in post-war abstraction and make me want to see examples of the artist's '50s semiabstract work.

Bravery and contentiousness are a big part of Georges's story. His beginnings are in the Pacific Northwest. Born in 1923 to a Russian Jewish mother and Greek father in Portland, Ore., Georges early on attended Sunday Hebrew school and worked in his father's laundry business. After military service and a year at the University of Oregon in Eugene, he was in Provincetown in the summer of 1947, studying with Hans Hofmann. There he met Jane Freilicher, Paul Resika and Larry Rivers; these artists, all figurative, remain points of comparison; indeed, Georges recently showed with Resika.

In 1949 he was in Paris, studying with Fernand Léger. In the wake of his Parisian apprenticeship, Georges over the next decade or so became adept

Paul Georges: The Angel Protecting the Artist from Blindness, 1995-98, 11 1/2 by 12 1/2 feet. All works this article oil on linen. Photos this article, unless otherwise noted, courtesy Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York.

at monumental multifigured compositions, with the result that his remarkable allegorical paintings of the 1980s and '90s partake of what can be called a curmudgeonly grand manner. While his late '40s self-portraits (not in the Center show) are obviously cubistic, Georges's later many-figured compositions depicting ruddy gods and goddesses are slower to reveal their sources in the proletarian cyclists and circus performers of Léger.¹

In Paris he met his wife-to-be, Lisette, the daughter of the photographer Erwin Blumenfeld. The young couple married in Cambridge, England, in 1950 and stayed in Europe until 1952, when they returned to New York.² There Georges felt he had to position his work vis-à-vis the Abstract Expressionists, who were then in power and a generation older. He painted abstractly at first, but by the mid-1950s he was switching back and forth between near-abstract and a more explicit figurative idiom that parodistically recalls the old masters.

Georges's art isn't exactly underknown. Ever since the 1950s, the painter has had his defenders in the New York art world. Clement Greenberg included him in a group show of emerging talent at the Kootz Gallery in January 1954. Frank O'Hara previewed his first show at the Hansa Gallery in the November 1954 issue of *Art News* and spoke intriguingly of an "enormous Abstract Expressionist Nativity" (*The Birth*, a three-part painting not at the Center); that planned show never took place, however—it was canceled by the artist because of a scheduling dispute with the co-operative. Fairfield Porter (who would write perceptively about Georges in 1961) also saw this body of work and introduced Georges to Tibor de Nagy, at whose gallery he had two shows in 1955 (when *The Birth* was shown) and 1957; in 1966, Parker Tyler called Georges's painting style "protean." John Bernard Myers, the gallery's director at that time, in his memoir *Tracking the Marvelous: A Life in the New York Art World* (1983), describes Georges's first show as "big, strong, colorful, abstract and distinctly à la mode." But then, in his account of the next show, Myers laments that Georges's later works are "big, colorful and abstract—but quite devoid of substance . . . like Kirsten Flagstad trying to sing like Jeanette MacDonald." Myers was relieved when Georges "slowly began another esthetic life, going down into the well of painterly experience he had accumulated during his years of learning . . . [and] . . . found his true self, painting the human figure."³

In fact, much of the work in the 1957 Tibor de Nagy show was already figurative; Myers is not always the most reliable witness, and the terms "abstract" and "figurative" have morphed considerably in meaning over the years. From that show, *Artist, Lisette, and Paulette in Studio of 1956* (seen at the Center) depicts Georges at his easel, his wife nude and their baby daughter Paulette as a puffo. By the artist's later standards, the work does not look colorful or abstract: painted in Maroger medium (a material first given to him by



Cedar Tavern, 1973-74, 4% by 7% feet. Photos this spread courtesy Center for Figurative Painting, New York.

The Mugging of the Muse, 1972-74, 6% by 8% feet.



Porter), the life-size figures seem sketchily drawn and self-consciously Rembrandtesque.

During the '60s, Georges was perceived as being outside the mainstream in the New York art world. Yet his work was chosen for inclusion in the Whitney's "Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting" in 1961, 1963, 1967 and 1969. In January 1966, his picture *The Studio* (not in the Center show) was on the cover of *Art News*; that issue contained a substantial profile of the artist by Lawrence Campbell, with photographs by Rudy Berckhardt. Georges's work (then represented by Alan Frutkin, where he had six shows) was defi-

nately not associated with Pop art; Combettesque Realism would have been more his banner.

In retrospect, we can see that Georges's big, blowy studio pictures of the '50s and '60s (several were on view at the Center) share more than a few affinities with those of Larry Rivers. Yet while Georges's '60s paintings can be funny, often inadvertently so, they don't strike me as ironic or distanced, as is the case with Rivers. Georges's pictorial humor is of the self-mocking sort, and the figure of the artist is often depicted as lumbering, like some old-masterish apostle, through his own early '70s paintings.⁴



Frieze and the Temple, 1990, 8 1/2 by 9 1/2 feet.

Looking at the Landscape, 1982, 6 1/2 by 7 feet.



After studying with Hans Hofmann and Fernand Léger, Georges became adept at monumental multfigured compositions; his allegorical paintings partake of a curmudgeonly grand manner.

For years, Georges was a slugger, seemingly on somewhat belated terrains. He painted the Cedar Tavern, not in its *Ab-Ex* heyday, but in the '70s when it was a hangout for embittered mid-career artists who were no longer in the limelight.⁵ His *Cedar Tavern* of 1973-74 (seen at the Center) is a group portrait of the denizens, including the painters Anthony Siani, Resica and Aristodimos Kaldis; Georges himself appears at left. It's a feisty-looking group in a Last Supper configuration, with Marty Pacheck at the center in Christ's position and Georges taking the implicit role of Judas, turning toward the audience and looking out at us from the shadows.

Georges's '70s work seems to hold within itself a history of controversy and willed contentiousness. There were some strong reactions to his picture *Hugging of the Muse* of 1974 (in the Center show), when it was reproduced in *American Artist* (March '74) and later shown by Georges in a slide lecture at a meeting of the Alliance for Figurative Artists. (The work had never been exhibited until the Center show.) Georges was sued for libel by Siani and Jacob Silberman, who didn't like their depictions as muggers about to knife a barely draped female model in an alley, as a puto stands by, watching from behind a bursting fire hydrant. (Today the painting evokes the endemic crime and the broken-down state of New York streets in the '70s.) Siani and Silberman won their case and awards of \$30,000 each in 1980, a decision that was overturned in Georges's favor in 1982. The painting has become something of a landmark in legal circles for cases involving works of art and libel.

In 1984, Georges sold the house in Sagaponack, Long Island, where he and his wife had been living roughly half the year. (At the time, the artist also had a loft in Manhattan and commuted to a teaching job at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass.) They moved to France and in 1985 settled in an old farm near Isigny. The property has outbuildings that became winter and summer studios, as well as a renovated barn with peaked rafters that serves as a dramatic place to showcase the artist's 13-foot-tall paintings. The strong plausibility and somewhat forbidding aspect of late-medieval Norman buildings, with their pierced openings narrow for defense, is depicted in Georges's '80s landscapes; a work like *Snow in the Courtyard* of 1985 (not in the Center show) captures the Brueghelian austerities of the place with a reduced palette of grays, whites and dirty yellows.

During the 1980s and '90s, the artist played with charades of the self. He depicted himself as a schlub in sandals, a rapacious centaur or a bohemian in blue jeans, besieged by blindness.

The biggest revelation of Georges's late '80s work is the sudden liberation of color, both in all-over fields and Hofmannesque contrasting zones. In *In the Studio* of 1989-90 (seen at the Center) is a self-portrait staged against a backdrop of strong primaries: the green-yellow lawn outside, the bright blue figure of the artist standing in half-light, and the blue and orange-red canvases on the walls inside. Embedded in zones of mottled gray brushwork, these color shapes suggest a self-conscious allegory of the artist's development, a drama between revelation and obscurity, illumination and muck.

During the '80s and '90s, the artist played with charades of self. He depicted himself as a schlub in sandals; a rapacious centaur; an ancient nude warrior; Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus kissing the ass of Helen of Troy (not in the Center show; the largest example from this series was shown at Galerie Darthea Speyer in Paris in 1995); a severed head in a still life (see *A.I.A.*, Apr. '97); and a monumental bohemian in blue jeans, battling with devils, protected by angels and besieged by the scourge of blindness. Five years ago, the artist was given a diagnosis of macular degeneration which has yet to take effect. ("Angels," remarked one seasoned art-world observer to me last spring. "That's so pretentious!" In fact, while nearly everyone seems to agree that Georges really knows how to paint, many cannot abide his subject matter.)

There are of course variances of opinion as to which works might be counted among Georges's best. Lisa Liebmman definitely had the scoop on this matter during the late '80s, a time when a lot of people weren't even looking much at painting in general. In particular, there was the "Diana and Actaeon" series, shown in November-December 1988 at the Anne Plumb Gallery, which also held a lot of the artist's older inventory during this low-tide period in his career. Liebmman still tends to favor those paintings—often, but by no means always, landscapes and still lifes—in which the ever-present fantastical element seems immanent, almost involuntary, rather than histrionic.

My own interest was piqued through Liebmman's writings on Georges in the *New Yorker*, and I went to see a subsequent show at Plumb in February-March 1991, which included works inspired by the Temple of Bassae, both the archeological site and the sculptural friezes in the British Museum. These famous battle scenes were

appropriated by Georges as the grisaille framing device in *Frieze and the Temple* of 1990 (seen again at the Center). Since I'd had my fill of post-modernist neoclassicism by the early '90s, Georges's "Temple" paintings seemed rather ham-fisted to me at the time. My enthusiasm was fully roused only when I saw *The Red Diana and Actaeon* in "Slow Art: Painting in New York Now," a spring 1992 exhibition organized by Alanna Heiss at P.S. 1 (see *A.I.A.*, Oct. '92). Since then, my favorite works have included some of the biggest and craziest of the artist's huge "genzo" allegories, such as *The Extremists* of 1991-94 (not in the Center show), a scene that depicts a Goyaesque band of religious fanatics slugging it out on a Brooklyn rooftop, while the lights of Manhattan skyscrapers, silhouetted against an orange-red sky, seem to twinkle in the distance. (The largest version of this composition was shown at Salander-O'Reilly in November 1994.) It is paintings like this that can cause even Georges's staunchest admirers to flinch.

All through the '90s, the artist's shows in New York were given bemused short shrift. Roberta Smith praised his color and faulted his drawing in a 1992 *New York Times* review. The idea of tradition and the individual talent, first borrowed from T.S. Eliot by Fairfield Porter in his 1961 review and later repeated like an article of faith, began to wear a bit thin, as neoclassicism in all its cultural manifestations continued to make its influence felt throughout the American art world. Jed Perl, a regular defender of Georges's work in the *New Criterion* through the '80s and early '90s, used the Georgian standard to praise and blame

other artists. At the same time, Georges was not without his defenders elsewhere, including Rhonda Lieberman in *Flash Art* and Stephen Westfall and Ken Johnson in this magazine.

By the late '90s, Georges's fortunes began to show signs of change. Henry Justin, a Manhattan real-estate developer, bought 22 of the artist's paintings in 1990 and established the Center for Figurative Painting in the spring of 2000, largely in order to show these holdings. (Justin also collects Leland Bell, Al Kresch, Kaldia and Peter Heinemann.) Most recently, Carter Ratcliff wrote the catalogue essay for Georges's March-April 2000 Salander-O'Reilly show (Ratcliff also wrote perceptively about the artist in 1983), while Hilton Kramer delivered a predictable rave of the Center retrospective, without discussing the Salander-O'Reilly show, in the *New York Observer*. Georges's work, in short, has always been sort of on and off the map.

Scale and seriality are two of the most important issues in Georges's recent work. Something that has never been done, until now, is to compare several different sizes and formats of the same subject. For example, I counted at least 13 versions, including small studies, of *The Angel Protecting the Artist from Blindness*, all from 1996-98; four are roughly the same size, 6½ feet high and 7½ to 8½ feet wide. Two are considerably larger, 11½ by 12½ feet (only one of these was shown at Salander-O'Reilly). If you showed all of Georges's variants on a given subject together (and what a great show that would be), you'd get an entirely different sense of the artist. He might

In the Studio, 1989-90, 6½ by 8 feet.
Photo courtesy Center for Figurative Painting.





The Extremists, 1991-94, 11 1/2 by 12 1/2 feet

even start to look like a serial modernist, or a kind of expressionistic minimalist.

In the large *Angel Protecting the Artist from Blindness* on view at Salander-O'Reilly, blindness takes the shape of a looming red classical head that hogs the upper part of the field, leaving only a trace of green landscape and the monumental figures of the artist and angel beneath. The creature's hair is peopled with writhing nude figures; these may be an outgrowth of the Bessie-inspired grisailles. Altogether, a huge mask of the blinded Oedipus is suggested. The pink-red nude female angel has startling, bright white wings, which look to be among the last things painted. The figure of the blue-jeaned artist stands in the foreground at left, paintbrushes in hand. Prosaic realist truths are juxtaposed against vaulted allegorical forces, and the pastoral of a gently rolling landscape, with tiny black-and-white cows on a low horizon, is threatened by apocalypse in the form of a cartoonish fury.

Process is radiantly visible in such '90s works. Georges often begins with a red underpainting (apparent in the head of the monster) and sometimes also makes a loose composition of abstract color patches. Works begun in Normandy might

be finished, and substantially changed, in New York; two big rolls of canvases travel from France to America every year. These days Georges paints both from the nude model and from memory; in the larger works, the figures tend to be rendered in the latter fashion; in their abbreviated blockiness, the figures of angel and artist look intentionally schematic. Georges usually does a small oil version of a subject and then squares it up for enlargement; sometimes the grid is still visible in the finished painting. Within this process he freely changes details of the composition as he goes along.

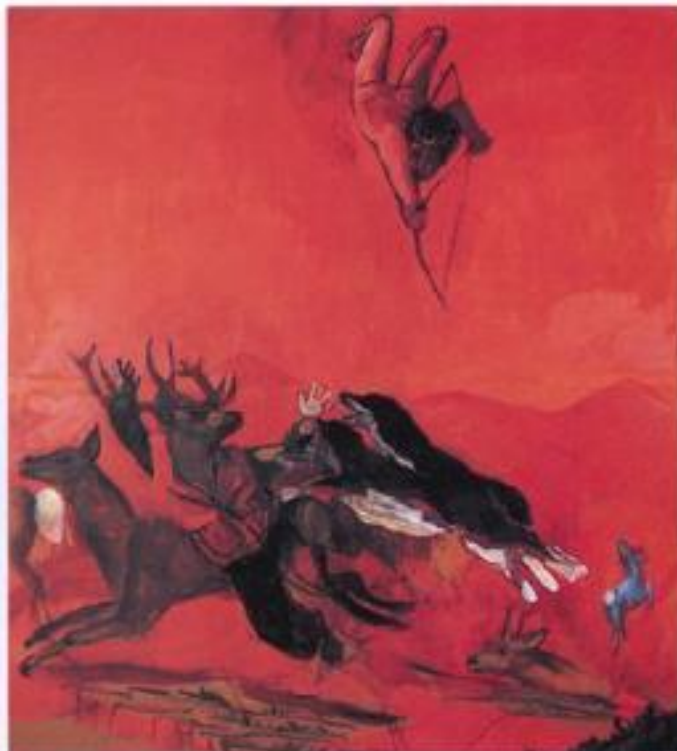
In the most recent Salander-O'Reilly show, the serial aspect of Georges's production was finally ventured, but still too tentatively. The 1996 and 1998 shows at the gallery tended to concentrate on still lifes and landscapes (although there were smaller versions of the "Faust" and "Blindness" subjects on view in '98). Even the 2000 show included an inoffensive lineup of four identically sized floral still lifes, quite beautiful and surprising in their way. I particularly liked *Artichoke Flowers, Gladiolas and Yellow Weeds* (1999), with its gray cubistic background and its clear-eyed depiction of a French plastic water bottle,

But such a lineup is not necessarily the kind of thing you want to emphasize unless you're trying to promote an image of the artist as a straight-shooting landscape and flower painter, which Georges, with his grandiose allegories and parodic self-portraits, definitely is not.

My favorite work at Salander-O'Reilly is a weird mix of flower painting, autobiography and allegory, *Anniversary* (1988), of which a horizontal and a vertical variant exist; both were shown, along with a smaller study of roses. The vertical is darker and more portentous with a green-yellow sky. The horizontal is a long, narrow format in which the artist pictures himself holding hands, in his cap and sport shirt, with his wife in her brown cardigan. The emblem of joined hands grounds the composition at the dead-center bottom edge of the canvas. The artist also appears to be in the act of painting, with his other hand holding a brush in midair. It's a deliberate tribute to Adriaen van Ostade's marriage self-portrait in the Louvre. Georges renders in straightforward brushy fashion the rather sparse blooms on the trellis, the flapping white wings of the birds against the sky and the befuddled expressions of the two figures. In its extreme laterality and *di sotto in su* orientation, the painting seems attenuated and precarious; it's like a Chardin-esque overdoor seen at chest height.⁶ This is intimism on a grand scale.

Other works are even more ambitious in size and scope, though their subjects are purely floral. Here Georges's paintings can start to look like murals in the tradition of Bonnard and Vuillard. The big vertical *Global Roses in Bloom* (1999) is all luscious, tumbling, whirling, brushwork comprising a rough circular mass of globular, grape-like clusters. The work suggests a radiant nature mysticism. These same flowers can be seen in the even larger *Roses with Vapor Trail* (1996), a 12-foot-tall vertical, which literally grazed the gallery's ceiling. The vapor trail (from an airplane passing over Normandy?) is depicted as a diagonal stripe modeled dark to light, with some pointillism in it, which cuts into a roughly triangular zone of blue. A slightly larger, broken triangle of bushy green is punctuated with spotty accumulations of red. This dense painterly thicket grounds the right part of the painting, while isolated fronds stray over another hard-edge, bisecting diagonal. This reductionist work, implicitly geometric and full of skewered formalisms, is one of the strongest manifestos of the artist's Abstract roots.

Other new allegories at Salander-O'Reilly didn't fare so well, perhaps because they couldn't be shown in their definitive large versions. For exam-

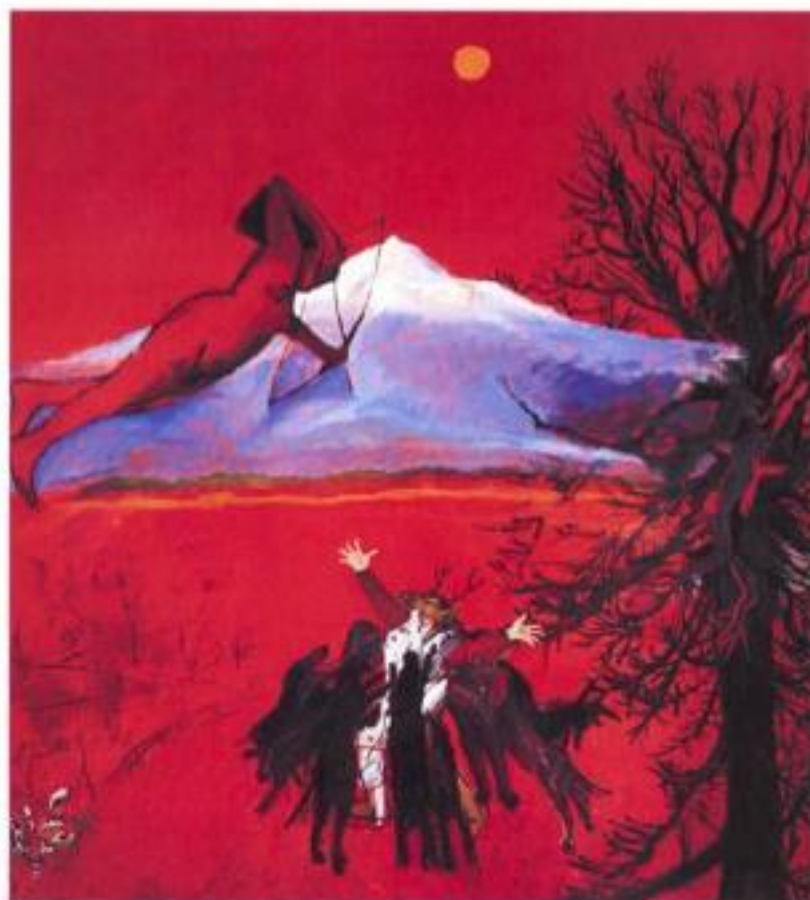


Images this spread from the "Diana and Actaeon" series. Above left, Red Diana and Actaeon, 1987-88, 12 1/2 by 11 1/2 feet.

Above right, Unnatural World, 1987-88, 12 1/2 by 11 1/2 feet. Below, River/Sky, 1987, 6 1/2 by 11 1/2 feet.

Opposite, top, She Turns Him into a Stag, 1989-92, 9 1/2 by 17 1/2 feet. Opposite bottom, His Dogs Turn Against Him, 1989-90, 12 1/2 by 11 1/2 feet.





ple, the study for *Battling Old Age* (1999) didn't make much of an impression, except as a kind of aide-mémoire for a colossal work I saw in the studio. The latter, *Battling Old Age* (1999-2000), fully 12½ by 11½ feet, depicts a bariyard rooster as a squawking namey-rhyme figure, his wings spread frontally, painted in a flurry of bravura yellow brushwork. He fluffs his feathers in the midst of a weird concatenation of gigantic still-life objects, landscape elements and monumental nudes straight out of some Renaissance *Expulsion from the Garden*. Next to the rooster looms a huge broken goblet that contains a life-size nude man and woman embracing this same glass, without the figures, reappears in several of the artist's *alfresco* still lifes. (In the exhibited version of *Battling Old Age*, the lovers are less than life-size, while the chalice and rooster are still enormous.) Perhaps the medium-sized version didn't work so well at Salander-O'Reilly because, without a serial context, it tended to read like overcooked allegory. The edginess of the composition and its additive structure were lost, and Georges's wild confluences of still-life and history-painting scale weren't made evident enough. This is, after all, a homogeneous still life in a landscape setting, with nudes and animals strewn throughout.

How are we to process such old-fashioned painting ideas today? During one studio visit last winter, the artist regaled me half-jokingly with stories about his relationship to a real-life bariyard rooster in Normandy. He went on about Freudian content and quipped that the painting is all about "cock and the

Scale and seriality are two of the most important issues in Georges's recent work. If you put all his variants on a given subject together, he might start to look like a serial modernist.

difficulties of getting it up in old age." But to my eye, *Battling Old Age* is also about the challenge of capturing bleak winter trees and yellow skies beside the yellow of the cock's feathers; about the brown men and pink women; about breathing new life into such schematic indications of nudes, which recur in three parts of the painting as if in some ancient narrative; about the gray feathers and gray clouds that synchronistically merge and diverge in the central zone of the big painting.

Georges's rote repetition of mythological formulas may recall similar practices in Bob Thompson's '60s paintings, likewise nourished by Provincetown and long stints in Europe. Both artists also have a source in Jan Muller's fuzzy brand of '50s figuration: Muller painted both a *Faust* and *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* in 1956-57. But the freehand variations in Georges's repetitions need, rather, to be put in a more contemporary, conceptual context similar to that surrounding Malcolm Morley's '90s paintings, with their depicted splits and fissures, which arise by scaling up a composition by grid. At their best, Georges's variations on the act of duplication and enlargement keep the paintings, and their over-the-top iconography (which I like), open to constant formal and conceptual renegotiation.

Even as Georges's work was generously on view at the Center for Figurative Painting, it came packaged with that institution's somewhat retardataire agenda, which may have little or nothing to do with the artist's priorities. At the Center, one could see how much has changed yet remained the same in Georges's painting. Above all, the passage from grisaille to pure color suggested a kind of narrative development which may be fictitious, since both types of painting, evoking sludge and stained glass, often coexist in a single mature work.

In the Center show, *Battle Eternal* (1990), a big, raw, yellow and gray painting depicting a nude man pulling an amazon off her horse (another composition based on the Bassae friezes) suddenly came forward as belonging to the same generation as Leon Golub's Pompeii-inspired mercenaries. Similarly, *Aurora: The New Dawn* of 1990 (not in the Center show) seems to share the same zeitgeist as Sandro Chia's, Eric Fischl's and Julian Schnabel's early diurnal mythologies. Last year, Georges told me of his newfound enthusiasm for Francesco Clemente. Now Georges's less obvious links to

Neo-Ex, particularly to European practitioners such as Steven Campbell or Salome, need to be explored.

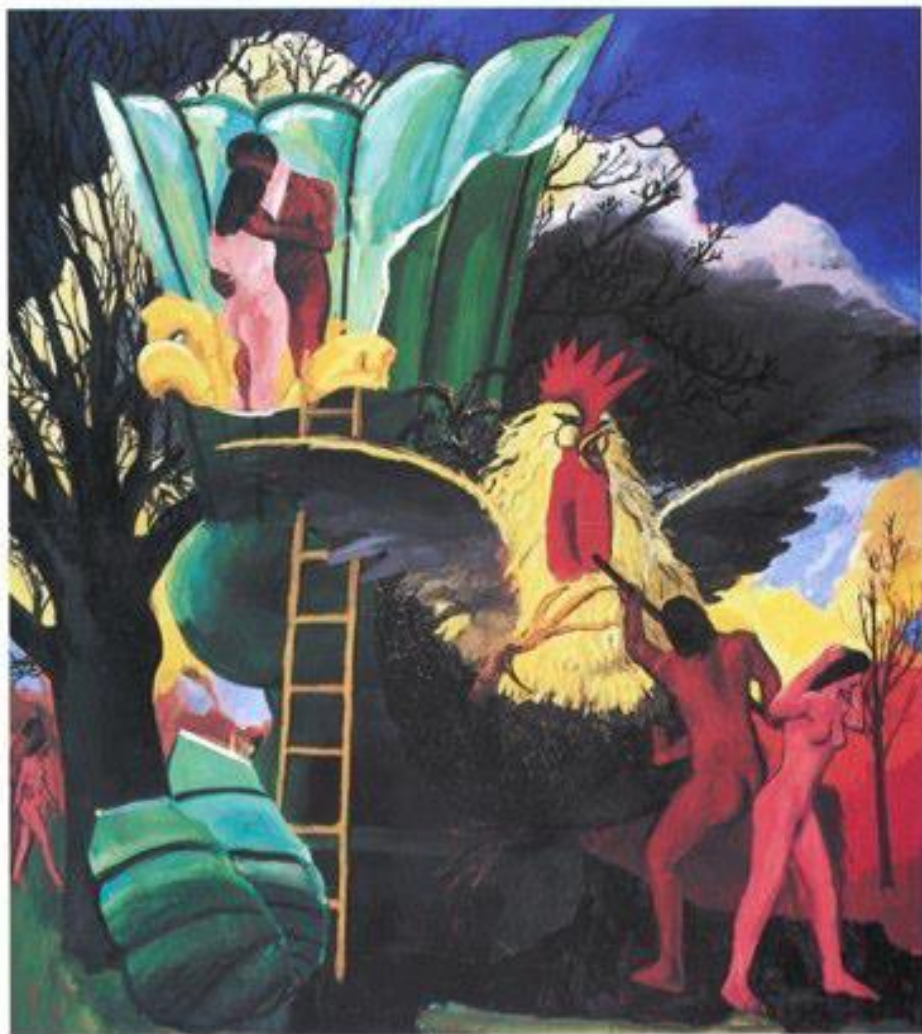
Only one picture at the Center, *Looking at the Landscape* (1982), stopped me dead in my tracks, however, and probably did so for all the wrong

reasons. The painting depicts two nymphets lolling on an old red studio couch *en plein air*, with a low horizon, a big cloud cover and a bright blue pond below the couch. This was one of several cheesecake paintings in the show. The long, wavy hair of one reclining figure, seen from the



Anniversary, 1998, 4 1/2 by 9 1/2 feet.

Battling Old Age, 1999-2000, 12 1/2 by 11 1/2 feet.



rear, is rendered in streaky brown strokes on raw canvas that merge with the modeling of the couch. The reclining girl's foot, by its radical foreshortening, appears to graze the other girl's. The second girl in turn smiles at the audience and awkwardly squints. (The work was done in part from studies of live models posing outdoors in bright sun at Sagaponack, a practice Georges says may have led to his later eye problems.)

In its chunky realism and breathless romanticism, *Looking at the Landscape* strikes me as a real stunner, part late Balthus, but more importantly, part proto-John Currin. Despite the throwback feeling of its figurative-arts mission, you could make such unexpected connections from the Center show. Similarly, the critical fortunes of Georges's work have proved more open and shifting than I would have imagined a decade ago. His pugilistic stance in favor of figurative painting has dovetailed with neoconservative agendas, yet he is not a conservative artist. He has never bowed to fashion, yet isolated works now look unregenerate and oddly hip. In fact, his work has nearly always been out of style, and this seems to be a point of pride on Georges's part, a statement of artistic independence and integrity. □

1. These '40s self-portraits are illustrated in Stanley I. Grand, *Paul Georges: Self-Portraits*, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., Seidoni Art Gallery, 1995, pls. 1 and 2.

2. The picaresque life of his father-in-law, who began as a Berlin Dadaist, lived in Amsterdam and Paris, was in a concentration camp in France and became one of the most successful postwar New York fashion photographers, presents a parallel to Georges's own itinerant life. The scabrous Berliner humor of Blumenfeld's German memoirs, published in 1999 by Thames & Hudson as *Ego to I*, also has many analogies to the son-in-law's raucous rallery.

3. See John Bernard Myers, *Tracking the Marcelous: A Life in the New York Art World*, New York, Random House, 1983, pp. 182-83.

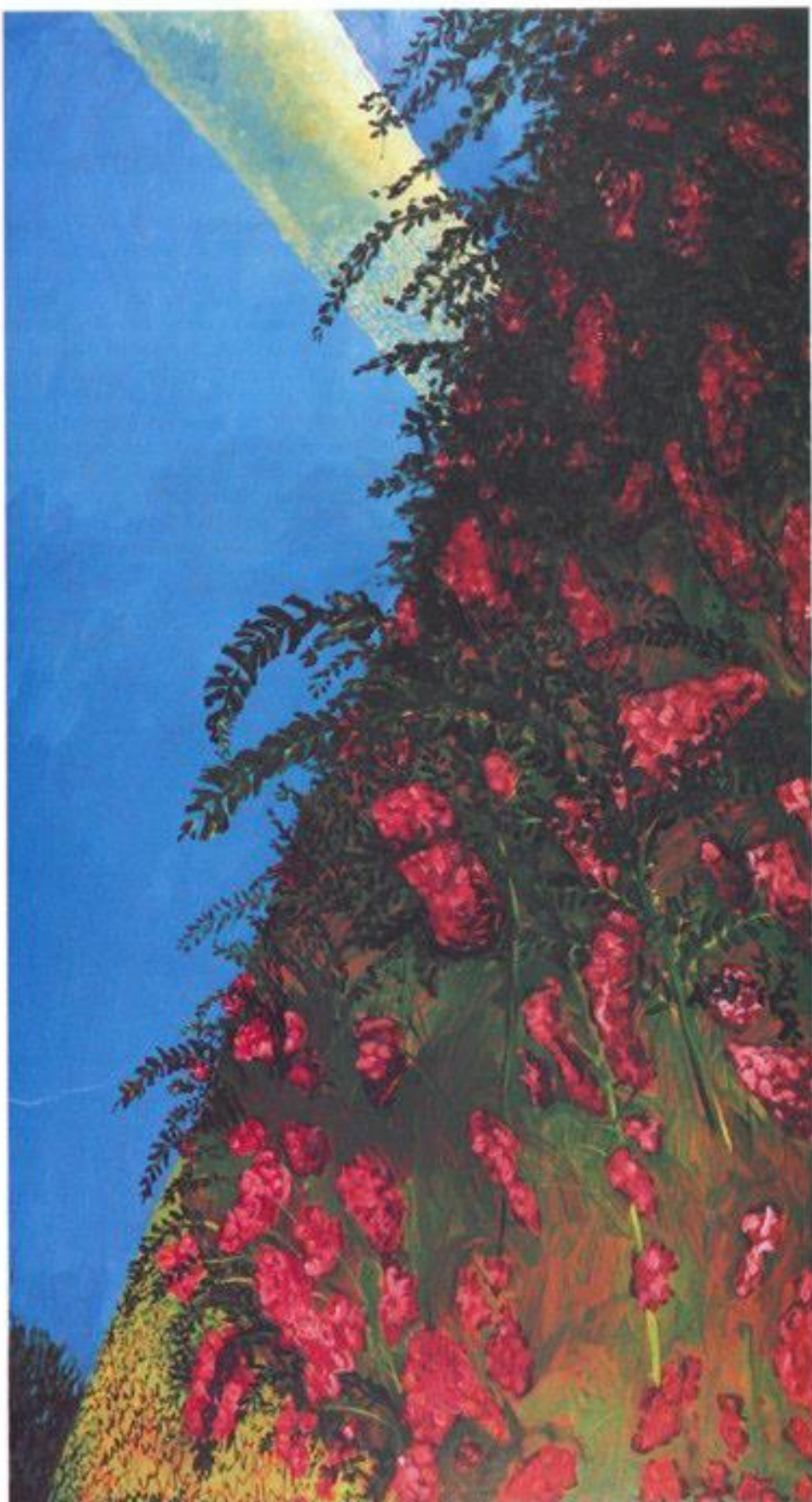
4. The classic period piece in this genre, *My Kent State* (1970-71), was unfortunately not in the Center show. It depicts the artist crouching in the foreground to save a running female nude, while gas-masked soldiers look on from behind, and Richard Nixon stands as a witness at the far right.

5. In 1960, Georges was a founding member of the Alliance of Figurative Artists, which met at the Educational Alliance on East Broadway in Manhattan. At the first meeting on Feb. 14, Georges is said to have urged other artists to overcome the psychological barriers that make "cripples" of all figurative artists. See Grand, *Chronology*, n.p. In the '80s, Georges was a member of the Artist's Choice Museum, another dark-horse organization.

6. Georges had many interesting things to say about Chardin's painting in an interview with Jennifer Samer and Danielle Abdouy-Efrain that took place on Mar. 16, 2000, at the Center for Figurative Painting. See the transcript available from the Center.

Recent works by Paul Georges were on view at the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries in New York (Mar. 29-Apr. 29, 2000). "Paul Georges: The Big Idea" was at the Center for Figurative Painting, New York (May 6-June 10, 2000). "Reconfiguring the New York School," a group show of 17 painters, including Georges, which opened Nov. 11, 2000, runs through Jan. 29, 2001, at the Center. "Paul Georges and Paul Resika" was at the Walker-Kornbluth Art Gallery in Fair Lawn, N.J. (Apr. 30-May 28, 2000).

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Roses with Vapor Trail, 1996, 12 by 6 1/2 feet.