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American realism

Since real-life scenes were painted on caves tens of thousands of years ago, realism has remained a timeless genre that captures emotion and reality through beautiful strokes of a paintbrush. Cavalier Galleries in New York City explores the realism genre spanning the past 115 years as it presents the exhibition *American Realism: Past and Present*, featuring about 60 works. Half come from historical artists, and half come from contemporary artists around the country, giving viewers insight into how the techniques of older works carry on in today's pieces.

"*American Realism: Past and Present* gives collectors an opportunity to consider this historic movement and its influence by viewing works by the masters of the genre beginning in the early 1900s, through the contemporary artists working today," says Cavalier Galleries President Ron Cavalier. "This historic exhibit is a must-see show in New York City this fall."

Historical artists represented include George Bellows, Thomas Hart Benton, Mary Cassatt, Gustave Courbet, Honoré Daumier, Thomas Eakins, Sanford Robinson Gifford, William Glackens, John Gutmann, Robert Henri, Winslow Homer, Edward Hopper, George Inness, Jean-François Millet, Maurice Prendergast, Norman Rockwell, J. Alden Weir, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, and Grant Wood. The historical artists' works are juxtaposed by living artists including Michael Aviano, Jenness Cortez, Rose Freymuth-Frazier, Max Ginsburg, Joel Carson Jones, Edward Minoff, Peter Poskas, Douglas Wiltraut, Li Xiao, and Robert E. Zappalorti.

Painter Joseph McGurl, who has three works in the exhibition, says he is passionate about the realism genre because of the transformative process realist artists undertake when creating works in this genre.

"All humans experience our world in the true reality of time and space," says McGurl, based in Massachusetts.





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1
Joseph McGurl, *Singularity*, oil on canvas, 16 x 20"

2
Peter Poskas, *Late Afternoon, Lorch Farm*, oil on panel, 27¾ x 36½"

3
Sarah Lamb, *Peonies*, oil on canvas, 22 x 23"

"However, the realist artist abstracts this reality with paint into a flat form painted on a flat surface, but he does this in a way that transforms it back to the appearance of three-dimensional reality. This transformation has always fascinated me."

The title of McGurl's oil on canvas *Singularity*, which will be in the exhibition, refers to the infinitely small, dense mass physicists theorize expanded to form the universe. He composed the painting as if it were a portrait, lighting the rock from the front and recreating the rock's barnacle-encrusted, nubby surface by adding texture through thickened gesso and subsequent layers of paint. He says the contemplative process he experienced while painting this work, musing on the rock's history and what will become of it, relates to how he hopes pieces such as this impact viewers.

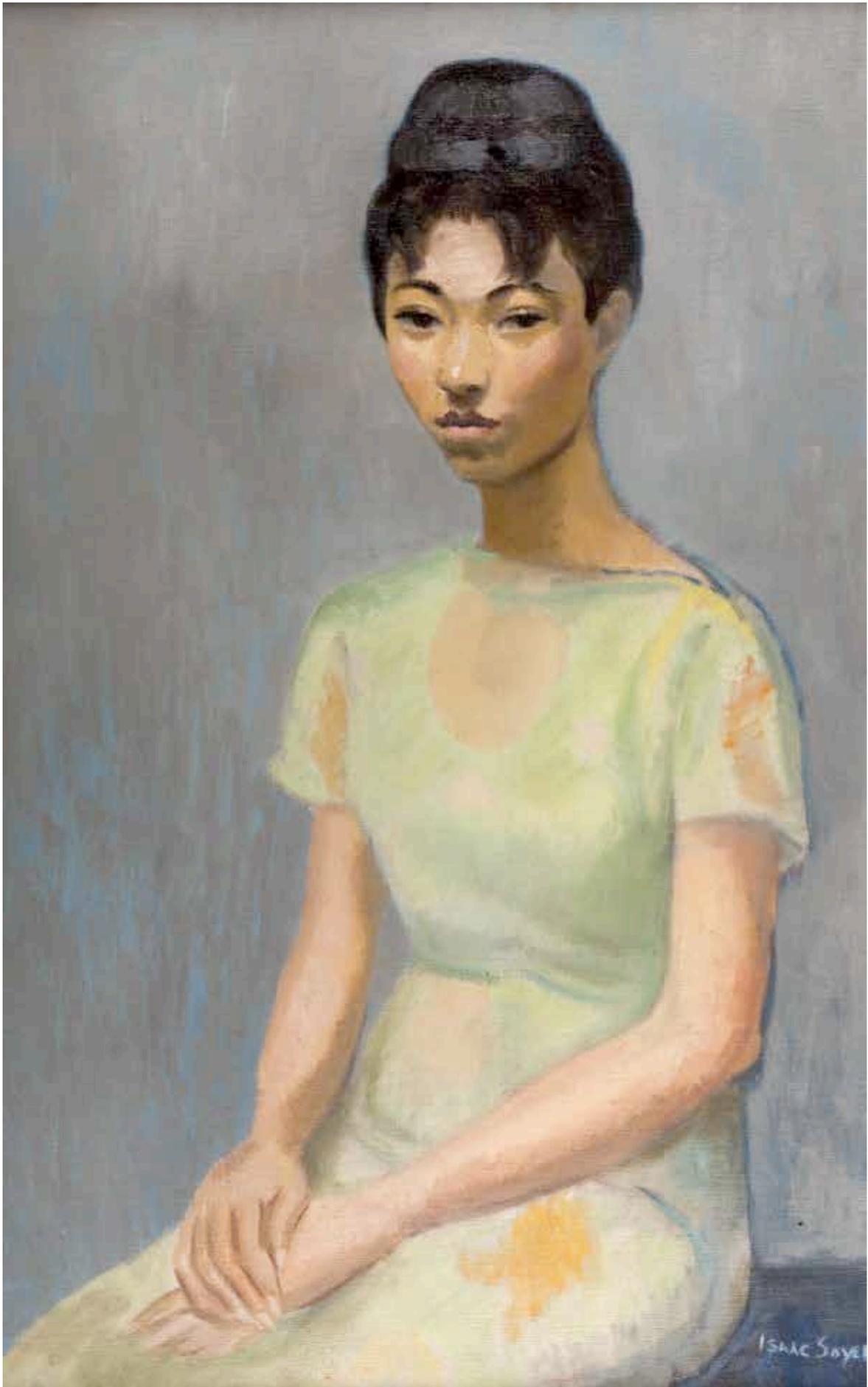
"I hope my art will inspire others to wonder about questions such as the origin of things and where it all

will lead, too," the artist says. "In a way, our journey through life seems small in comparison to the infinities of the universe."

Another artist capturing nature in her realism works is **Sarah Lamb**, from Downingtown, Pennsylvania, whose oil on canvas *Peonies* is a floral still life depicting blossoms from the artist's garden. The artist paints a series of peony paintings every year and says this work was demanding because of the light background, which required capturing the subtle changes of light.

"Peonies are a challenge to paint because they open so quickly and die," says Lamb. "They have a wonderful tissue paper quality that is fun to try to capture in paint, and they make my studio smell divine."

A contemporary artist capturing the figure in his realism works is **Paul Oxborough**, whose oil on canvas *At the Royal Livingstone Hotel* depicts bartenders at the Zambia hotel he stayed at during a monthlong trip to Africa. The artist says he tends to be drawn to



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Isaac Soyer, *Seated Woman in Green*, ca. 1955, oil on canvas, 32 x 20". From the Joseph and Marjorie Relkin Collection.

5

Paul Oxborough, *At the Royal Livingstone Hotel*, oil on canvas, 30 x 60"

6

Kenneth Hayes Miller, *Portrait of a Woman Reading a Letter*, 1927, oil on canvas, 30 x 25"

7

Jeness Cortez, *Room with a View*, acrylic on mahogany panel, 24 x 20"



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people, and the blue light falling across the bartenders' shirts and faces caught his eye and inspired him to paint the scene. The Excelsior, Minnesota-based artist cites many historical realist painters as inspiration, including his exhibition-mate Rockwell.

"I've been passionate about realist art since I was a child, first being inspired by Norman Rockwell and photorealists such as Ralph Goings and Chuck Close, and then including impressionists from Manet to Degas, to the likes of Sargent and Zorn," says Oxborough. "I've always loved the

way realism tells a story visually, leaving the words to the writers. In many ways, I consider myself to be a documentarian, trying to capture real moments in time from my life, inspired by travel afar or scenes close to home."

Other real moments on display include the wintry landscape scene *Late Afternoon, Lorch Farm*, by Poskas; the circa 1955 female portrait *Seated Woman in Green* by Soyer; and the interior scene *Room with a View* by Cortez. McGurl encourages people to visit the exhibition to see the nuances in color, glazes, textures and scale of the

works and to experience their uniqueness in person, as the display of realist work in the exhibition is of exceptional quality.

"Mankind will always experience our universe visually, and it is part of what makes us human to want to express the reality of what we see, think and feel," McGurl says. "This exhibition consists of artists who have dedicated their entire life to their craft and have reached a high level of accomplishment and individual expression, so the quality is among the top tier of what can be seen in exhibitions of realists' work." ●