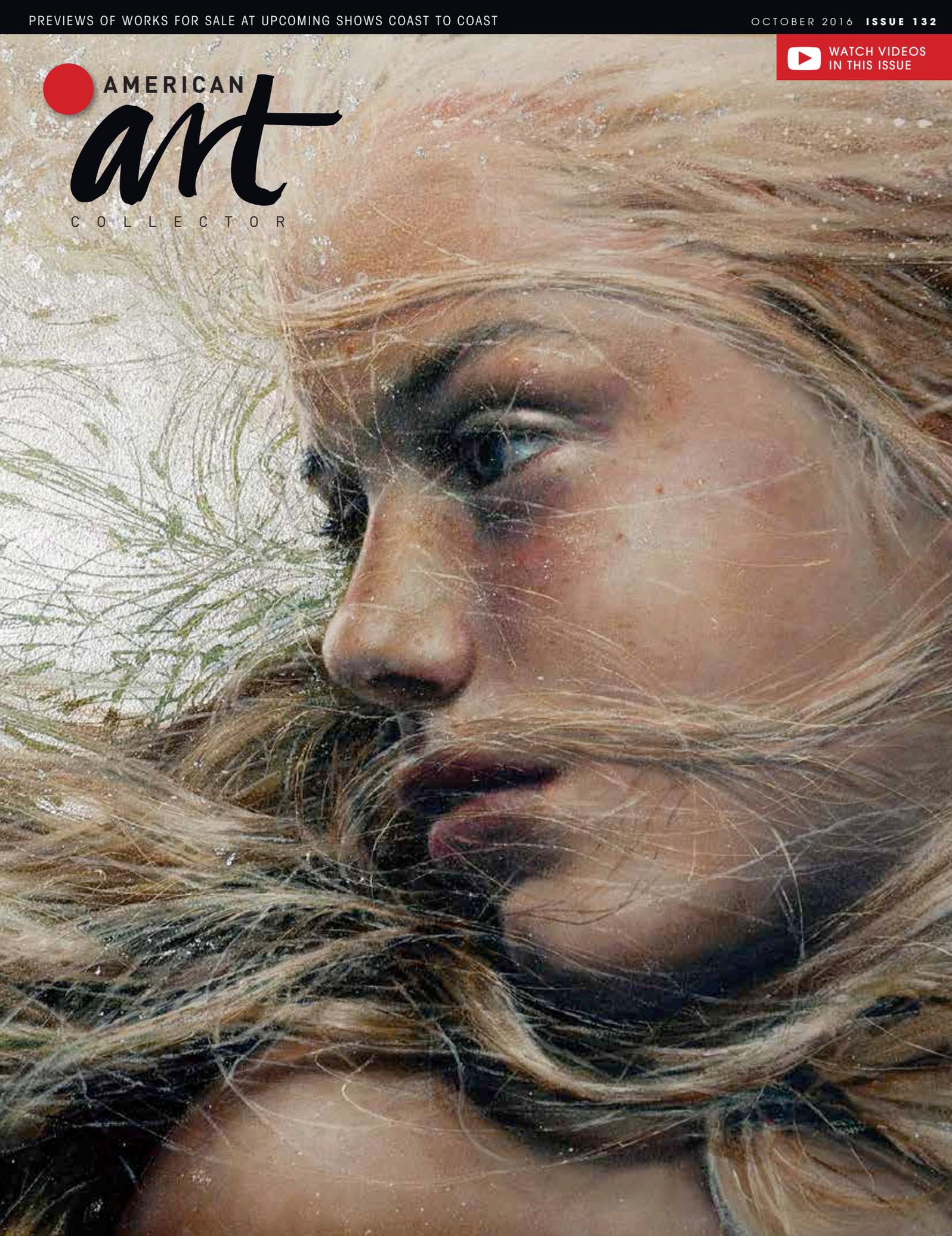


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AMERICAN
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A TRADITIONAL APPROACH

Exploring the role of the nude figure in formal art education and its impact on contemporary artists.

By John O'Hern

Drawing from the nude figure has been a requirement for centuries in formal art education. Drawings by Leonardo and Michelangelo are cherished as works of art in themselves. Thousands of extraordinary drawings from the European and American academies of the 19th century, however, languish in gallery bins and often sell for a few hundred dollars.

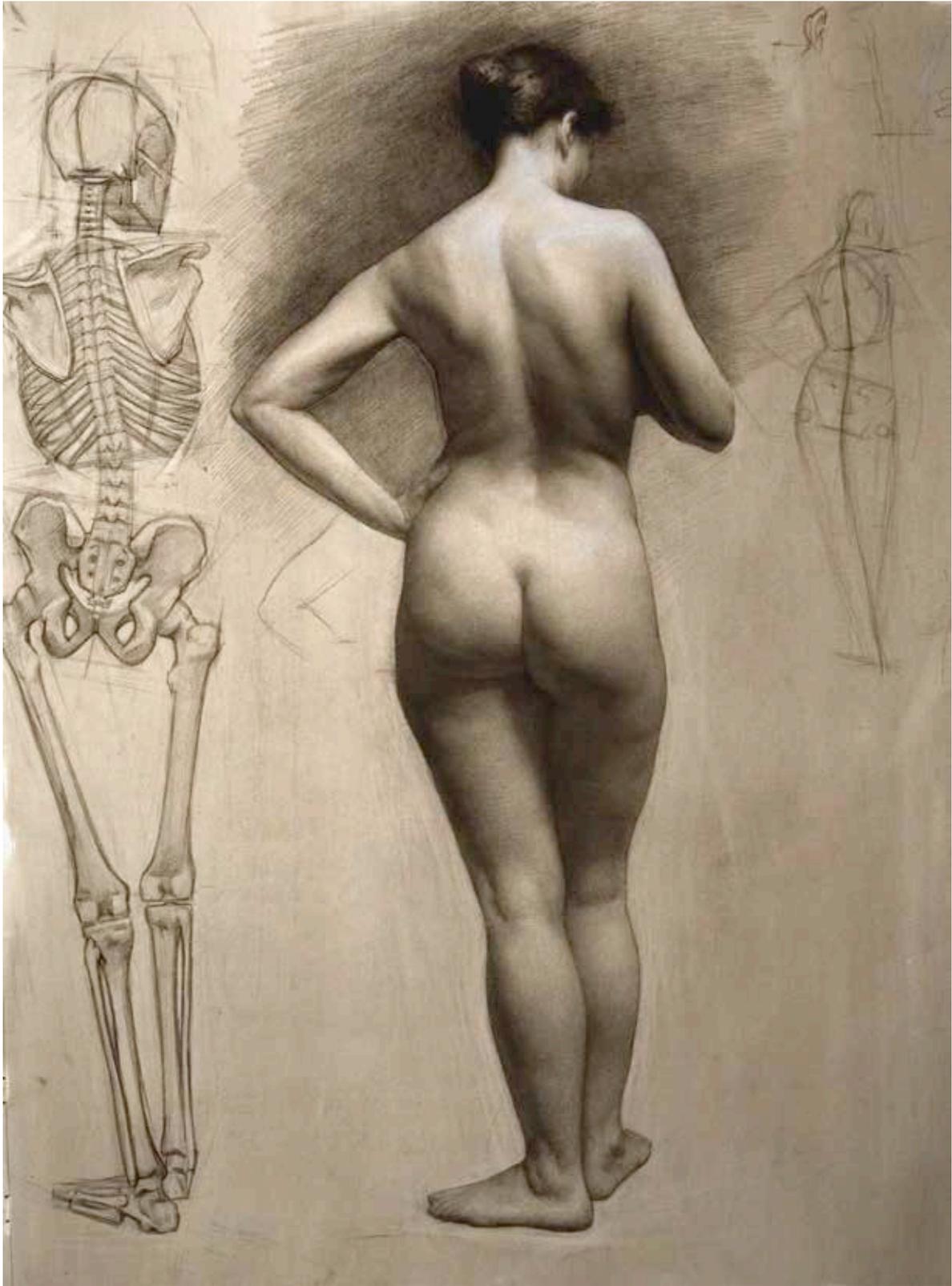
Drawing from the nude and from plaster casts of classical sculpture was the backbone of academic education. In the 20th century, however, the practice

1
Jacob Smies (1764-1833),
Drawing lessons at an academy, watercolor, ink on paper, 10 x 15".
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

2
Colleen Barry, *Female Nude with Skeleton,*
graphite on paper, 24 x 18".
Courtesy the artist.

began to die out. David Hockney wrote, "I was aware that the teaching of drawing was being stopped almost 30 years ago. And I always said, 'The teaching of drawing is the teaching of looking.' A lot of people don't look very hard."

Jacob Smies (1764-1833) drew a multi-figure caricature, *Drawing lessons at an academy*, depicting students slouched or crouched over their drawing boards and portfolios drawing a nude man incongruously smoking a pipe. All of the students are male, dictated by an odd mix of propriety and misogyny.



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In Philadelphia in the 19th century, Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) was forced to resign from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts for the impropriety of allowing women into a studio with fully nude male models—women had only been allowed to draw male nudes discreetly covered with a loincloth.

Eakins also encouraged the use of photography, often posing himself and his students for nude photographs to be used as study

references. He had witnessed the use of photography in European ateliers but the practice was frowned upon in the United States.

The Belgian sculptor Jacques de Lalaing (1858-1917) either took or hired a photographer to take photographs of models in his studio. One example from a portfolio in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam shows a model posed for the artist to model in clay. He is helped in maintaining the pose by a crudely construct scaffold



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he can hold on to.

Eakins's photographs, and those of his circle, are often less formal and taken outdoors. One of his most complex and famous paintings is *The Swimming Hole* (originally called *Swimming*) which depicts a group of nude men swimming. It was commissioned by Edward H. Coates, chairman of the Committee on Instruction at PAFA, who



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returned it to Eakins for something less provocative. Ironically, it was Coates who forced Eakins' resignation.

One of the reasons Coates rejected the painting was that the models, including Eakins, were recognizable. There are several photographs among the studies for the painting.

The great French photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004) said, "Photography is an immediate reaction, drawing is a meditation."

In the case of Eakins, where so many of his photo references are available, it's interesting to see the truth of Cartier-Bresson's statement comparing them to finished paintings.

In the 20th-century, photography eclipsed drawing in some circles and drawing was declared anathema in others. Fortunately, the tradition of academic nudes survived and even thrives in the 21st century.

Colleen Barry has studied the Old Masters extensively and now teaches figure-drawing workshops. Often, in her studies, she incorporates the skeleton and a schematic of the pose. In *Female Nude with Skeleton*, the beautifully and classically rendered figure is accompanied by a skeleton and a study of the mechanics of her contrapposto pose, indicating the opposing angle of her shoulders and her hips and pelvis.

Michael Bergt only draws from life, using photographs for later reference. Often, he does simple ink line drawings that are finished works in themselves and sometimes serve as the inspiration for more complex works in colored pencil or egg tempera. With an economy of line, he expresses a wealth of form. ●

3
Michael Bergt,
Seated nude,
walnut ink on
Arches paper,
18 x 12". Courtesy
the artist.

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**Studio of
Jacques de
Lalaing
(1858-1917),**
Untitled, ca.
1883-ca. 1917,
photograph,
7 x 6".
Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam, The
Netherlands.

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**Thomas Eakins
(1844-1916),**
[Male Figures
at the Site of
"Swimming"],
1884, Albumen
silver print,
3¹¹/₁₆ x 4¹³/₁₆".
The J. Paul
Getty Museum,
Los Angeles,
California.

1
Lotton Gallery, *Blue Head Scarf*, oil on canvas, 39 x 31", by Jose Borrell.

2
Lotton Gallery, *Tenderness of Morning*, oil on canvas, 24 x 16", by Marina Marina.

LOTTON GALLERY

900 N. Michigan Avenue, Level 6
Chicago, IL 60611, (312) 664-6203
www.lottongallery.com

Lotton Gallery presents new work from Russian artist **Marina Marina**, including her latest masterpiece titled

Tenderness of Morning. Her magnificent ability to paint the female form is matched only by her impressive ability to paint lace and fabrics. *Tenderness of Morning* is exquisitely detailed with finely painted lace, in juxtaposition to a distinctly airy sense of light. Lotton Gallery is

pleased to represent Marina, as she is true rare definitive talent.

In addition, Lotton Gallery welcomes to their stable of artists Spanish artist **Jose Borrell**. His painting *Blue Head Scarf* is a remarkable work, which incorporates his delicate handling of the skin

and soft features of beauty.

PAIGE BRADLEY

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"My inspiration comes from my connection to the world, my relationships with others and my relationship with myself. I don't need to travel the planet or hire dancers to find a muse. My individual journey is inspiration enough," says sculptor **Paige Bradley**. "The figure to me is the perfect vehicle to communicate the human condition. My definition of success is to be a visionary through truthful and courageous artwork—work that communicates what it feels like to be alive in the world today. My goal is to make what feels real, not necessarily beautiful, in order to impact people and create lasting fine art."

GABRIEL MARK LIPPER

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www.artofgabriel.com

Artist **Gabriel Mark Lipper**





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paints nudes because he's interested in the truth beyond the surface. "When the diffidence of our carnality dissolves, the intrinsic power of the spirit is revealed," Lipper says. "The intentions of the model emerge from the skin, the nuance of a gesture, the gaze, the language of the body. Beyond the immediate nakedness, there is an even more powerful aesthetic at work: the elements of form, style and design. I paint nudes for the same reason I paint everything I choose to paint. I paint them because I find them beautiful."

E.L. STEWART

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www.elstewart.com

"Why nudes," asks artist **E.L. Stewart**. "I have painted many nudes over



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my career. Occasionally, I have asked myself, 'why?' As I think of the reasons behind these works, I come up with a variety of answers. Briefly, I use the nude as a choreographer uses dancers

or actors to tell a narrative; to express an experience in the most personal way. My nude figures portray the essence of living persons, wildly vulnerable, in the home of the soul and spirit.

It is a bit of heaven and earth. I'm looking beyond the raw physical attributes into the whole person... with passions and fears and dreams, like every one of us."



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Paige Bradley, *Release*,
bronze, 91 x 22 x 40"

4
Gabriel Mark Lipper,
Eros in Black and White,
oil on panel, 36 x 24"

5
Paige Bradley, *Trust*,
bronze, 39 x 20 x 16"

6
Gabriel Mark Lipper,
The Artist's Studio,
oil on linen, 25 x 50"

7
E.L. Stewart, *Unfinished
Youth*, acrylic on
canvas, 48 x 36"

8
Janet A. Cook, *Three
Stages of Proserpina's
Fall*, oil on panel,
72 x 33"

9
Janet A. Cook, *Megan
in Blue*, pen and ink
with acrylic wash,
10 x 8"

10
E.L. Stewart, *Woman
Washing Up*, acrylic on
canvas, 36 x 36"

11
Jessica Wicken,
Morning Dreams, oil,
11 x 14"



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11

JANET A. COOK

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Represented by www.daciagallery.com,
www.havenartgallery.com

Janet A. Cook loves to paint and draw the human form. Inspired by both the Old Masters and the multifaceted world of contemporary imagery, Cook combines these elements into her imaginative paintings.

Trained at the Art Students League and the National Academy School of Fine Art, Cook now exhibits at Dacia Gallery in New York City where she will have her third solo

show, and the Haven Gallery in Northport, New York. She teaches at the Pastel Society of America and holds workshops at the Art Students League of New York.

Cook's work is held in collections around the world including the permanent collection at the Trenton City Museum in New Jersey.

JESSICA WICKEN

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Colorado artist **Jessica Wicken** enjoys diverse subject matter

but finds greatest satisfaction in figurative work and exploring the human experience. Collectors are drawn to her lively use of color and sensitive approach to the subject. She received a Bachelor of Fine Art from University of Utah and studied in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and at the Art Students League of Denver. Wicken is represented in by Art Images & Art in the Loft in Denver, 7801 Home Furnishings and Design in Evergreen, Colorado, and The Gallery at Roundtop in Texas. ●