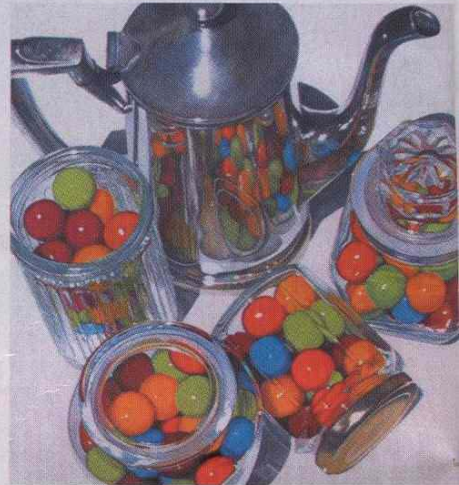




Home Sweet Home (at left; oil, 22x28) by Camille Engel and *Twice As Much* (below; acrylic, 24x24) by Lorena Kloosterboer, from the International Guild of Realism's Second Annual Juried Exhibition.



Reality Check

Two recent group shows celebrate realism and confirm that it's still very much on the radar.

In September, Manitou Galleries in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was the site of the **International Guild of Realism's Second Annual Juried Exhibition**. The show featured nearly 70 paintings by 46 artists, all members of the guild. Another presentation of realist works, **Slow Painting: A Deliberate Renaissance**, also opened in September and runs through mid-December at the Oglethorpe University Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia. It might seem a coincidence that two similarly themed shows are taking place at nearly the same time, but truth be told, realism is experiencing a renaissance of its own.

A four-year-old organization based in Scottsdale, Arizona, the International Guild of Realism has seen membership grow considerably even since last year. With approximately 125 members worldwide, the guild provides workshop opportunities, Internet exposure, gallery exhibitions and marketing support. But the organization has stringent standards for membership. "Indeed, we're not an egalitarian group for anyone with a paintbrush," says charter member Lorena Kloosterboer. "The membership selection process is a careful procedure designed to favor those meeting the highest standards of technique,

talent and creativity." The need for the organization grew out of a concern that realism had taken a backseat to other contemporary styles. "In today's art world, there's such an extraordinary focus on modern art styles, while the skills and traditional craftsmanship of the more formal interpretation are often overlooked and disregarded," explains Kloosterboer. "

Under the umbrella of realism falls a number of styles—from photorealistic to loosely rendered and highly classical. Kloosterboer says artists working in any of these styles can find a home with the International Guild of Realism. Hopeful members need not have

Speed Bags (at right; oil on panel, 30x26) by Paul Brown, from the exhibition "Slow Painting: A Deliberate Renaissance."

a showy track record, though. The guild is not interested in impressive résumés or gallery affiliation. “We’re truly looking for those artists whose paintings embody the highest qualities of realism,” she says.

Currently underway at the Oglethorpe University Museum is the exhibition “Slow Painting: A Deliberate Renaissance,” focusing mainly on the figure, with 40 works by 22 different artists. The term “slow painting” refers to the time needed to learn the painterly techniques of the old masters. These classical realist painters—with a few exceptions—work exclusively from life, in contrast to photorealists, who reproduce the exactitude of a photograph. The term “slow painting” was used in a manifesto devised by Dr. Gregory Hedberg, a proponent

of classical realism, former head of the New York Academy of Art, and current director of European art at Hirschl & Adler Galleries in New York. At a dinner in 2005, some of the artists in the “Slow Painting” exhibit signed the manifesto while others rejected the term, not wanting to be conveniently labeled as part of an artistic movement.

Among painters of the classical realism style is an unexpected connection: a geographical triangle between New York, North Carolina and Florence, Italy. Abigail Dowd, who assisted with the show and is associate curator for Mims Studios in Southern Pines, North Carolina, explains, “During the heyday of Abstract Expressionism, expatriate Americans moved to Florence,

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