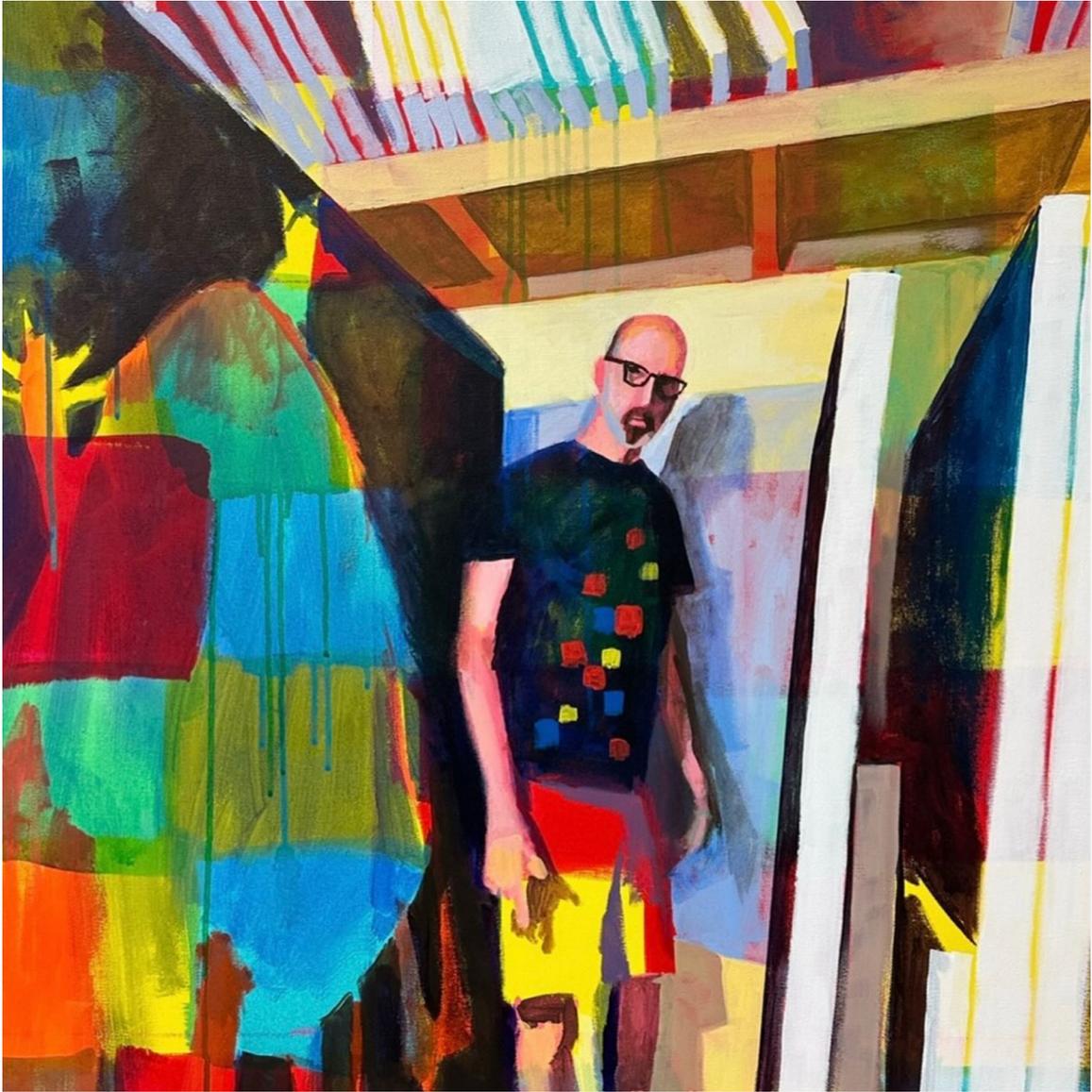


# *DAYLIGHT*

Adam Lowenbein



*Storage*, 2023, 40 x 30 inches, acrylic on canvas

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Adam Lowenbein

February 6 – March 6, 2025

Essay by Enrico Gomez

Flecker Gallery  
Suffolk County Community College  
Ammerman Campus, Selden, NY

## Director's Forward:

Flecker Gallery proudly presents *Daylight*, a solo exhibition by Adam Lowenbein. This exhibition features a collection of large-scale paintings exploring the observable and the imagined, the familiar and the unsettling. Adam's practice spans decades of dedication, embodying a contemporary approach to traditional techniques while allowing his paintings to take life; inspired by Adam's life. Adam paints what he sees around him filtering through his mind, memories, and imagination exploring color, truth, and the ordinary.

When I first encountered Adam's work, I was drawn to the way he depicted reality through his paintings. His usage of color, form, and gesture, his ability to sculpt his paintings with light and shadow, are masterful and unique. His mind and process of painting allow him to turn an ordinary scene into a beautiful and at times unsettling moment. He invites viewers to linger in moments of stillness and ambiguity, where we wonder if something has happened, or is something about to happen; the in-between moments. Whether through his depictions of beautiful yet ominous suburban landscapes, reflective puddles that invert the world around them, or figures caught in moments of stillness or pre-transformation, Adam's work operates in a space where reality and the imaginative intertwine.

We are thrilled to host *Daylight* at Flecker Gallery and to share Adam Lowenbein's paintings with our art students and community. His art, both technically masterful and conceptually depth, offers viewers and students not just an opportunity to view but learn and take away from his interesting take on reality and process of painting. I am confident that this exhibition will leave a lasting impression, offering both an aesthetic and a thoughtful experience.

Joshua Olsen, Director

## The In-Between:

By Enrico Gomez

All visual art is communication of a sort. On one level it is, simply, a series of images, marks, groupings of color or texture that, in toto, can convey feeling, tell a story, impart meaning, or illuminate that which may previously have been hidden. This process of sharing or making communal that which is privately true can be seen across the arts. Indeed, this “call and response” quality of the expressive artist-to-audience gesture is indicated in the etymological root of the word communicate itself, i.e., from the Latin *communis*, “to be shared or experienced by many”. Visual art can be like writing in this way. Abstract marks, in patterned and sequential relationships with one another, somehow result in the possibility of both message and mystery. It is at this intersection of conceptual intention and experiential interpretation that one entry point into the work of Adam Lowenbein can be found.

With a rigorous and diverse art-making practice that spans decades, artist Adam Lowenbein utilizes a range of visual media including acrylic paint, canvas, print photography, porcelain, wood, and fabric. The scope of his visual output nimbly and cogently crosses such seemingly disparate genres as portrait painting, installation art, landscape painting, photo collage, and abstraction. The subject matter of his paintings over the past twenty years has covered an equally broad and impressive spectrum, with many common themes emergent. Foremost among them is a focus on the human figure, inside of and impressing upon its natural and constructed environment. Says the artist, “I paint the things that are around me, the things imagined in my head, and also the material located somewhere in between.” This sense of the fantastical and imaginal existing alongside of, and perhaps embedded within, the immediately observable is strongly evidenced among the works assembled for his survey “Daylight”, a collection of paintings exploring the potentially deceptive veneer of tranquility and quietude in the American suburban surround.



*Studio*, 2020, 72 x 60 inches, acrylic on canvas

As readily as artists utilize paint, clay, and other materials to construct their work, so too will artists often utilize a range of depicted objects and subject matter in their output. Among the first visibly jarring works in this show, with regard to its depicted subject matter juxtapositions, would be “Backyard” (2020), an image of a relaxed and floating figure, outfitted in patriotic swimwear, and ostensibly oblivious to a forest fire occurring just at the edge of his manicured estate. The cool aquas and warm amber hues vie for the viewers attention and one wonders if the depiction is a daydream, a social commentary, or a presciently ominous warning, painted as it was in our collectively quarantined summer of 2020. Also from that period, “Eagle” (2020), depicts the symbolic national bird, perched atop an empty lawn chair, with encroaching darkened forest, alight with a distant early sunrise, or perhaps the last notes of a gleaming twilight. The interplay of light and shadow is also pronounced in “Gate” (2022), wherein a solitary white picket gate is depicted as an exact midpoint between a garden lawn’s brightly wooded backdrop and its darkened, shadowy foreground. The enigmatic gate hangs almost functionless, yet its associated implications of boundaries, ownership, stability, and aspiration are very much at play here. The advancing and receding daylight in these works can both illuminate and obfuscate meaning, a quality shared throughout the works in this show.

Another vantage point from which to enter into a deeper consideration of Adam Lowenbein’s work would be with regard to the mechanics of their construction, the “making of the thing.” A cursory glance around the gallery will tell you that Lowenbein is, among other things, a master of compositional framing. Whether through the use of directional line to gently, but surely, guide the viewer into an image or through the use of placement and scale to amplify tension and psychological ambiguity, the artist is a deft hand at constructing engaging visual spaces.



*Dead Roses*, 2020, 30 x 24 inches, acrylic on canvas

One traditional way that painters construct a scene, dating back to the Renaissance, is through the use of tonal underpainting, sometimes called the “grisaille” method, from the French word “gris” meaning gray or monochromatic. By establishing values and composition in grayscale, painters can build upon this structure, adding tints and shades from their color palette as they see fit. Lowenbein applies this technique, but makes it his own by switching out the traditional grays and sepias for what he calls “un-restrained color”, a dynamic collection of electric blues, dayglow oranges, pinks and other neon tones that peak through later layers of paint, imbuing the image with a psychological charge. In this way, the artist masterfully controls the light in his paintings in both an additive, accretive fashion, as is common with oil and acrylic painters, as well as in a preservative fashion, allowing reflected light from the white or neon substrate to shine through, as is common with printmakers and watercolorists. “I play a lot with light,” shares Lowenbein, “representing light through objects and settings and also around them.” Two prime examples of these qualities are on view in the works “Reverie” (2020) and “Glow” (2020). The works date to the global pandemic and depict figures in a sort of stasis, held within a suburban, wooded context, either real or imagined, and ringed in fluorescent glow. The eerie luminescence here recalls the lockdown cycle of day into night into day, habitual doom scrolling, and the visual emissions of the paradoxically connecting yet alienating LED monitors ubiquitously in use at that time.

The depiction of reflected light is an additional element within Lowenbein’s work, particularly well evinced in the image inversions found in “Flash Flood” (2020) and “Puddles” (2021). These scenes of a parking lot or perhaps a road are decidedly devoid of human activity. Stage-like, these images with their watery reflections recall a world turned upside down by elements out of anyone’s control. Devoid of players, these scenes will be communally familiar to any who have lived through “unprecedented times”, moments rife with questions as to what happened before and what might come next.

This sense of inverted reality, of visual cues that belie contradictory subtexts can be seen in the painting “Picnic” (2021) and the work “Attic”



*Flash Flood*, 2021, 72 x 60 inches, acrylic on canvas



*Drag*, 2021 , 24 x 20 inches, acrylic on canvas

these experiences did imbue him with, among other things, a deep appreciation for the “layers of hidden truth” within any image or personal expression. In “Attic” (2020), a home space synonymous with the sequestered, stored, and secreted away, we see what appears to be a male figure, possibly a self portrait, either disrobing or just donning a traditionally feminine article of dress. In the background hang colorful clothing, boxes and other detritus. Imbued with secrecy, this jewel-toned space seems perfectly pitched between several questions, “Is this activity private or pre-performative?”, “Is this a portrait or a projection?” and “What came before this event and what will come just after?”

Adam Lowenbein’s work often occupies this area of “in-between”, the midway point between “message sent” and “message received”. As anyone in an ongoing relationship with significant others can attest, what is said can often be very different from what is heard. This is because both sound and vision, by necessity, are processed subjectively, i.e. retinal cones, eardrums, occipital lobes, etc., and then measured against previous wisdoms with all their attendant biases and prejudices in tow. The

(2020). Both feature images of figures, busily engaged in personal activities. Adam Lowenbein shares that “Picnic” holds a sort of homage-like nod to the work of his father, Michael Lowenbein, who was a graphic artist and illustrator, and whose paintings intersected the worlds of advertising, fashion, and children’s book illustration. His father would often utilize family members as models for various illustration jobs. The self-identifying gay and Jewish artist Adam Lowenbein shares an amusing anecdote of his brother serving as the cover model for a baby Jesus book illustration. It was perhaps from these early childhood episodes that the artist took a sense of the power of imagination, the importance of play, and a deep sense that depicted images can be very different from the lived reality of their source origins. The artist shares that

artist describes aspects of his work as depicting “something in the real world filtered through something else”, and one can draw this pattern out to one’s own memories, dreams, and individual past experience. In this way, our understanding of Lowenbein’s work can be as much a reflection of our own predilections, as it is an encounter with the artist’s intentions, put forward in visual form. This interplay between the declared and the distilled, between imaginative intention and individual interpretation is both a quality of “Daylight” the show and of the artist’s oeuvre in general, a shining corpus both liminal and boundless, bright and flexible with enduring possibility.



*Gate*, 2021, 40 x 30 inches, acrylic on canvas





*Reveri*, 2020, 72 x 60 inches, acrylic on canvas



*Backyard*, 2020, 60 x 36 inches, acrylic on canvas

*Picnic*, 2021, 72 x 60 inches, acrylic on canvas



*Attic*, 2020, 72 x 60 inches, acrylic on canvas



*Flash Flood*, 2021, 72 x 60 inches, acrylic on canvas



*Puddles*, 2020, 72 x 60 inches, acrylic on canvas





*Eagle*, 2020, 60 x 48 inches, acrylic on canvas



*Glow*, 2020, 72 x 60 inches, acrylic on canvas



Adam Lowenbein lives in Long Island, NY and Fort Lauderdale, FL. He has a BFA in painting from The Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA in painting from Indiana University where he attended on a fellowship. He won grants to attend Skowhegan, and Vermont Studio Center, and spent a year as a Core Fellow at The Glassell School, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Adam has shown his paintings in NY at Caren Golden Fine Art, DFN gallery, Ivy Brown Gallery, and The Angel Orensanz Foundation. Nationally he has exhibited at Rudolph Blume Fine Art, Houston and Wilton Artworks, Fort Lauderdale. In London he has shown with Janet Rady Fine Art. His work is also part of the West Collection, Oaks, PA. Adam's work has been published in The New Yorker Magazine, New York Magazine, and The World of interiors among other publications.

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<https://sunysuffolk.edu> <https://www.sunysuffolk.edu/experience-student-life/arts/art-galleries/flecker-gallery.jsp>

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Gallery Director and Curator: Joshua Olsen

Essay by Enrico Gomez

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