



Who's plain Jane?

What does a face mean and what does the absence of a face mean?

There's no way to tell a person's character by looking at their face. But of course, we all look for clues of it in expression, for physicality that communicates more truthfully than what we say and that's part of what I'm interested in representing. It's about what clues to keep in, and what to leave absent.

I prefer to think of what I'm painting as a head, not the face. It's important for me to try to bring out what's behind the face- to break down and pull apart the facade just enough that the interior bits- the rich parts, can come out. I'll borrow Nicola Tyson's term 'psycho-figuration' for the kind of painting that I'm making.

Your paintings ebb between so many dualities- continuity and dissolution, presence and absence, matter and space, anger and passivity, ghost and flesh, death and vitality, abstraction and true form, the ancient and the modern. Why is it important to express these borderlines, how do you do it? Tell me about your process of making...

The borderlines are important because that's where you're pushing and pulling between states of static. Static is quite a boring and debilitating space; it's where we get comfortable and stop growing. It's on the edges between the dualities you mention- where the discussions are.

Rein, when she was 50
of an pond
2014

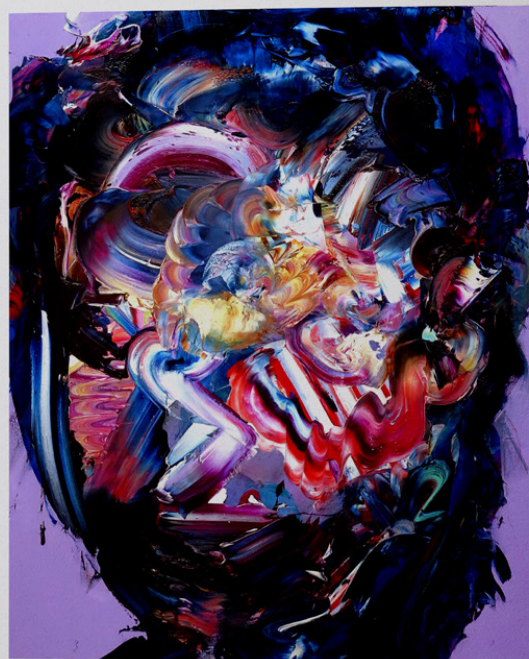
And the process.... well, it changes, because I want to do something new every time. Which I guess is pretty weird for me to say, because I've been painting the same subject on the same scale for 2 years now!

But the improvisation in brushwork, and changes in what the subject is saying, move each painting beyond the previous.

To me your paintings are expressions of fragmentations of selfhood visiting/haunting you. Do you find the same expressions manifesting over and over-are their personas or states that are repeated in the history of your works?

It would take me some serious time with a psychologist to figure out what fragments of selfhood keep haunting my work! As much as we have to be accountable for our work as artists, much of the time you can't make good work while being completely aware of its meaning. That comes later. We explain ourselves to ourselves. But I'm way too close to the paintings to be able to step back right now farther than a few feet- it may ruin the whole progression. Not to say I don't walk up to my studio looking at the gravel thinking: so, what the hell am I painting about today?

Jane



Bringing Down the House
Oil on panel
16" x 12"
2015

"They're cumulative sights, thoughts, and emotions of and about people. They usually start with some semblance of a person creating a structure of a head that can be used to build on, and then I let it reveal itself. Abstracting the form gives me an outlet to depict a sense of rich interior life. The brushwork follows its own trajectory and breaks whatever rules or habits I've picked up along the way. I paint people in general, as a way to understand what it is to be human."

Who is your favorite dead and gone painter, who is a contemporary painter whose work is interesting? Favorite movie? Director? Musician? Time period? Artist?

This question reminds me of those articles in women's magazines that asks someone what's in her purse....

So- dead (but not gone) painter is my absolute favorite painter- Euan Uglow. I was introduced to his work while studying at the Slade in 2001 just after he died. He's why I became a painter. Seeing his work is a bit like going to church. It's a touchstone.

My favorite contemporary painter for the last 3 years, has been Peter Krauskompf.

Please check him out if you don't already know his work. And for movies, I'll always go back to Emir Kusturica's *Underground*- particularly the very last finale scene. For a favorite time period, I'll define favorite by most interest in? 1919-1933 Weimar Germany. I've always been interested in what happened during this short, unstable, chaotic, but politically, intellectually, and artistically creative time between wars. Wild times. I would have liked a few nights out on the town in 1920s Berlin, taken in a Paul Klee lecture at the Bauhaus, talk to Adorno, you know... Favorite Music- changes daily. It's schizophrenic.

What is the influence of the artist John LaFarge- your great great grandfather-on your art?

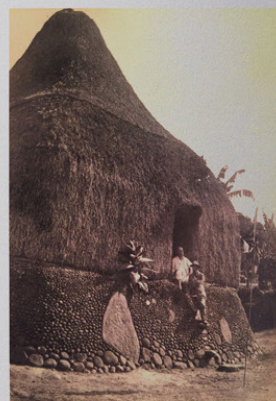
I think the influence of my great great grandfather's art was actually mostly important as an influence on my becoming an artist.

Seeing his work hung on the MET walls as a kid, made it seem normal that people you might even be personally connected to could have their work in museums. The human quality in that- understanding at a young age that all those pieces of great art were made by actual, real, normal people, was a lesson.

Yes, John LaFarge was best known for his stained glass work, but he was a remarkably versatile artist, and it was during a show of his paintings at Yale a few years ago that I felt a deeper connection to his work; on top of my familial pride to him as a man. The Yale show concentrated on his travels throughout the South Pacific begun in 1890. (He was painting in Tahiti before Gauguin, and their versions

of the same places are complete contrasts.) There are 12 surviving sketch books from those South Seas travels that contain landscape and figurative drawings, but also copious notes on culture and language... in very tiny lettering.

It's a practice that seems to be following in the family- my husband Jason Bereswill is also a travel painter, documenting time and place with sketches wherever we go. He does the same as LaFarge, coming back to the studio to flesh field work into larger paintings. Although the two differ in that Jason paints a bit of human folly/clumsiness within the majestic natural landscape, and LaFarge was more romantic with his graceful figures working with nature. Additionally, continuing his activities as a graffiti artist, John LaFarge often incorporated words into his paintings. Before his career as a painter began, he produced punk-inspired postcards for sale on the street, and became known for the political-poetical graffiti under the name of SAMO. He would often draw on random objects and surfaces, including other people's property. The conjunction of various media is an integral element of LaFarge's art. His paintings are typically covered with text and codes of all kinds: words, letters, numerals, pictograms, logos, map symbols, diagrams and more.



John LaFarge in Fiji



Untitled Renaissance, Figure 1
Oil on panel
20 x 16"
2014

Jane



delineation
Oil on panel
8" x 10"
2018



Unfold
Oil on panel
8" x 10"
2018