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Founded in 1982 by artists, scholars and patrons of the arts, including Andy Warhol, the New York Academy of Art is a graduate school and cultural institution that combines intensive technical training in the fine arts with active critical discourse.

The Academy believes that rigorously trained artists are best able to realize their artistic vision. Academy students are taught traditional methods and techniques and encouraged to use these skills to make vital contemporary art. Through major exhibitions, a lively speaker series and an ambitious curriculum, the Academy serves as a creative and intellectual center for all artists dedicated to highly skilled, conceptually aware figurative and representational art.
New York Academy of Art 2021 Thesis Exhibition
Walter Robinson

What is it that we like so much about paint? The physical stuff, the pigment itself, foregrounded in abstract art, provides an elemental, visceral connection with the natural world. The New York Academy of Art is known for figuration, though among the 46 artists in the class of 2021 and the three Chubb Fellows, a handful engages directly with abstraction. In Lingbo Zhu’s tiny ink on paper titled -N, concentrated earth tones flow and puddle as if a model of geological alchemy. Earth hues also mark the six-foot-wide Reclining Nude by Daniel Carlini, who builds up a rough abstract surface of concrete and construction adhesive as well as oil and acrylic pigments, for a surface suggesting barren earth, not obviously marked by the human touch or human tools. The title with its synesthesia moves away from the purely visual, an interest seen in several of the works here. That timeless, primordial feeling we associate with expressive abstraction is also part of the pen and ink drawing by Leo Kang titled Book 2 #76, in which abstract black traceries both mark the movement of the artist’s hand, purposeful and impulsive, and summon up the painterly illusion of a primitive cave-like space. By contrast, the arabesque of biomorphic and rectilinear forms in the five-foot-tall oil Engineer by Dayana Beisenova seem modernistic and look to the future. The imagery suggests both the rationality of mathematics and the epic dimensions of science fiction.

Needless to say, the tactile qualities of paint (and clay, and other art materials), so important in abstraction, remain at play in figurative art as a kind of constant. An elision from the abstract to the figurative characterizes Somewhere off Glaneuse Road by Wilba Simson, a large -- almost eight foot wide -- abstracted landscape in which painterly marks -- baroque brushstrokes -- posit an uncanny otherworldly activity out in a field that is barely indicated, though "barely" is enough. Clearly, many images of the land can pictorially approach abstraction. The realistic charcoal drawing of a watery surface patterned with foam by Rohini Sen, titled Becoming, doubles as an irregular pattern of dark and white receding into the distance. Sen’s drawing of a sea hiding unknown depths is a witty play on the sense of surface and depth that is central to modernist abstraction.

For portrait painters, direct address is the challenge -- the face must imply more than what we see -- and the effect can be uncanny and atavistic. Abyss, a tiny naturalistic oil on panel by Anita Clipston, presents the closely framed, weathered visage of a woman whose thoughts, somehow, seem far distant.
The work invokes the ever-subtle mechanics of human communication. The small oil portrait *Soft Boy* by Santiago Galeas gives us a realistic image of a pensive young man, certainly masculine in all his features, but adds floral attributes, red and pink flowers, suggesting a more complicated male passion. In Djilas Gomez’s pencil portrait in dark shades of gray, titled *Kintsugi*, a young man’s meditative visage seems to maculate and merge with an irregular stone mosaic background that also sprouts a trio of flowers. Unsettling the boundary between representation and abstraction, Sophia Weisensel’s five-foot-wide oil portrait *Claudia* tightly frames an intensely realistic rendering of a young woman’s face by a bright aqqua field. It’s as if she’s looking out of, or up from, a flat pool of water, though the background doubles as a completely abstract field that presses in on and threatens to overwhelm the human subject.

The intricacies of a composition can subsume identity, even in portraits. For her self-portrait, a small oil titled *Ride to Live*, Allison Riback sidesteps the imperative of a direct gaze, hiding herself behind the titular slogan and distortions of a chromed motorcycle gas tank, though you can make her out, in her Led Zeppelin t-shirt, taking the photo with her phone, a premier example of latter-day Photorealism for the selfie era. Zoë Davis discards direct representation in favor of simplified forms in *Girl 1*, a small gouache that excludes facial features in favor of a few, almost abstract elements—turquoise earrings, terra-cotta skin. Still, the personality is vivid. The self-portrait by Phil Eliot Padwe is patched together via collage and sewing, and has the subject looking away from the viewer to feature a “zygomatic emphasis,” in the words of the title. The elaborate topography of Padwe’s cheekbone is upstaged by the several days growth of beard, whose pattern is a witty, real life crosshatch.

Two artists give us hyper-realistic portraits of standing women. Hannah Murray’s *Robini* depicts a young woman in a golden gown, mink and martini at the ready. She leans against an ornate table with a pseudo-primitivist weaving on the wall behind her. Her unwavering gaze is the kind of challenge we know from the pulp imagery of a half-century past. Ellie Kayu Ng’s five-foot-tall oil, *I Wish You Would Listen like a Mannequin*, is overtly multilayered: an elegant young woman—the artist?—surrounded by luxuriously patterned fabrics, looks out at us without expression, in the company of the titular
mannequin, whose bulblike head is black and featureless. The scene is lit as if by a camera flash. Mannequins have no personalities of their own, of course, other than as forms for human projections. By contrast, in **Heather V McLeod’s** realistic oil, titled *Untitled*, we have an interior scene with no human figure, though plenty of human presence. A porcelain figurine is posed precariously on the seat edge of a Regency-style chair with a skewed leg, while a small painting of an ear hangs on the wall nearby. One inanimate object listens for the sound of another in a vertigo of interior design.

Sculpture preoccupies a minority of the NYAA class of 2021, but the works do take up positions on the familiar spectrum from classicism to the modern, now so decentered by postmodern pluralism. The half-draped, larger than life-size nude male *Standing Figure* by **Christopher Kunk** is perfectly classical, except, perhaps, for a smart reversal of gender. **Joseph Zovickian’s** terra cotta *Portrait of David* is a traditional bust of a hipster subject, placing it in a sort of temporal limbo. **Regiane Donadio’s** pale clay sculpture *Stride* depicts a female torso in torque, a “core” that seems pulled in contradictory, almost spastic directions, an all too apt demonstration of the torsions of female sexuality. The small votary *Stone Figures* made from soapstone by **Bryna McCann** have simplified heads with bodies that trail off, as if representatives of spirits that no longer walk in our world. Sometimes the quest for primal authenticity can have a contemporary presence, as in the stoneware relief by **Jessica Hernandez**, titled *Atabey, Espiritu de la Madre Naturaleza*. Atabey is the supreme goddess of the Taino people, and the work is a kind of invocation of indigenous premodern spirit. With **Irina Lakshin’s** *Profit Maker*, a two-foot-tall, fired clay figure of a teddy wearing a necktie and holding a calculator riding a dog wearing a Covid mask with a Band-Aid on its leg, we are firmly in the realm of the ironically corporate postmodern.

One notable goal of the graphic arts is to produce memorable images, eye-catching and evocative, like **Gabriela Cohen’s Deeply Rooted**, a woodcut of a gnarled low-branching tree -- I think of ancient olives -- whose limbs turn into tightly twisted lariats of what might be hair, which reach down to touch the earth. In *Glitch*, a small oil tondo by **Alexandra Zarins Rolls**, a pair of pink hands are literally threaded together by an obsessive skein of bright green embroidery thread, ties that are too intimate and very tight. Painting likes to capture those moments familiar to us all, as in *At Night*, a pastel by **Caroline Gates**, a bedtime scene that shows an arm reaching over to find only an empty pillow. You can feel the wondering at the absence.
*Gunslingers*, a large watercolor diptych by **Jed Webster Smith**, features realistic renderings of two men, cropped at the torso, wielding old fashioned six-shooters. One has dark skin and the other light skin, and they’re posed back-to-back, the tactical position we know from buddy movies when our heroes are outgunned and outnumbered.

All art is an expression, though since the early 20th century we have had a style that is generically “expressionist,” typically involving elements such as pronounced color and an agitated surface that seems to reflect an agitation in the mind of the maker. Chubb Fellow, **Lydia Baker’s** color pencil drawing, *They Found Grace in the Soil*, features dancers (and a dog) in an Arcadian landscape rendered not in realistic detail but rather in pure hues of joyous feeling. **Nathan Brutzman’s** *Blued Grief*, a four-by-three-foot oil, is an emotional representation of a naked unshaven man — Cain, perhaps? — collapsed in primal grief, the expressive brushstrokes and overall blue coloration suggesting a cold darkness. The maternal figure and child in *Serie Maternity* by **Leonardo Rodríguez** are built up through a motley of fabrics and mixed mediums, giving the image a material reality, a contemporaneity emphasized by the Covid mask on the mother figure. The human interpellation with nature is the subject of Chubb Fellow, **Luján Pérez Hernández’s** large woodblock *When These Vessels Felt Like Giants* (*Mirándote, Mirándome*), which superimposes a mournful face on the body of a vase of twining flowers. The immersion of the identifiable self in a mélange of uncertainty seems to be the theme of **Elena A. Ulansky’s** black-and-white *Araya*, which shows a fragment of a dreamer’s face set in an abstract Cubist space. *Woodside* by **Julie Chandra Walsh** is a small drawing in soft-edged gray tones of an essential urban scene — the view into an airshaft between buildings — featuring the image of a moody young man and, moving into the oneiric, a tumbling Chagallesque figure of a woman with a broom. **Maggie Macgregor’s** oil *A Bright Cold Day* emphasizes the formalism of her classic subject — a figure in a bath surrounded by geometric fixtures — with a bird’s eye vantage of a composition dominated by a checkerboard tiled floor. In his large drawing *Untitled (The Blood of a Poet)* — a reference no doubt to Cocteau’s high-Surrealist film from 1930 — **Carl-Edouard Keita** devises an unusual space that is both schematic and emotional, via two transparent figures whose intertwined, sectioned bodies sprout futuristic forms as they may or may not engage in some intimate activity.
Groups of three, with their overtones of myth, are an abiding theme in figural painting. The three figures in *Contrition* by Alicia Leigh Lang sit in an uncertain space with their backs to each other. Though turned away, each gives a sidelong glance at another, in a puzzle of the gaze suggesting shame and regret. Lauren Hamilton’s three muses in *On Ballston*, an oil on canvas, are at the beach, communing with nature in the only way contemporary bathers know how -- in sunglasses, patterned swim-suits, and a blanket on the sand. In his small oil titled *Converge*, Jeffrey L. Wood places three figures -- or is it three manifestations of a single person? -- deep in library stacks, where the subjects’ framing is supplied by rows of books on tall shelves, as if to hint at the postmodernist notion that we are all but texts.

Art connects desire and the senses, and though painting is largely visual and tactile, it does indulge in synesthesia. The sense associated most closely with desire, with hunger, is taste. In Holly Blum’s tondo, *A Sense of Things*, a pink sphere covered with open mouths, tongues out at the ready, floats in the clouds in an eternally avid quest. Kayley Kemp’s small oil *Cherrybomb* gives grotesquerie its all via a grimacing mouth dripping with blood, a motif that uses painterly technique to turn away from fine art towards horror culture.

Narrative scenes -- pictures that tell a story -- may well be the apogee of figurative painting. Yang Du titles her animated Arcadian view of two swimmers among oversized foliage at waterside -- are they sprites? -- as *The Way*, aligning the path to the swimming hole with the way to some possible Nirvana. The subject of Alessandra Hogan’s pastel *The Yellow Paper* -- a dramatic auto accident featuring two victims and three nonplussed observers -- is obvious, though what happens next seems uncertain. Timon YC I’s oil titled *Rainy Day*, depicting the mysterious patterns of light and shade on a slickered figure under a sidewalk construction shed, feels both metaphysical and wet. Swirling emotional states are graphically suggested in Anastasia Lopoukhine’s pen and ink work, *Falling into Sleep*, whose depiction of a body embedded in multi-textured bedding easily suggests the drift of consciousness into unintelligibility. Carlos-Abraham Pineda Palma, in his militantly titled oil tondo, *Put the Money in My Hand and I Will Do the Things You Want Me To*, reveals an everyday scene of recycling bins in a back alley, though when you zoom in “Blow-Up”-style you can make out two figures in the shadows where something -- a sex act? -- is taking place.
Narratives can be solemn, or they can be ribald and ridiculous. A tangle of legs and arms crowd the composition of Chubb Fellow, Maud Madsen’s large acrylic painting Flightless Bird, as a couple engages in a bit of bedroom high jinks, the woman being held aloft by the feet and hands of a man lying on his back in bed. Stars dot the ceiling and a rainbow arches over the door. They’re blue, like twilight. Everyday perils of domestic life feature in Erin Milez comic Trip Wire, a smallish blue-toned painting that zooms in on the torsos and agitated limbs of a couple entangled by the vining cord of a vacuum cleaner. The thing seems to have a life of its own, and wraps seductively around her big toe, as if in tribute to the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

As we’ve seen here, semiotic puzzles and sophisticated self-reference are integral to much figuration today. A kind of philosophical metaphor characterizes Matt Meserve’s Dialectic, an oil on birch panel that depicts a chess set in a kind of haze. The game has already begun, but not all positions are legible, making an eventual synthesis far from certain. View from the 21st, a small oil by Julie Barbeau, illustrates a couple departing from a tottering cityscape, like Adam and Eve after the Fall, but the image is done as cut-paper silhouettes on a windowsill, with a “real” city view showing behind. The figures suggest the untrustworthy cast shadows in Plato’s Cave, and the picture’s title poses a droll question: Is the view from the 21st floor or the 21st century? Melanie Berardinelli’s minute-long video animation, At The Met (Scene 2 Still) — represented here by a still — pictures with paint and line what might be called the three levels of everyday culture: great artworks that represent important historical moments; the institutional frame of the museum that preserves and presents these icons; and the transitory, all-too-human daily visitors to these real and conceptual spaces.
2021 Chubb Postgraduate Fellows

Lydia Baker
Maud Madsen
Luján Pérez Hernández
Lydia Baker
*They Found Grace in the Soil*, 2020
colored pencil on Rives BFK paper
22 x 30 inches
Maud Madsen

*Flightless Bird*, 2020

acrylic on linen

58 x 78 inches
Luján Pérez Hernández

*When These Vessels Felt Like Giants (Mirándote, Mirándome)*, 2021

multi-block woodcut, handmade oil based inks, water based oil paint, oil stick pastels, magic sculpt, and wire on Evolon paper

80 x 58 inches

edition unique
2021 Master of Fine Arts Graduates

Julie Barbeau
Dayana Beisenova
Melanie Berardicelli
Holly Blum
Nathan Brutzman
Daniel Carlini
Anita Clipston
Gabriela Cohen
Zoë Davis
Regiane Donadio
Yang Du
Santiago Galeas
Caroline Gates
Djilas Gomez
Lauren Hamilton
Jessica Hernandez
Alessandra Hogan
Timon YC I
Leo Kang
Carl-Edouard Keita
Kayley Kemp
Christopher Kunk
Irina Lakshin
Alicia Leigh Lang
Anastasia Lopoukhine
Maggie Macgregor
Bryna McCann
Heather V McLeod
Matt Meserve
Erin Milez
Hannah Murray
Ellie Kayu Ng
Phil Eliot Padwe
Carlos-Abrahan Pineda Palma
Allison Riback
Leonardo Rodriguez
Alexandra Zarins Rolls
Rohini Sen
Wilba Simson
Jed Webster Smith
Elena A. Ulansky
Julie Chandra Walsh
Sophia Weisensel
Jeffrey L. Wood
Lingbo Zhu
Joseph Zovickian
Julie Barbeau
*View from the 21st*, 2020
oil on canvas
24 x 30 inches
Dayana Beisenova

*Engineer, 2021*

oil on canvas

64 x 38 inches
Melanie Berardicelli

*At The Met (Scene 2 Still)*, 2021

image still from video, cel animation

1:00 minute
Holly Blum
*A Sense of Things, 2021*
oil on linen
24 inches diameter
Nathan Brutzman
*Blued Grief*, 2020
oil on canvas
48 x 36 inches
Daniel Carlini
Reclining Nude, 2021
oil, acrylic, pastel, construction adhesive, and charcoal, and canvas on panel
48 x 72 inches
Anita Clipston

*Abyss*, 2020

oil on panel

7 x 5 inches
Gabriela Cohen

Deeply Rooted, 2021

woodcut print on paper

33 x 48 inches

dition 1 of 10
Zoë Davis
*Girl 1*, 2020
gouache and ink on watercolor paper
12 x 9 inches
Regiane Donadio

Stride, 2021
terra-cotta
19 x 9 x 12 inches
Yang Du
*The Way*, 2021
oil on canvas
36 x 30 inches
Santiago Galeas
_Soft Boy_, 2020
oil on canvas
16 x 12 inches
Caroline Gates

*At Night*, 2021
pastel on paper
18 x 23 inches
Djilas Gomez
*Kintsugi*, 2021
pencil and gold leaf on paper
22 x 30 inches
Lauren Hamilton
*On Ballston*, 2020
oil on canvas
30 x 40 inches
Jessica Hernandez
*Atabey, Espiritu de la Madre Naturaleza*, 2021
stoneware and high fire glaze
26 x 10.5 x 0.75 inches
Alessandra Hogan
The Yellow Paper, 2021
chalk pastel on handmade paper
8 x 14 inches
Timon YC I
Rainy Day, 2020
oil on canvas
60 x 46 inches
Leo Kang

Book 2 #76, 2021

pen, ink, and gouache on paper mounted to panel

20 x 24 inches
Carl-Edouard Keita

*Untitled (The Blood of a Poet)*, 2021

graphite, charcoal, colored pencil, and silver marker on paper

38 x 50 inches
Kayley Kemp
Cherrybomb, 2021
oil on canvas
20 x 16 inches
Christopher Kunk
*Standing Figure*, 2020
clay on armature
79 x 20 x 15 inches
Irina Lakshin

*Profit Maker*, 2020
fired clay covered with terra sigillata and blue stain
24 x 16 x 14.5 inches
Alicia Leigh Lang

Contrition, 2020
oil on canvas
24 x 36 inches
Anastasia Lopoukhine
*Falling into Sleep*, 2020
pen and ink on paper
54 x 54 inches
Maggie Macgregor
*A Bright Cold Day*, 2020
oil on canvas
48 x 36 inches
Bryna McCann
*Stone Figures, 2021*
soapstone
11 x 52 x 2.5 inches
Heather V McLeod

*Untitled*, 2021

oil on panel

30 x 24 inches
Matt Meserve

_Dialectic_, 2020

oil on cradled birch panel

20 x 24 inches
Erin Milez

*Trip Wire*, 2021

oil and acrylic on canvas

24 x 18 inches
Hannah Murray
Robini, 2021
oil on linen
48 x 46 inches
Ellie Kayu Ng
*I Wish You Would Listen Like a Mannequin*, 2021
oil on canvas
60 x 42 inches
Phil Eliot Padwe

**Self-Portrait, March 2021 - Zygomatic Emphasis, 2021**

ballpoint pen and soft pastel on handmade paper, and collaged sewing patterns mounted to board

10 x 8 inches
Carlos-Abrahan Pineda Palma

*Put the Money in My Hand and I Will Do the Things You Want Me To*, 2021

oil on linen

48 inches diameter
Allison Riback
*Ride to Live*, 2021
oil on linen
8 x 10 inches
Leonardo Rodriguez

*Serie Maternity*, 2020

wood, paper, fabric, wood filling, sandpaper, acrylic, and oil on cardboard

30 x 22 inches
Alexandra Zarins Rolls

*Glitch*, 2020

oil and embroidery thread on canvas

12 inches diameter
Rohini Sen
*Becoming*, 2020
charcoal on paper
16 x 23 inches
Wilba Simson

*Somewhere off Glaneuse Road*, 2021
charcoal, oil, and natural resin on canvas
62 x 92 inches
Jed Webster Smith

*Gunslingers*, 2020

watercolor on paper mounted to canvas

25 x 54 inches
Elena A. Ulansky
_Araya_, 2021
ink, oil, and charcoal on panel
30 x 40 inches
Julie Chandra Walsh
*Woodside*, 2021
graphite, charcoal, and ink wash on watercolor paper
21 x 15.5 inches
Sophia Weisensel
*Claudia*, 2020
oil on linen
36 x 60 inches
Jeffrey L. Wood
Converge, 2020
oil on panel
18 x 16 inches
Lingbo Zhu
-N, 2021
alcohol ink on Yupo paper
7 x 7 inches
Joseph Zovickian
*Portrait of David*, 2020
terra-cotta
31 x 25 x 12 inches
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