

LEGER, PATRICK NATHAN, M.F.A. The Paramount Series. (2006)
Directed by Professor John Maggio. 6 pp.

The purpose of this series is an investigation into the relationships between the figure and its setting in portraiture. Using photography as a primary reference, I will create six paintings, which demonstrate my interest in motion and distortion of the figure in contrast to a static, rigid environment.

THE PARAMOUNT SERIES

by

Patrick Nathan Leger

A Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
2006

Approved by

Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____ John Maggio

Committee Members _____ Richard Gantt

_____ Robert Gerhart

_____ Pat Wasserboehr

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

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THE PARAMOUNT SERIES

My approach to painting is a reaction to what I would consider traditional figure painting. The traditional idea of figure painting was once the focus of my work and was a fundamental part in my learning the process of painting. This was part of what I would consider academic values where the successes of previous artists are imparted upon the next generation. I think that my overexposure to this work often considered traditional, where the figure is perfectly framed and posed, has led me to do paintings of the figure where it is in a state of either action or distortion. These distortions are meant to give the viewer only an impression of the figure and to make the action the focus rather than the figure's features. My paintings are not meant to convey any sort of meaning apart from the possibility of depicting the figure in a way that isn't a portrait. Also, I am trying to incorporate more complex surroundings into my work. Lighting and environments are often chosen for their ability to emphasize the figure. I try, however, to use surroundings that overpower the figure in their size and intensity. The urban environment of a parking deck became an ideal setting for this series because of how it contrasts with the figure in both appearance and construction.

I consider myself to be an artist without a concentration in a single medium. My artistic devotion has always been to the study and experimentation within various mediums in the service of my concepts. The greatest concern in my process is

representing my idea as clearly as possible. I am not concerned with representation of materiality in my work. My use of photographic references helps me to better imitate the details or aesthetic qualities that I desire. I didn't approach these desired qualities as rules in the series. I feel that these pieces are unified by the similarity of their construction and appearance, but they are each separate pieces with their own unique characteristics.

In my recent work, photography is the only reference that I work from. My primary concern is to create a painting with characteristics similar to those of a photo and then pushing that idea to a point where focus is given to elements that address my own aesthetic concerns.

The importance of photography in my recent work is based on the many compositional, photographic qualities that I am trying to reproduce in this series. The photographic quality to depict exact moments in time shows instances that could never be captured while painting from life. This impromptu quality is important for how I want these paintings to represent their subjects in these spaces.

The use of photographic references allows me several freedoms that I would not normally have when simply painting from life. With a photo I can use locations that I would not be able to paint in, or that weren't suitable conditions for my way of working. Location became a very important part of this series. My choice of a parking deck became an interesting setting for work that included the figure because of its hard, sterile quality. The density and static appearance of the environment contrasts with the more fleeting impressions of the figures. In this setting, the figure is set apart from the rest of

the composition and isolates it but is also given a prominence because of its distorted quality in space based on a rigid, fixed geometric order.

Apart from just the locations, photographs enabled me to look at space from vantage points that I normally wouldn't have considered. The lower angled view gives the composition an off-balanced appearance. Instead of being at eye-level with the room and the figure, the viewer is put into a position where they would either be kneeling or lying down. This sort of viewer displacement through positioning has become of interest to me recently and is an element that I plan to continue to develop.

The intricacies of interiors are always something I have chosen to avoid in my paintings. In this series I saw the opportunity to address this problem in a way that was easier and more interesting for me to observe. The lower views used in the series often crop the figure almost out of the composition and focus on the ceilings and walls in an overwhelming way. Addressing the angles and the interlocking of the planes allows the painted environment to activate the entire picture plane. Choices like these would normally not be addressed in my work, which has a tendency to push the figure to the front and dominate much of the composition.

My reluctance to address the complexities of a setting would have led me to hone in on areas less complex and avoid those details that more accurately define the space. Using a photographic reference that is equal in dimension takes away the need for my own creative intervention and forces me to address every element that of the photo. This also dissuades me from omitting details that I would normally find too difficult to paint or seemed insignificant in the past. Since the photos being used for reference for this

series were chosen among others for their aesthetic properties, there should be no reason to alter them. Problems did arise when I began painting and certain elements had to be changed for reason other than preference. These changes did alter the composition of the painting from those of the reference photos, but do maintain the aesthetic concerns I was addressing.

The photographic description of objects and space was often not how I intended. There was the presence of accidents whether they were objects cropped by the frame, light sources outside of the image, or backlit figures that only appear as black, silhouetted shapes. Flaws, such as these, are a result of mechanical error and create something entirely different from what I intended. These, and similar elements were the ones I became most interested in because they were elements that I would have never thought to include in a painting. In choosing the images to reference, I had to consider what I was capable of depicting clearly. Because these are paintings, what would be considered a flaw in a photograph may not translate in the same way to a viewer.

The strong, saturated colors of the spaces are another way I use to distance the figure in the compositions. The paintings have bright, almost acidic greens and oranges that overpower the figures in intensity. In some paintings in the series the figures are enveloped within this saturated light but are mostly depicted in a way that contrasts them with the flat, reflective surfaces of the environments.

The subjects addressed in the paintings are very open to interpretation. The compositions are figures in similar environments. The environments are either large, expansive spaces or more confining areas. Even though the environment's dominance is

different in each painting, it retains the same geometric nature. The setting's imposing quality is influenced greatly by the position and size of the figure. In some, the figure is closer to the picture plane to create more intimacy with the viewer; in others, it becomes overtaken by the expanse of the environment. This type of figure-ground relationship is something that I have been investigating in my previous work, though most of the spaces and figures earlier paintings were invented.

I choose a medium that best conveys my intentions. While my paintings are not photo-realistic, a sense of realism is what I am concerned with most. I think much of my devotion to painting comes from my attachment to the actual process. The hands-on interaction of the mediums in which I work allows me a level of influence that would not be present in a process, like photography, where more elements are out of my control. This idea of control is inherent in painting, which is why the idea of combining aspects of it with the incidental qualities of photography are interesting to me.

Much of my painting is meant to work on a purely aesthetic level. There is little or no depiction of any sort of idea outside of the representation of how I want the image to be presented to the viewer. I avoid metaphorical or symbolic representation because I feel that those are issues that don't have a place within this series. My work now focuses entirely on craft, and my involvement in the medium of painting centers entirely on the refinement of the techniques and methods I utilize in an effort to expand my knowledge.

CATALOGUE

Leger, Patrick. *Paramount Series 1-6*. Paintings. 2006.