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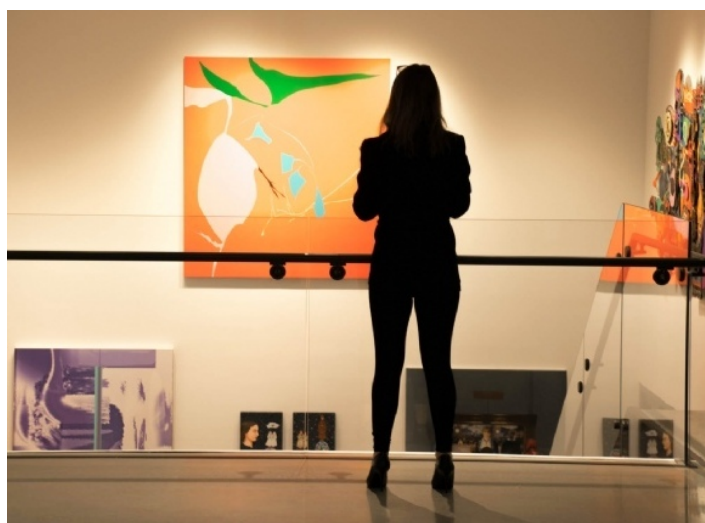
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## New York's C24 Gallery Shows 'How Many Miles to Babylon: Recent Paintings from Los Angeles and New York'

January 21, 2016 [D. Dominick Lombardi](#)



C24 Gallery, with Peter Frank-curated exhibition, a Heather Gwen Martin painting in the distance.

I first met Peter Frank, curator of this show, in the fall of 2003. It was on a press trip to St Louis – Peter came in from LA and I was one of the writers in from New York. The idea of this particular junket was to get a good look at the Saint Louis Art Museum and the Contemporary Art Museum of St Louis, plus a few of the local tourist attractions, art galleries and artist's studios to round off our experience. Both aforementioned museums are

impressive for their architecture, as well as their world-class exhibition programs. The Saint Louis Art Museum's building and the grounds it overlooks are a testament to good taste and stateliness, designed and built by Cass Gilbert for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition (World's Fair); while the Contemporary Art Museum of St Louis is one of the more impressive and memorable contemporary institutions our country has to offer, a credit to the

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uniquely visionary mind of architect, Brad Cloepfil. xxxxx

Peter and I got to know each other during one or two of our more enlightening group dinners at St. Louis's vibrant local breweries. There, we broke bread, laughed a lot and savored the locally-brewed seasonal offerings. We've stayed in touch since then, occasionally running into each other at art fairs in New York or Miami, but I've never had the pleasure of seeing one of his curatorial projects up close and personal, until now.

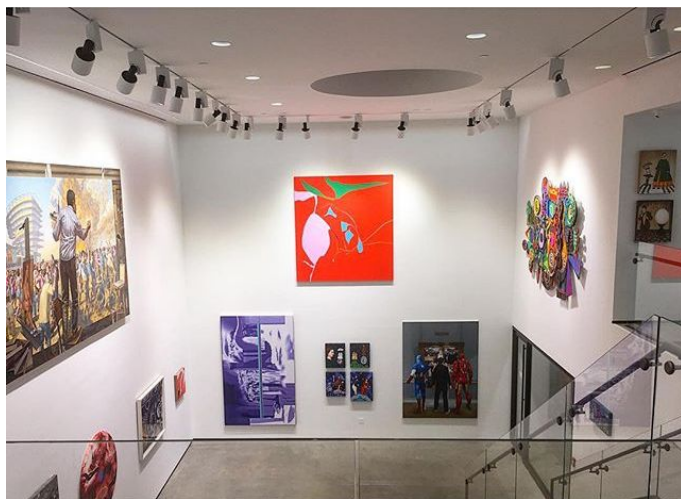


*How Many Miles to Babylon: Recent Paintings from Los Angeles and New York*, an exhibition at C24 (above), closes on February 17<sup>th</sup>, meets and surpasses all of my expectations of what Peter, who I believe to be one of the more brilliant personalities in the art world, might have had in store for the New York art scene. Starting with the exhibition space, the gallery has a number of unique features that are keyed off of a doublewide central descending staircase, opening up a number of possibilities for installation, presentation and viewing. In addition, the spacious floor planning has a few quirky elements, such as a tightly designed, yet openly viewable dead-end hall way to two-story tall hanging areas, visible from a multitude of angles and vantage points. Between the strength of the art and the freshness of sight lines, everywhere you look when entering the space here, you will encounter a lively and festive atmosphere. This, in contrast to many of New York's Chelsea gallery district exhibitions, which tend to be much of the same formula of perfectly set works offering 'optimal' and precise viewing levels and 'proper' spacing.

Left: C24 Gallery, New York, NY

In this exhibition, you will see art which is as active within its picture plane, energizing the space it occupies. For instance, walking in, there are a number of strong figurative-to-abstract works suggesting the exhibition's implied theme of varied and divergent artistic voices and *-isms*. Having work brought in from Los Angeles (or California, in general), to





venues here in New York, sometimes means finding a strong illustrative component in technique or aesthetics. And still, to my constant amazement, this trend may be off-putting to some of our more 'knowledgeable' New York-based locals who have not yet adjusted to the now decades-old, mainly West Coast trend, of skillful and oft-times dreamy representation.

For example, with works from F. Scott Hess, who has traveled quite a bit while residing, as he does, in LA since 1984, we have *Dancing on the Edge of Time* (2015), reminiscent of Tiepolo's ceiling paintings—mastered many centuries ago—which offers a great skyward-looking view. This strong, precise super-representational component, found in Hess's approach to the narrative, may turn off more than a few New Yorkers who find it, for lack of a better word when it comes to illustrative painters, oh I don't know what the best word is...maybe, too commercial?

Right: Scott Hess, *Dancing on the Edge of Time* (2015), oil on polyester canvas, 41 x 54.5".



This thinking, I believe, is deep-seated, albeit less so in more recent times, separating as it does the so-called 'commercial arts' from the 'fine arts'.

This cultural divide between art and illustration has more or less completely dissolved along our nation's West Coast, thanks in part to the popularity and influence of important, ground breaking publications like *Juxtapoz* magazine, which was established in 1994 by a number of artists and collectors including Robert Williams. The publication serves as an antidote to the "established" art world tenets of New York City. *Juxtapoz* is primarily focused on Pop Surrealism, art often done with masterful representational skill and technique, building on a distinctive hot rod—graffiti—psychedelic—skate and surfboard aesthetic. There is also an Asian influence in West Coast culture—most notably Japanese—where great design, or a great creation, no matter what the application or genre, is great art. Period!

Here in New York, galleries like Jonathan Levine are helping to establish and reinforce how



this West Coast Culture is spreading internationally, as they currently feature a show that offers a Ukrainian version of 'Juxtapoz'-type art with work by Interesni Kazki. Also, the Paul Kasmin Gallery is now showing Mark Ryden, one of the most popular and sought-after artists of the skillfully crafted Pop Surrealist style in a solo exhibition at their 293 Tenth Avenue location. Many other galleries in the metro area continue to embrace and fuel the fire for a growing and solid interest in proficient, representational narrative painting.

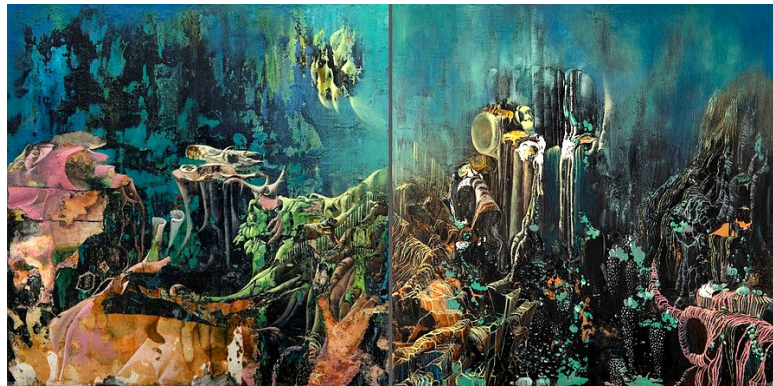
Right: Fatemeh Burnes, *Nightscares 2* (2015), oil,

pigment, hand-made paper on wooden panel 2 panels 12 x 12".

Getting back to the Frank-curated exhibition, we have artist, Fatemeh Burnes, who was born in Tehran, settling in Southern California in 1977. Here, the artist offers work best described by two somewhat naughty words that might be uttered in New York: fantasy and surrealism. Conditions have improved since the 1970s, when I as an artist, pounded the pavement in SoHo with slides of my surrealist/expressionist paintings in tow, hitting dead end after dead end in my efforts to have the work accepted. But, even despite improving times, there still remains controlled caution when viewing work in these genre. I find Burnes' paintings quite striking and inspiring, as she blends the real with the imagined with great clarity and mystery, narrowing in on the waking/dream state.

Left: Jedd Gareth, *The Most Beautiful French Actress in Red Chiffon* (2015), Archival pigment on canvas, 72 x 42" oval.

Jedd Gareth makes an appearance here, as well, in the form of ruby red archival pigment on canvas, a work entitled, *The Most Beautiful French Actress in Red Chiffon* (2015). I haven't encountered Jedd Gareth's name since he was a big Whitney Biennial staple, back in the 1980s. This new piece, which is sexy, enigmatic and quite beautiful in all its brazen crimson hues and subtly comparative textures, is quite a departure from his past works which were awkwardly arresting and oddly designed, in a weird De Chirico sort of way.



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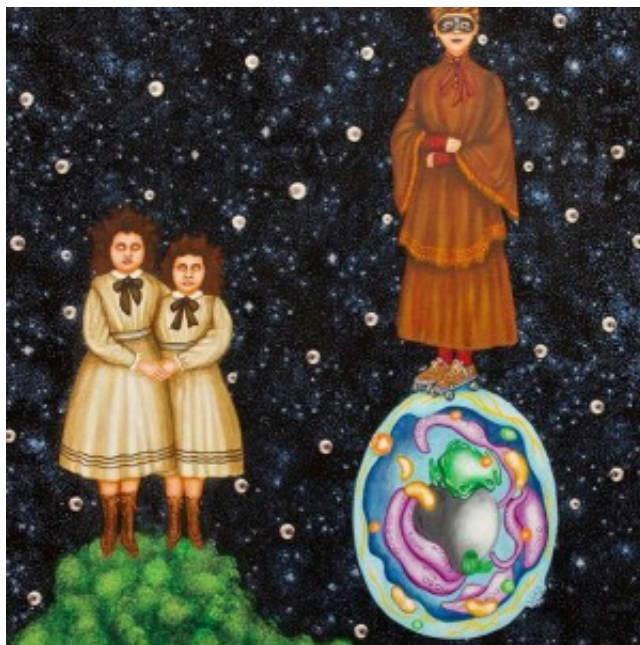
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Lezley Saar makes herself heard, loud and clear, on a much smaller scale, with a number of compelling vignettes, pairing mythology, science, culture and dreams with equal ease. She asks viewers to travel through space and time, meeting at a distant star system's earthlike planet. Artist, Geraldine Neuwirth, grounds us in the tactile meanderings of a wildly uninhibited thinker, proving that expression and creativity come from the gut as much as they do from heart and mind.

Right: Lezley Saar, *The Lunatic, the Chaste, and the Unexpressive* (2014), Acrylic and photos on fabric on board, 20 x 16".



Other works in the exhibition come from the studios of Marc Dennis, who offers beautifully painted, humorous narratives; Heather Gwen Martin adds the graceful side of well-designed colorful abstractions; and Chris de Boschnek adds a bit of creepy discomfort with his mysterious and somewhat suspicious looking 'artifacts'.

*How Many Miles to Babylon*, a challenging question, and a more superb blaze of talent you won't see anywhere else in the city this winter.

**By Dominick Lombardi, Contributing Writer**

*How Many Miles to Babylon: Recent Paintings from Los Angeles and New York*

Through February 17, 2016

C24 Gallery

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(646) 416 6300

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<http://www.c24gallery.com/>

## Links:

Peter Frank

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_Frank\\_\(art\\_critic\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Frank_(art_critic))



Saint Louis Art Museum

<http://www.slam.org/>

Left: Marc Dennis, *Ironman, Captain America and a Russian Mobster Walk into a Bar* (2015), Oil on linen, 80 x 60".

Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis

<http://camstl.org/>

Juxtapoz

<http://www.juxtapoz.com/>

Robert Williams

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Williams\\_\(artist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Williams_(artist))

Jonathan Levine Gallery

<http://jonathanlevinegallery.com/>

Paul Kasmin Gallery

<http://www.paulkasmingallery.com/exhibitions>

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**Jesse Poimboeuf** January 21, 2016 7:06 pm

Haven't seen this show yet, but can't wait. I met Peter quite a few years ago and consider him not only one of the most knowledgeable critic/curators but the most open to different styles, ideas and techniques. He never ceases to impress & challenge my views and sensibilities! What a great sense of humor as well! Never boring or dull in his presentations & conversations. He always inspires my utmost respect!



**Gerard Perales** January 22, 2016 4:00 am

Very interesting article,  
Thank you,  
Gerard

<http://www.gerardperales.com>



**Fast Eddy Rubin** January 22, 2016 10:41 am

Peter is a God and Everybody knows it, including Peter Himself. If only he would move back to NYC. We could use some Intelligent Life here in The Big Apple. I wouldn't turn down More Excitement either. Fast Eddy aka Edward Rubin

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