

Portfolio: Joel Mesler Makes Art for Hamptons Supersize Homes

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by Pat Rogers

The idea of featuring a flamigo in a painting arose when Joel Mesler was starting to make art intended for an exhibition set in an alternate space in a rough-edge neighborhood outside of Palm Springs, CA. In Palm Springs, flamigos are viewed as representing luxury, having been imported into the sandy desert, explained Mesler. Considering the exhibition setting of a house under renovation in the dodgy Joshua Tree, where meth labs aren't necessarily a rarity, the pink elegant bird provided the perfect irony to pair a lux lifestyle with a place where it wasn't likely to ever arrive, said Mesler.

Fast forward a few years and to The Hamptons, where Mesler now makes his home. A new transplant, the former L.A. art dealer and recent NYC gallerist, Mesler pulled up stakes from New York City and recently founded Rental Gallery in East Hampton, N.Y. as a curator-driven gallery space. With the move, came more time to paint and to make art as he and his family settled in to a new life.

Irony struck again when Mesler considered reviving the series, but now taylorred to a place where luxury actually thrives. The conceptual connection was too good to pass up. The fact there are no flamingos on the East End made the flip-flop even better. Especially if the symbolism could be part of a private joke.

In his latest series, Mesler couples an iconic flamingo image with places typical for a Hamptons mansion. Set on raw linen, the locales are conjured through bold labels including "Guest House" and "Indoor Pool."

Tapping into a Hamptons summer, "Art market" is among the paintings and is currently presented by Harper's Books at the Upstairs Art Fair, a NADA-esque art fair debuting this year. Gallerist Harper Levine is a co-founder of the new fair, along with gallerist Bill Powers, and is a neighbor to Mesler's Rental Gallery.

Flamingos aside, art featuring identifiable objects and text are consistent with Joel Mesler's art practice. He has a fascination with images that influenced him while growing up and frequently incorporates them into his art, said Mesler. Architecture, art, television personalities and actors including Gene Wilder, Barbara Streisand and Audrey Hepburn came easily to mind, he said during a recent phone interview.

The series also plays into Mesler's preference for realism, for drawing and for making art that specifically related to the environment where they are likely to be installed or find a home. Mesler enjoys infusing a tongue-in-cheek humor into the work that has the side benefit of encouraging creative thinking and adopting a sense of humor about life and its circumstances for viewers of his art.

Before the flamingos took center stage, Mesler exhibited paintings from his series "[The Estate of Joel Mesler](#)" at NADA New York in May 2016 and at the Surf Lodge in July 2016, which featured a sub-series called "[Fish People of Montauk.](#)" Both were presented by [Cultural Council](#).

Why "The Estate of Joel Mesler" you might ask? Mesler paints when life allows and has identified streaks as an artist taking place during 1999-2001; 2004-06; and 2015 to present, according to Adam Abdalla during an [interview with Ann Binlot for Forbes](#). As each streak might be his last, Mesler believes it's best to consider all his art from "The Estate of Joel Mesler," just in case his next period as an artist doesn't arrive.

In an email exchange with Pat Rogers of Hamptons Art Hub, Joel Mesler explained more about his recent works and his art for Hamptons homes.

Pat Rogers: What is your inspiration for your art?

Joel Mesler: Wanting to be loved and remembered.

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“Untitled (Guest House)” by Joel Mesler, 2017. Pigment on linen, 48 x 40 inches. Courtesy of Harper’s Books.

PR: How did this series begin?

JM: When a friend in California began to redecorate his house. He ripped out his bath, sink and toilet and all that was left was the plumbing which I thought would be a lovely setting for a painting to hang that read “Powder Room.”



“Untitled (Powder Room)” by Joel Mesler, 2017. Pigment on linen, 48 x 40 inches. Courtesy of Harper’s Books.

PR: How does this series differ from the work you’re known for?

JM: I’m not known yet.

PR: Can you say something about your process?

JM: I was trained as a print maker so the process I use is close to a lithographic process than a traditional painting process.



"Untitled (Art Market)" by Joel Mesler, 2017. Pigment on linen, 48 x 40 inches. Courtesy of Harper's Books.

PR: What kind of viewer reaction are you hoping for when your *Indoor Pool* painting is, indeed, installed poolside?

JM: Receiving a \$6k check from someone that wants to take it home.



“Untitled (Indoor Pool)” by Joel Mesler, 2017. Pigment on linen, 48 x 40 inches. Courtesy of Harper’s Books.

PR: Do you have a favorite piece?

JM: They are all my babies!

BASIC FACTS: Joel Mesler’s art is exhibited with Harper’s Books of East Hampton, NY. A selection from the series is presented at the Upstairs Art Fair from July 14 to 16, 2017 at 11 Indian Wells Road, Amagansett, NY 11930. Harper’s Books is located at 87 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, NY 11937. www.harpersbooks.com.

Joel Mesler is the owner and director of Rental Gallery in East Hampton, 87 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, NY 11937. For information on Mesler or the gallery program, visit www.rentalgallery.us.

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