



Worlds in Flux Revealed in New Show of Paintings at RJD Gallery

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by Pat Rogers

There's something about life on the fringe that's compelling. Perhaps it's curiosity about what life looks like from a precipice, or perhaps there is comfort to be found on the fringe, knowing that survival on uncertain terrain is a mark of tenacity.

Two contemporary painters walk softly in the outskirts and bring back life in all its complexity through portrayals of people, places and objects that offer a window into lives on the edge. In a series of new paintings, both artists have made artworks that captivate and welcome imaginative wanderings into worlds that resonate even though they may not be fully familiar.

"On the Edge of..." features the paintings of [Rick Garland](#) and [Frank Oriti](#) at [RJD Gallery](#) in Bridgehampton, NY in The Hamptons. An Opening Reception takes place on Saturday, July 21, 2018, from 6 to 8 p.m. with both artists flying to New York to attend. The exhibition remains on view through August 12, 2018.

Garland and Oriti are paired together to create an exhibition that reflects the tension in contemporary life worldwide, explained gallery owner Richard J. Demato.

"Their art represents emotional cutting edge and extraordinary contemporary issues through photorealism," said Demato. "The WORLD is on the edge. It changes more quickly than any of us can assimilate—creating anxiety—and the art represents our world today."

The artists draw upon different muses for their realist paintings and provide a natural complement to one another.

Garland is based in London and draws inspiration for his narrative art from abandoned buildings that have been reclaimed by nature or unseen people who transform the space to possess an unearthly type of vibrancy. Garland finds and highlights the beauty of these nearly forgotten places—left behind by history—to create interior urban landscapes enlivened by imagination and rendered with technical accomplishment.

Oriti is based in Cleveland, Ohio, a city perched on Lake Erie that has undergone a harsh historical arc. The American city rose to prosperity, was plunged into economic depression and eventually regained its footing through reinvention to coax revitalization. Oriti makes portraits of people populating the scrappy city who possess their own historical arcs and understand how to survive.

Both artists, in a sense, have interest in transitions and their paintings provide a conduit to worlds in flux. Paintings by both Oriti and Garland possess a subtle optimism and a resiliency born from

embracing change and making the best of things.

Rick Garland

Rick Garland made seven new paintings that will debut at “On the Edge of...” All the paintings are set in derelict places where life—both past and present—makes its mark. While deterioration is evident, Garland’s art does not focus on decay but in the beauty found in possibilities, the artist explained in a phone interview.

“This is a collection of paintings of imagined spaces: compositions of real places with elements of personal memories and an injection of imagination,” Garland said. “They show the elegance with which history, nature, mankind, and time combine when making a claim on a building that has lost its identity and purpose— and the beauty in its deterioration.”



“The Old Chair” by Richard Garland. 46 1/4 x 37 3/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

Garland’s paintings—composed with minute detail that makes the locations feel as if the paintings were doorways to an adjoining location—are a mix between realistic depiction and creative license. He constructs the interior buildingscapes with scenes or elements from different buildings to create compelling paintings that are a mix of fantasy and reality, and historical recording with a personal point of view

“I use elements of buildings and add them to other buildings as I would like the scene to be and to get across what I think is important,” Garland said.



“The Suite” by Richard Garland. 26 x 21 inches. Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

Light and the way it streams from external sources is an important element of his art. The quality of light changes from painting to painting but also within artworks to signify the complexity of interior spaces. The way he handles light directly enhances the atmosphere and sense of place in his paintings.

For instance, there are typically multiple sources of natural light that streams from crumbled walls, rooftop holes and changes with distance in places that can be the size of football fields. Working in

a multitude of thin layers allows Garland to achieve luminescence as well as complex dark tones, coaxed from a myriad of colors to achieve rich surfaces and lush blacks.

"Light defines everything," he said. "It's form; it's atmosphere and it's a color palette. It's a technical challenge as well. It's a very organic procedure with me. I bring the light up in a painting until I know it's right."



"One Illuminati" by Richard Garland. 48 x 36 inches. Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

Frank Oriti

Frank Oriti made nine new paintings that will be unveiled in "On the Edge of..." at RJD Gallery. While predominantly portraits that depict friends, family and folks Oriti meets during daily life, the paintings represent three distinct bodies of work, he said. Portraiture, paintings of wearable items and portraits that emphasize tattoos.

"A few years ago, I began to describe the portraits I was painting as people belonging to a 'new working class,'" Oriti wrote in an email. "These people were artists, musicians, tattoo artists, tattoo collectors, bakers, bartenders, and barbers to name a few. Some of whom were working two jobs just to support their creative path. I was used to this sort of grind and befriending others who were on the same path was extremely inspiring."



"King Neto" by Frank Oriti, 2017. Oil on panel, 20 x 16 inches. Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

When Oriti makes portraits, he invites his subjects to wear what they like. Over the years, the recurrence of denim, leather jackets and canvas sneakers seemed to establish these items as the "unofficial uniform" of the blue collar culture he portrayed, he said. This led to paintings of jeans, belts, sneakers and other wearable items that blur the line between portraiture and still life.

"With paint, I explore the materiality of these items—documenting a visual history of how these things rip, tear, scuff, fade, break down and evolve over time," Oriti wrote.



"With or Without II" by Frank Oriti, 2018. Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

Considering the individuality of his portraiture subjects led Oriti to consider the importance of tattoos and the facial hair integral to many of his subjects, he said. Honing in on the details helped stretch Oriti as a painter.

Finding the tattoos themselves interesting, he created a new series that will be unveiled in "On the Edge of ..." highlighting tattoos of his subjects.

"In *Red*, I have created a portrait of Dustin Arnett, a Cleveland tattoo artist. I was drawn to his numerous colorful tattoos and the full red beard he continues to sport. This intermingling of the two textures (tattooed flesh and coarse red facial hair) is the type of 'crossover' between my figurative work and paintings of singled out materials I find so rewarding in my studio practice."



"Red" by Frank Oriti, 2018. Oil on panel, 10 x 8 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and RJD Gallery.

"On the Edge of..."

"On the Edge of ..." provides viewers the chance to visit worlds unseen in a single gallery visit. The paintings themselves represent an opportunity for collectors to be a part of the history of these painters, Demato said. All the art in the exhibition is fresh, allowing established collectors to enhance their collection. It also allows new art buyers to become part of the painters' creative trajectory and to join a network of collectors at interesting points in these painters' careers, he said.

"Art intelligently acquired is very personal, evolves and provides the collector the daily honor and pleasure of viewing what surrounds them," Demato said. "Mature, established, refined, trained artists create opportunities to provide the art owners with pleasure and to improve their daily environment. What could be more important than deciding to improve daily life in a way that allows them to share their state of mind and joy with others?"

BASIC FACTS: "On the Edge of..." is on view from July 21 to August 12, 2018 at RJD Gallery, 2385 Main Street, Bridgehampton, NY 11932. An Opening Reception takes place on Saturday, July 21, 2018 from 6 to 8 p.m. Exhibiting artists Frank Oriti and Rick Garland are expected to attend.

www.rjdgallery.com.

To preview the art online, visit RJD Gallery's Artsy page by visiting www.artsy.net/rjd-gallery.

Also on view is a group show of select artworks by Margaret Bowland, [Andrea Kowch](#), Jackee Strom, Phillip Thomas and Salvatore Alessi.

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