



Peter Lyons
modern luminist

The paintings of Peter Lyons look somehow familiar, but they are distinctive, different, memorable. They seem realistic, but they speak of memory and myth. They evoke dreams of different times and different places. One cannot recall seeing exactly such landscapes in nature, yet one easily recognizes each scene: they have both strength and credibility.

Lyons's work looks like photo-realism but it isn't. His compositions stem from his occasional sightings of certain objects in the landscape — a railroad car, a crossing signal, an oil tank — which cause him “a moment of revelation.” He sees something, an object, a detail, that brings to mind for him a complete finished painting. Then he goes through a laborious preparation of a gessoed panel ... yet the finished painting conveys only a hallucinatory sense of mystery and suggests nothing of its laborious construction.

One of the oldest themes in American landscape painting is that of the “machine in the garden.” ... Lyons' paintings speak to our continuing national ambivalence toward technological progress. In them the “machine”—in the form of nearly ubiquitous railroad tracks stretching horizontally across his composition or receding toward the horizon—looks as permanent as the sky itself. Nature and man—represented by his machines—seem at a standoff, neither willing to yield...

One feels in these paintings both despair and hope. In them, a limitless barren landscape, the stuff of dreams, populated only with threatening, man-made structures of great intrinsic beauty, may symbolize either the end of time or the beginning of a new day.

Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr.
Former Curator of American Art
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Like the paintings by Fitz Henry Lane and his contemporaries later called Luminists, Peter Lyons's paintings depict scenes whose otherworldly light evokes or precipitates a moment in which the mind comes into contact with truths beyond the senses and outside time. Beauty is immanent; serenity is palpable; spiritual fulfillment — with all its requisite complexity and awareness of suffering — is imminent.

A few of Lyons's paintings exemplify the axes of his art and the emotional power of his paintings.

In *The Valley*, a long irrigation canal arrives from a distant horizon, together with angled twilight and a converging series of poles. The proximate debouching of a second canal, intensely illuminated, the surge and debris suggesting violent power, the glowing rails — this culminating power of the engineered and natural landscape is all aimed precisely at the spot where the viewer stands, and is happening now.

In *Yellow Boxcar*, childlike joy in color and form elevate and celebrate the elementary sensations of being in the world. In *Breakthrough*, emblems of the sensory world disappear into that realm beyond real where artists create meaning and beauty.

In *American Dream*, the vortical harmonies and tensions of the composition enact the spiritual harmonies and tensions among the three strata of human experience: the heavens above, the natural order below, and civilization interposing.

Matthew Swift
Director
Trident Gallery

Artist's Statement

The triangular tug-of-war between man, nature, and super-nature is the essence of what we call human. To search for metaphors to capture and transform what is vast and incomprehensible into understandable and recognizable forms is to try to communicate what is incommunicable — the essence of what we call art.

The making of images enables us to examine our condition and to test reality. But this process is dynamic and reversible, allowing us to take what is known and quantifiable and transmogrify it into something beyond time and form, back into an original state free of physical and temporal constraints.

Since the painting of Christian icons, western culture has represented light as directly transmitting the authority of God. Later, light in a church was not just light but divine light. As painting became more secular, particularly in the first landscapes, the Dutch flat, uninspiring countryside became majestic through the magical agency of light. In America the fulfillment of the Enlightenment and the flood tide of Romanticism reasserted the divine nature of every human soul and the entire universe they inhabited. The American landscape became a metaphor for man, the clay from which Adam, like unleavened bread, was raised and made more than kinetic with something of God's own condition, animated by the divine power of light.

When bathed in this elevating light, the beauty in the ordinary is released, and the image acts as a lens focusing awareness of wonder, joy, and spiritual anticipation in the viewer.

Before something becomes immortal it must first pass away. What is unworthy finds a new life through expanded perception and imagination. The junkyard is restored and Calvary becomes Eden.

—Peter Lyons



The Valley
2010; oil on canvas; 36 x 60 inches

American Eden

A broken world glimpsed from a speeding vehicle. But in that glimpse what was fallen is forgiven and perfected. If we could only exit the vehicle and re-enter this other place, perhaps we too could be redeemed. But the vehicle won't stop.



American Eden
2002; oil on panel; 16 x 36 inches
private collection



Altar
2010; oil on canvas; 36 x 60 in.



SNE 48010
2015; oil on canvas; 40 x 60 inches



American Spring
2013; oil on canvas; 30 x 48 inches



Mondo Exotica
2015; oil on canvas; 40 x 72 inches

European Sojourn 1

The town of Consuegra has an antiquated motif, and along with Campo de Criptana are said to be Cervantes's inspiration for Don Quixote's most famous adventure as he tries to slay his demons.

When I saw this scene, the sun was in its last fifteen minutes above the horizon. The blue heaven was adorned with an angel moon. The windmill is attempting direct communication and seems similar to the Lovell Radio Telescope at Jodrell Bank. Like the telescope, it appears to be on its knees, arms outstretched in prayer for forgiveness and atonement.





Consuegra
2014; oil on canvas; 14 x 22 inches

European Sojourn 2

S.P.Q.R. is a vision of Rome, the acronym ascribed to the authority and power of the Roman Empire — *Senatus Populusque Romanus*. The Senate and the people of Rome. These archaic letters are still embossed on the cast iron manhole covers throughout Rome.

This painting is the record of a moment of vision while on a bus halfway between the airport and the city. The highways, overpasses, and bridges of modern Rome were built by the direct descendants of the architects and engineers who constructed the antique empire. The clean, laminar lines of the modern designs are unaffected by the natural forms of the surrounding grass and trees, themselves strictly planted in subordinate pseudo-natural designs around the engineering. The clouds echo and enhance the trees, the modern forms, and the surreal nature of the image. It is in just such a setting that a young Monica Vitti would stand alone, lost in modern dislocation in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni.



S.P.Q.R.
2013; oil on canvas; 20 x 30 inches



Sanctuary
2005; oil on panel; 24 x 49 inches



Valencia

2014; oil on canvas; 16 x 30 inches

Dreams

The difference between fact and truth is temporality. Facts are temporal, and as time's slaves, they decay and turn to dust. Truth exists outside the field of time and is eternal.



American Dream
2014; oil on canvas; 16 x 24 inches



Playtime Manhattan
2014; oil on canvas; 16 x 24 inches



Friday Night
2010; oil on canvas; 36 x 60 inches



Breakthrough
2014; oil on canvas; 14 x 22 in.



Yellow Boxcar
2015; oil on canvas; 14 x 24 inches

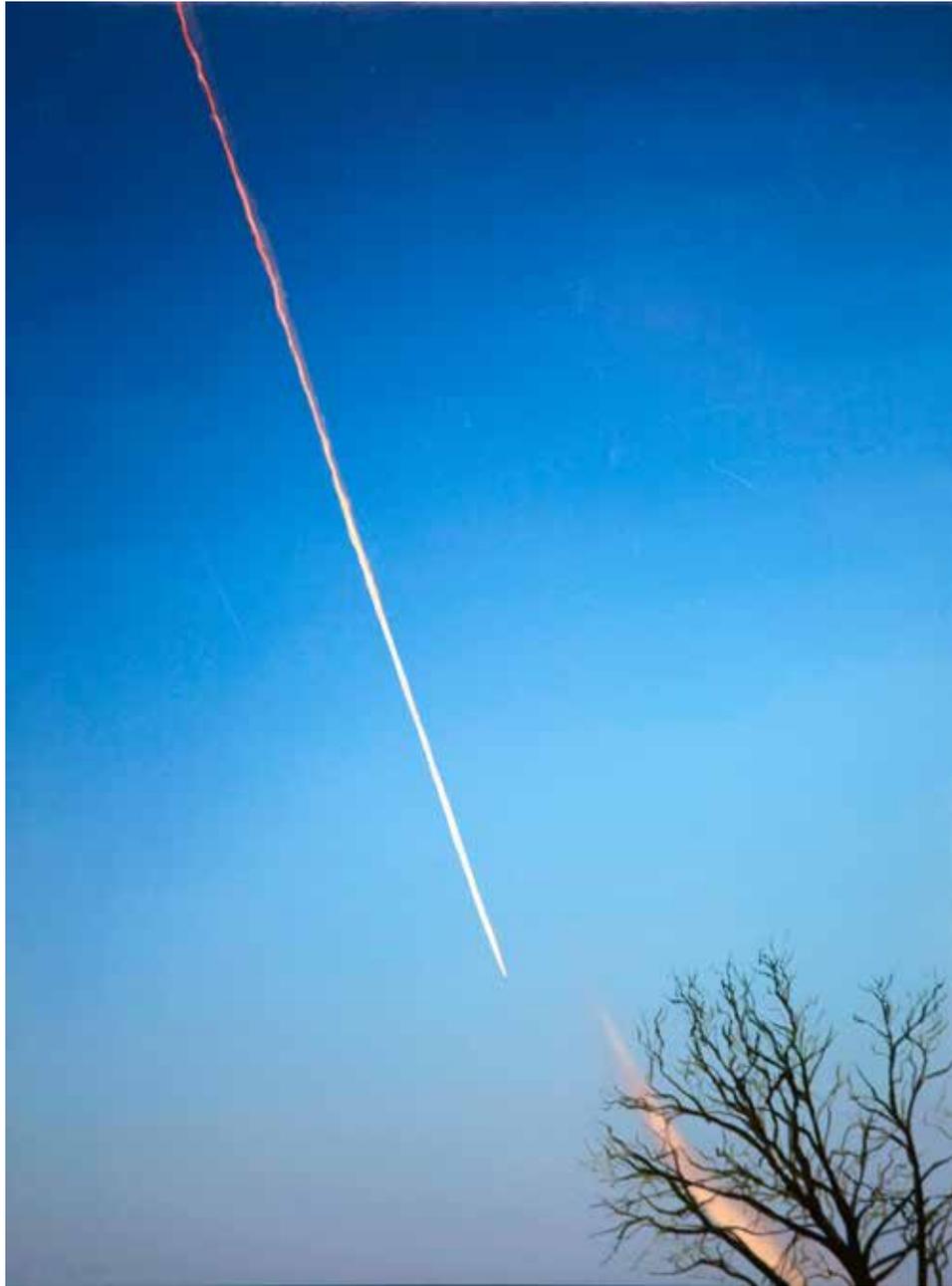
Sky

From the earth we see directly into heaven's vault. We are separated yet somehow connected. The invitation is implicit.

In nocturnes, Earth's atmosphere seems stripped away, the veil between God and man is torn, and we see ourselves in the eternal.



Archangel
2008; oil on panel; 12 x 16 inches



Prometheus
2007; oil on panel; 16 x 12 inches
private collection



Joie de Vivre
2006; oil on panel; 16 x 12 inches



Elements
2004; oil on panel; 36 x 72 inches



Decor
2007; oil on panel; 36 x 72 inches



Galaxie
2003; oil on panel; 36 x 60 inches
private collection



Icarus
2005; oil on panel; 12 x 16 inches



Milky Way
2015; oil on canvas; 14 x 24 inches



Night Vision
2014; oil on canvas; 22 x 36 in.

Gloucester

Gloucester out on Cape Ann pulls in a unique and pure light. Part of its mystique is in its quickly changing weather, like all North Atlantic seaports. But when the sun is shining, the clean salt air has a crystalline quality that bestows new possibilities upon all it touches. Bathed in this light, the fascinating, abstract forms of a seaport and the water's variable surface are a prospect of boundless promise.



Gloucester Harbor
2013; oil on canvas; 38 x 50 inches



Gloucester Afternoon
2014; oil on canvas; 24 x 36 inches



Jubilee
2013; oil on canvas; 48 x 60 inches
private collection

Cambridge Environs

The well-known urban landscape seen new, transmogrified, changed in a magical or unexpected way. Divine gardens and holy temples full of hope and joy.



Obstacle
2007; oil on panel; 12 x 16 inches



Night — Allston
2007; oil on panel; 12 x 16 inches



Prescott St.
2005; oil on panel; 29 x 36 in.



Priam's Palace
2005; oil on panel; 24 x 36 in.



Revelation
2005; oil on panel; 24 x 36 inches



Duel
2005; oil on panel; 24 x 36 inches



Winter Thursday
2006; oil on panel; 12 x 16 in.



American Office
2008; oil on panel; 12 x 16 in.



Archetype
2005; oil on panel; 24 x 36 inches

Geometry

It is through the relationships between objects that we negotiate the world. We are ethereal in substance but tangible in form, and as corporeal beings we interact with one another in Cartesian space. These overtly geometric paintings make this existential paradox more obvious, make the incorporeal more comprehensible, and reveal the abstract nature of reality itself.



Friday 5pm
2015; oil on canvas; 14 x 22 inches

Plentitude

The oil storage tanks are geometrical, but also suggest fullness and completion, a Rubenesque satisfaction that makes what might otherwise be a sterile surface voluminous, sensual, and, dare I say it, pleasantly plump.



Deity
2014; oil on canvas; 14 x 22 inches



Marshland

2012; oil on canvas; 36 x 60 inches



Everett Massachusetts
2013; oil on panel; 12 x 16 in.



Peppermint Twist
2002–2003; oil on panel; 36 x 72 inches
private collection



Eternal Angel
2004; oil on panel; 36 x 72 inches
private collection

Biography

Peter John Lyons was born in New Zealand in 1960. He attended university there, but dropped out after two years of a physics degree, and spent the rest of the 1980s teaching himself to paint. He left for America in 1990, lived in Los Angeles for six years, then moved to Boston.

Galleries and Exhibitions

St. Botolph Club (Boston)

2002–3, solo exhibition. Awarded the Morton C. Bradley Prize for best work in recent years.

2003–2011, group exhibitions.

Richard York Gallery (New York City)

2003, solo exhibition.

Meredith Ward Fine Art (New York City)

2005, solo exhibition.

Paul Dietrich Gallery (Cambridge MA)

2010, solo exhibition.

Boston Athenaeum (Boston)

2010, commissioned painting.

North Shore Arts Association (Gloucester MA)

2012–2015, group exhibitions.

Salmagundi Club (New York), 2015, member.

Trident Gallery (Gloucester MA)

2015, group exhibition.

2016, solo exhibition.

Peter Lyons's paintings are shown by appointment
at Trident Gallery or your home or place of work.

A solo exhibition will take place in the spring of 2016.

TRIDENTGALLERY

GLOUCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

Trident Gallery shows beautiful and intelligent contemporary art in all mediums, emphasizing the work of artists continuing Gloucester's rich legacy as a center for new American Art.

Every five weeks, the gallery presents a new exhibition of contemporary art in a rich context of written commentary and public discussion.

Gallery Director Dr. Matthew Swift curates and produces gallery exhibitions, drawing on over twenty years of multi-disciplinary scholarship, teaching, and creative exploration.

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MATTHEW SWIFT, DIRECTOR