GREGORY PACKARD
THE LIGHT STILL SHEDS THE DARK
EXHIBITION DATES

JUNE 15 - SEPTEMBER 7, 2015

Inaugural Exhibition in the Jacomien Mars Reception Gallery of the new Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Building at THE Brinton MUSEUM
DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

When opening a new exhibition space it is wise to consider carefully which artist you want to have initiate that gallery, so it was with copious forethought that Gregory Packard was selected as our premier artist to show in the Jacomien Mars Reception Gallery of the Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Building. The following serves as an explanation of my thought process in arriving at this decision back in 2012. At forty-five years of age, by artistic standards, Greg is only now embarking upon the prime of his creative years. Even more importantly, we at The Brinton Museum feel a sense of pride and, may I say, a smidgen of ownership in his artistic career. This institution put Greg into his first museum show in 2002 and followed that up by giving him his first one-person museum exhibition in 2004. His most recent show here in Big Horn was in 2009 when he pinch-hit for an artist who withdrew from our Holiday Show leaving us with less than three months to find an artist capable of delivering a museum-quality show on such short notice. That time as on every other occasion, Greg’s work was stellar. Consequently, in Gregory Packard we have an artist who produces superlative work, has an impeccable track record, is as reliable as your old Timex watch, and has been a constant friend to The Brinton Museum throughout his artistic career. He also is a great individual, personable, kind and generous to a fault. It was a very easy choice, I hope that upon viewing the work you concur.

Ken Schuster
Director & Chief Curator
In an honest manner with not much more than a handful of piles of paint, I try to represent the physical character of the natural world, and yet not neglect to bring out the real but often indefinable connections I have with her. Deep within me there is a still, quiet place that resonates and flows with the spirit of life to all of these places here represented; for me a calm amidst the storm. Through this unfolding of my soul I paint as my own unique leap towards the divine. With brush in hand in gratitude and curiosity I search for understanding, for meaning, for joy, for strength, for peace of mind, and for goodness for all—the light within.

*Gregory Packard*
For centuries, one of art’s essential roles has been to lift the heart and soul above the burdens and limitations—and frequently, the darkness and suffering—of human life. We have looked to religious art, or to the exquisite yet ordinary beauty of window light falling gently across a weathered table, the delicate grace of a floral still life, or the glorious wildness of nature, for reflections of what makes life worth living, for connection with each other and the divine. Gregory Packard continues this venerable tradition, both visually through his paintings themselves and in his use of the artistic process to explore the perennial questions of being human.
As gifted with words as he is with a paintbrush, he discovers perspective, metaphor, and智慧 emerging simultaneously in paint and in musings related to his art. As this show's title and his painting of the same title suggest, the enduring power of beauty and light to break through and dissolve darkness is as present and vital today as it has ever been.
A Good Harvest, oil, 36” x 36”
Packard’s selection as featured artist for The Brinton Museum’s inaugural exhibition in its new Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Building represents an inspired match, both aesthetically and personally.
Afternoon Shade, oil, 16" x 20"
As a young painter living not far from Big Horn, Greg got to know Brinton Director and Chief Curator Ken Schuster and his wife Barbara, and his work has been exhibited at the museum for most of his career.
Gallatin Ranch, oil, 18” x 24”
"It's hard to quantify how much Ken's confidence in my work has helped me in my attempt to become a better painter. He never told me how to paint or what to paint; he just believed in me and my work," Packard says.
Be Still, oil, 36” x 36”
Aesthetically, the exhibition’s 46 paintings are a perfect complement to the uplifting spirit and exquisite workmanship and design of the new facility, the beauty and charm of the historic Brinton, and the magnificence of the surrounding landscape.
May Along the Bighorns, oil, 12” x 22”
In Schuster's words: “Greg really puts that paint onto the canvas in a manner that you can feel and nearly taste, it looks so good, with a superb use of color and fine draftsmanship. If he wasn't such a nice individual you could almost dislike him for being so talented. And to top it off, he has remained the same humble guy I've known for the past fifteen years. How could I ever not give him the first show in our brand new Reception Gallery?”
Greg Packard’s lifelong connection with the natural world took root in early boyhood on an Idaho farm. Although as a child he moved to Boise with his mother and four siblings after his parents’ divorce, the memory of woods and fields had become embedded in his mind and heart.
He returned to nature physically when he could, spending a summer working in Alaska in his early 20s, later living in his wife’s home state of Wyoming, and today at his home in Montrose, Colorado. And he returned to it passionately through his art.
As a young man he was moved by the work of Vincent van Gogh, Anders Zorn, Joaquín Sorolla, Camille Pissarro, and especially Claude Monet and other French Impressionists. But it was through a pair of back-to-back workshops with artists Robert Moore and Delbert Gish, both trained in Russian Impressionism, that Packard found himself inspired to set off on his own artistic journey.
“The Russian Impressionists’ work was less refined than the French. It was coarse like me but purposeful and full of life,” he says. “When I finally got my hands in deep and dirty with color, it was pure freedom with the paintbrush compared with the photorealist, monochromatic drawing I had been cutting my teeth on since I was a young boy.”
Today Packard's visual expression takes two distinct yet related forms. In works such as *Each Day We Wade into a Stream* he lays down oils, wet-on-wet, in a fairly loose, traditional approach to color mixing, texture, and brushwork. The painting was inspired by a fly-fishing outing with friends at Smith Creek near Gunnison, Colorado. “I spent most of the day photographing and gawking at the water, with my fly rod dangling,” he remembers, smiling. When it came to titling the piece, he turned to a poem he’d written years before. Both the poem and painting suggest the choice we each continuously face: to enter the flow of life that moves us along our perfect path, or to block that flow through hesitation or fear.
“I waded into that stream eventually,” Packard says. It carried him gratefully and deeply into art.
Also in a traditional style, *The Good Shepherd* depicts a shepherder standing amidst his flock under the shadow of an approaching storm. The piece is significant to the artist as a symbol of the Christ-like qualities that have appeared in rare figures across time. Like the humble, faithful shepherd, these individuals sacrifice their own comfort and gain for the sake of others, often being persecuted in return, Packard believes. As a painting, he enjoyed the dynamic movement, texture, and contrast of the broad, gently curving landscape and wild, stormy sky.

*The Good Shepherd*, oil, 31”x 39”
Renewal, oil, 16” x 24”
A few years ago Packard added a second direction to his painting while also continuing to work in his original style. He refers to this technique as broken color, and it can be traced to Monet and other early 19th-century Impressionists. Applied to the same subjects as his wet-on-wet approach—landscapes, seascapes, city scenes, and floral still life—it involves discrete, often short brushstrokes, both layered and side-by-side. The effect is an electric sense of pulsating color and shimmering light.
Little Bouquet, oil, 14" x 14"
“It’s like building a painting, literally, stroke by stroke,” the artist explains. “It puts odd colors in odd places. In some ways it’s more childlike in expression, and that’s a beautiful thing, both literally and spiritually. It’s farther away from actual experience, but closer to what’s going on in my heart and mind.”
Inner Light, oil, 4.5" x 9.25"
Among recent works in this style is *Paradox*, depicting a stately old leafless tree in strong morning light in the interval between winter and spring. As Packard sketched the scene while leading a painting workshop, his students were aghast that he would choose to paint such an “ugly old tree.” But beyond the strong visual appeal of its lines and shadows, the artist sees in the image a perfect metaphor for the paradox of renewal, of individuals in whom the human spirit becomes more radiant even as the body is failing with illness or age. “These metaphors are how I find meaning about life from nature itself, how I learn from it,” Packard says.

On a visual level the painting reveals a range of unexpected colors: turquoise in the tree’s shadow, orange, purple, bright pink. Yet somehow the feeling is of glistening, almost-spring light, the air still cool, the season on the edge of rebirth. “As an artist you have to make your paint feel like it’s real light by the colors you add, the colors you leave out, and how you place one color next to another. It’s always a dance,” Packard says.
High Places, oil, 10” x 12”
Part of the pleasure of that dance, of course, is pure abstraction, especially when the works are viewed up close.
Inner Beauty, oil, 20" x 24"
Rich textures, scintillating hues, and complex color relationships produce undercurrents of movement and emotion that add to the viewer’s experience on a subtle level.
Hope, oil, 30" x 36"
Repose, oil, 30” x 36”

As Packard puts it:
“I want people to believe in the subject, but I also like the viewer to discover those abstract qualities. It’s like a book. You can read it twice and get a whole different feeling the second time.”
Still Life with Melons, oil, 9" x 12"
From the artist's perspective, proficiency in two distinct approaches expands both his aesthetic vocabulary and what he is able to express. It's the visual equivalent of full fluency in both poetry and prose.
Strength, oil, 24” x 24”
A third component in this expression are the frames. For this body of work Packard designed and hand-carved basswood frames for all but five of the paintings. Many are hand-gilded in 23-karat gold. In each case the design motif complements and adds dimension to the artwork’s imagery, visual rhythm, and mood.
The Quiet Beauty of Surrender, oil, 48" x 60"
As someone with “one foot in nature and one foot in the human experience,” as he puts it—although clearly he is firmly planted in both realms—Packard produces artwork that admirably fulfills dual roles.

Salt of the Earth, oil, 18” x 24”
A painting such as *The Space Between* can be viewed as a gorgeous autumn landscape featuring a mountain lake. Look closely, however, and you’ll see an empty canoe or small boat pulled up on the lake’s far shore. Symbolically, and personally for Packard, the painting suggests the wide but navigable space between where we are now and where our fullest human potential might carry us.
Tongue River Canyon, oil, 24" x 20"
Transformation, oil, 12" x 16"
Wind River Air, oil, 24" x 24"
A boat has crossed that divide—someone has reached the other side. We might imagine that person as Jesus, Michelangelo, Gandhi, or Monet. In any case, Packard says, “Someone has done it. So the possibility is there for every one of us.”

Gussie Fauntleroy