

# THREE<sup>TO</sup> WATCH

There is a lot of superb art being made these days; this column by Allison Malafronte shines light on a trio of gifted individuals.

## JOEL OSTLIND (b. 1954)

makes paintings and etchings of the West born from his firsthand familiarity with Wyoming's natural beauty, and from a lifelong connection to the region's community and culture. This self-taught artist has actually spent most of his adult life working as a professional cowboy, herding cattle on ranches throughout Wyoming and Montana, yet he always found time for sketching. When Ostlind married and settled in Big Horn, Wyoming, he built a studio in the foothills and began drawing and painting full-time. His subject matter ranges from Western landscapes and scenes of Native American life to cattle ranching and fly-fishing. Ostlind's influences include Adolph Menzel, Nicolae Grigorescu, John Singer Sargent, Joaquín Sorolla, and Anders Zorn, as well as his regional etching predecessor, Hans Kleiber (1887–1967).

That last role model is telling: after registering for a printmaking class at a local college, Ostlind became enamored with the ancient art of etching. Although he is now admired for his work in multiple media and subjects, his artistic identity remains rooted in etching. Etching is not as prevalent today as it was in the past, yet it has remained a highly regarded medium valued for bringing an artist's draftsmanship, design abilities, and expressiveness to life. This art form gained renown through certain Old Masters, including Rembrandt, whose astonishing accomplishments with just a needle and a copper plate remain unrivaled. Ostlind's etchings are done in the same time-honored manner of drawing the image directly on a copper plate through a layer of acid-proof wax. When the plate is immersed in a tub of acid, the acid bites tiny grooves into the plate where the lines were drawn. The wax is removed, ink is rubbed onto the plate, the surface is wiped off (leaving ink in the lines), and the plate is run through an etching press with a piece of damp paper. The ink transfers to the paper, and a mirror image of the plate is printed.



JOEL OSTLIND (b. 1954), *Coffee at the Neighbors*, 2015, etching on paper [edition of 96], 6 x 8 in., private collection

Ostlind's etchings are admirable not only because this medium is relatively rare today, but also for the insights and artistry they reveal. His detail-oriented approach to the production process is also noteworthy: Ostlind hand-pulls each edition, typically keeping the number to 96 or fewer so that he can monitor the appearance of every print. If needed, he will make minor changes or corrections to the plate for each new proof, ensuring that all of the prints meet the highest standards.

Ostlind is represented by Ann Korologos Gallery (Basalt, CO), Bozeman Trail Gallery (Sheridan, WY), the Brinton Museum (Big Horn, WY), and Simpson Gallagher Gallery (Cody, WY).



**AIMEE ERICKSON** (b. 1967), *Seeing Through*, 2016, oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in., collection of the artist

**AIMEE ERICKSON** (b. 1967) makes paintings that draw their strength from her ability to arrange design and color elements in aesthetically harmonious ways, while bringing dignity and grace to everyday moments. The people and places that catch her eye are those we all encounter in daily life — baristas, waitresses, musicians, beaches, parks, squares — but through Erickson’s observational empathy we sense untold stories and hidden beauty behind the casual glances and familiar scenes. “My artistic voice is based in traditional realism,” she says, “but also informed by the principles of design, and inspired by nature and my life experience.”

The strong sense of design in Erickson’s painting stems from her understanding of how shape, line, and color create three-dimensional structure and space. Her work is characterized by thoughtful composition and deliberate perspective — “I use mostly horizontals (peace) and verticals (strength), with fewer diagonals” — and she employs a soft tonal palette to communicate mood and emotion. “Color has emotional weight and is related to the shape of space,” Erickson says. “The emotion shifts with the color, and the shape itself can take on more or less importance as a result. If you change the color of a shape, it feels

different. In an interior, for instance, when you paint a room the ‘right’ color, the room relaxes and feels inviting.”

Born in Paris and now living in Portland, Oregon, Erickson began her training as an illustrator and earned her B.F.A. in visual communication design from Brigham Young University (Provo, UT). She continued her education independently with various instructors, including Burton Silverman, Joseph Paquet, Richard Pionk, Sherrie McGraw, David Leffel, William Park, Ray Roberts, and Stephen Hayes. A teacher herself since 2003, Erickson is particularly interested in what enables or inhibits artistic progress. The questions she ponders regularly include, “How do we learn to see what we cannot yet see? How do our beliefs influence our ability to perceive? What is the role of knowledge in the realm of choice? How do we ‘tune in’ to our artistic perception?”

Erickson is the first woman artist to paint an official portrait of an Oregon governor: her 1997 portrait of former Gov. Barbara Roberts hangs at the State Capitol in Salem.

*Erickson is represented by Brian Marki Fine Art (Portland, OR), Meyer Gallery (Santa Fe), and Nancy Dodds Gallery (Carmel, CA).*





**ANDREA T. KEMP** (b. 1981) begins her artist statement with a sentence that summarizes many artists' intentions, as well as their desire to create significant meaning through imagery: "For me, painting is a way to communicate what words cannot." Each artist's language is different, of course, depending on his or her unique life experiences and way of looking at the world. Kemp, then, uses a young female perspective and the power of suggestion to create intriguing narratives. "Through one frame a story is told," her statement continues, "with lingering questions hanging and possible scenarios left for the viewer's own interpretation. This is one of the many reasons why painting is so unique. Like a good poem, it has the potential to reach its audience in a way that can leave a strong, lasting impression."

This Colorado artist first studied privately with Daniel Sprick from 1996 through 1999, then attended the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts (Old Lyme, CT) for three years. This was followed by another year at the University of Utah (Salt Lake City), where she received her B.F.A. in 2002. After several years painting independently, Kemp says she began shifting from hearing her teachers' voices to hearing her own. She held fast to the visions and direction developing inside her, and made a conscious effort to ignore outside influence in order to bring that vision to fruition. Today Kemp emphasizes to her students that she is simply giving them suggestions, not rules, and that it is ultimately up to them to find their individual artistic voices.

*Kemp is represented by Saks Galleries (Denver).*

**ANDREA T. KEMP** (b. 1981), *Drummer Boy*, 2017, oil on canvas, 32 x 24 in., collection of the artist