

CHARLES BURCHFIELD | ROMANTIC DRAWINGS | CHICAGO'S UNION LEAGUE CLUB | JOHN PHILLIP OSBORNE

Fine Art Connoisseur

THE PREMIER MAGAZINE FOR INFORMED COLLECTORS



APRIL 2010

\$8.95 U.S. | \$9.95 CAN.



Volume 7, Issue 2

ARTS & LETTERS

Three to Watch: Artists Making Their Mark

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



BRAD KUNKLE (b. 1978) hails from rural Pennsylvania, where he explored — and romanticized — the verdant countryside around him. He studied at Kutztown University, primarily under George Sorrells (b. 1944), the painter of “imaginary realism” trained by a pupil of the great 19th-century academician, William-Adolphe Bouguereau. There Kunkle grew technically proficient, but felt he had not yet found his own pictorial language. He was sure, however, of his attraction to the paradoxically hyper-realistic and unreal visions of the Pre-Raphaelites, and of their great American inheritor, Maxfield Parrish. These masters created moody worlds, Kunkle says, “where a subtle, supernatural beauty seems to be hiding under the breath of women — worlds where something beyond our natural perception is waiting to be found.”

Kunkle then spent almost a decade teaching himself new methods and studying masterworks in person, even as he found success fulfilling commissions for portraits and decorative projects. While painting decorations, he came to enjoy covering surfaces in copper, gold, or silver leaf, beguiled by the way these surfaces change in appearance as we move around them (rather like life changes as we move through it). He began to incorporate passages of gilding in his own paintings, a strategy that enhanced the unreal quality he had been seeking.

Kunkle also began reducing the number of colors on his palette, finding inspiration in *grisailles* (paintings made in monochrome, usually greys) and historical photographs, especially daguerreotypes. “*Grisaille* has a mysterious quality to it,” he notes, one that offers “just enough information for viewers to finish the details of what they are seeing.”

Today Kunkle paints large images of modern-looking women in sylvan settings, with which they seem organically linked. He paints these figures in a variation of *grisaille* that contrasts strikingly with the richly toned foliage and shimmering gold leaf all around. Rarely used together, these disparate elements disorient us: Perhaps we’ve stumbled upon a magical being in a glade unlike any on earth. Kunkle is particularly skilled at mottling patches of sunlight and shade to heighten our sense of dislocation, and when we gaze at the painting from different angles, or even when we dim the lights, it becomes what he calls a “living, breathing thing.” The artist says he paints “to connect with the part of being human that is beautiful and slightly dark, stripped to its truth and always changing: the part of being human that appears to be romantic, but feels very real.”

Though he imagines woodlands, Kunkle now lives and works in New York City, where his first solo exhibition will be presented at Arcadia Fine Arts April 22-May 7.

BRAD KUNKLE (b. 1978)

REVELEN

2009, OIL AND GOLD LEAF ON CANVAS, 60 X 33 IN.

ARCADIA FINE ARTS, NEW YORK

