

Terry St. John

The Pursuit of Form

Studio Figures and Landscape Paintings

May 4 – June 24, 2006

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 4, 5:30–7:30 PM

48-page color catalog with essay by Peter Campion available, \$45.00/\$25.00

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Gallery Hours: Tue. - Fri. 10:30 – 5:30 pm; Sat. 11 – 5 pm

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Hackett-Freedman Gallery proudly presents an exhibition of new figurative and landscape paintings by Bay Area artist Terry St. John. Accompanying the exhibition is an extended, hardbound catalog with 22 reproductions of works from 1988 to the present and an essay by noted poet and critic Peter Campion. A reception for the artist will take place on Thursday, May 4, 2006, from 5:30–7:30pm.

St. John is widely acknowledged as one of the most respected figurative painters working in the San Francisco area today. At age 71, his work bridges, expands, and reinvents that of previous generations of Bay Area artists, from the Society of Six to Richard Diebenkorn, James Weeks, and their students. In this regard, St. John is a strong influence on many younger painters. According to Campion, St. John's paintings are an "exhilarating balance of emotion and form." This "give-and-take," in Campion's words, shows St. John's reliance on both intuition and direct observation and is what gives his painting such vibrancy and friction. St. John's well-noted mastery of paint—his viscous, deeply expressive brushwork, the fluidity of his mark-making, the thick, scum-



Woman, Interior with Cat, Patterns 60 x 48" oil on canvas, 2006

bled, scraped, and layered surfaces—remains a hallmark of his work, offering viewers a rich and varied experience. Recently, however, St. John has begun experimenting with a more muted, less high-keyed palette, as seen in *Nude, Summer, 2005* (2005) and *From Oakland Estuary Pier* (2006). This shift towards a more somber tonal range imbues these recent paintings with a powerful emotional strength.

While St. John's painterly realism is grounded in the tradition of Bay Area Figurative painting (he studied with James Weeks at the California School of Fine Arts, now the San Francisco Art Institute), it is also strongly informed by abstraction. Paintings such as *Woman, Interior with Cat*, *Patterns* and *From High Street Park* (both 2006), in which the subject matter is reduced to a series of light and dark planes pressured by the simple geometric shapes of the background, highlight the importance of abstract space in his work. St. John's compositional prowess allows his paintings to break free of the constraints imposed by his subject matter. The resulting tension between color and shape suffuses the works with a dynamism and vibrating



Nude, Summer, 2005 60 1/4 x 48 1/2" oil on canvas, 2005

energy that belies St. John's determined pursuit of the internal and external realities underlying his subject matter.

St. John served as a curator of modern painting at the Oakland Museum of California (1970–1990), and, until recently, chaired the art department at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, California. A leading practitioner of outdoor painting, he developed and ran the “Outdoor Painters Project” at the University of California, Santa Cruz, from 1978 to 1990. St. John's paintings are held in the collections of the Oakland Museum of California, the City of San Francisco, and the San Jose Museum of Art, among others. This is his seventh solo exhibition at Hackett-Freedman Gallery.



From High St. Park 42 x 48" oil on canvas, 2006