

TOM BIRKNER

1966, New Jersey (US)

Tom Birkner, nato nel New Jersey, sviluppa una ricerca pittorica incentrata sull'osservazione della realtà quotidiana, con particolare attenzione ai sobborghi della classe operaia e ai paesaggi frammentati dell'America postindustriale. La sua pratica artistica affonda le radici in un'esperienza diretta e precoce del contesto sociale e visivo in cui è cresciuto: dalle partite di football alle gite nei centri commerciali, dai parchi di divertimento alle molteplici forme di intrattenimento che scandiscono la vita suburbana. Attraverso uno sguardo attento e ricettivo, Birkner individua nella casualità degli eventi e nelle situazioni ordinarie il punto di partenza per la costruzione delle proprie immagini, privilegiando scene che restituiscono una percezione immediata e riconoscibile del mondo. Come afferma l'artista: «*Mi piace dipingere cose che, dal punto di vista visivo, corrispondono al modo in cui le persone vedono il mondo. Trovo i soggetti dei miei dipinti in vignette e situazioni che si manifestano casualmente*». Più che perseguire una lettura esplicitamente sociologica o culturale dei contesti rappresentati, Birkner indaga le dimensioni soggettive della memoria, della nostalgia e della percezione, esplorando la tensione tra esperienza vissuta e la sua rielaborazione pittorica. Le sue composizioni si distinguono per



l'acutezza dello sguardo, la ricchezza cromatica e una costruzione formale articolata, attraverso cui ambienti familiari e situazioni apparentemente marginali acquisiscono una peculiare intensità emotiva. Come osserva il critico David Cohen, le scene sociali dipinte da Birkner, precise nell'osservazione, inventive nell'uso del colore e ambiziose nella composizione, evocano una sensualità latente, in sintonia con la malinconia blues delle città economicamente depresse, la tensione degli incontri lungo le autostrade e le forme di svago della classe operaia. Birkner ha conseguito il Bachelor of Arts presso la Rutgers University e il Master of Fine Arts presso la Pennsylvania State University. Ha ricevuto per due volte una borsa di studio dal New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Le sue opere sono state recentemente presentate all'El Paso Museum of Art, a El Paso, Texas, e al Centro Cultural de las Fronteras, a Ciudad Juárez, Messico. La sua attività espositiva comprende mostre personali e collettive negli Stati Uniti e a livello internazionale. Il suo lavoro è stato inoltre oggetto di recensioni su importanti testate di settore, tra cui *The New York Times* e *ARTnews*.

Born in New Jersey, Tom Birkner's painting practice is rooted in the observation of everyday life, with a particular focus on working-class suburbs and the fragmented landscapes of post-industrial America. His artistic vision emerged early, shaped by a close familiarity with the social environments and visual culture of his surroundings—from football games and trips to shopping malls to amusement parks and the many forms of entertainment that punctuate suburban life. Through an attentive and perceptive gaze, Birkner draws on the spontaneity of everyday encounters and seemingly incidental situations as the starting point for his paintings, privileging scenes that convey an immediate, recognizable experience of the world. As the artist explains, "I like to paint things that look visually the way people see the world. I find subjects for my paintings in vignettes and scenarios that happen by chance." Rather than pursuing an explicitly sociological or cultural reading of the environments he depicts, Birkner is primarily concerned with the subjective dimensions of memory, nostalgia, and perception, exploring the tension between lived experience and its painterly reconstruction. His compositions are distinguished by their incisive observation, inventive use of color, and sophisticated formal structure, through which familiar settings and seemingly peripheral moments acquire a distinctive emotional

intensity. As art critic David Cohen observes, Birkner's social scenes, marked by perceptive precision, chromatic inventiveness, and compositional ambition, evoke a latent sensuality that resonates with the blues-inflected resignation of economically depressed towns, the charged encounters of highway life, and the working-class diversions that populate his paintings. Birkner received his B.A. from Rutgers University and his M.F.A. from Pennsylvania State University. He has been awarded fellowships by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts on two occasions. His work has recently been exhibited at the El Paso Museum of Art in El Paso, Texas, and at the Centro Cultural de las Fronteras in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. His exhibition history includes solo and group presentations throughout the United States and internationally. His work has also been reviewed by leading publications, including The New York Times and ARTnews.

MOSTRE PERSONALI SELEZIONATE / SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Mass Abstractions*, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco (US)
DemoGraphica, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco (US)
Night & Day on Main, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe (US)
- 2021 *Tom Birkner: Works on View*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe (US)
LOL!!!, Casa Ortiz, Socorro (US)
- 2020 *Little People / Big Picture*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe (US)
- 2019 *Pintura Cuasi Fotográfica*, Centro Cultural de las Fronteras, Juárez (MX)
The Rain Paintings, Drew University, Korn Gallery, Madison (US)
Tom Birkner: Trace, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe (US)
Tom Birkner, El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso (US)
- 2016 *Artists on Art*, El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso (US)
- 2015 *Chromatic Fictions*, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco (US)
- 2014 *Scenes from the Long Drive*, Jones Lang La Salle Americas, San Francisco (US)
- 2011 *Little People / Big World*, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco (US)
- 2008 *Jersey Girls*, DFN Gallery, New York (US)
Tom Birkner, Ocean City Art Center, Ocean City (US)
- 2007 *New York at Night*, DFN Gallery, New York (US)
- 2006 *Recent Paintings*, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco (US)
Tom Birkner: Motorscape, DFN Gallery, New York (US)
- 2005 *Once-Royal Portraits*, Marella Arte Contemporanea, Milano (IT)
- 2004 *Jersey World*, DFN Gallery, New York (US)
- 2003 *Scenes from the Long Drive*, Paul Thiebaud Gallery, San Francisco (US)
Tom Birkner: Paintings, Riverrun Gallery, Lambertville (US)

MOSTRE COLLETTIVE SELEZIONATE / SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 *Stories Retold: New American Perspectives*, Gerald Peters Contemporary, Santa Fe (US)
University of Texas, El Paso Department of Art Faculty Biennial, Rubin Centre for Visual Arts, El Paso (US)
- 2024 *CFEVA at 40: Four Decades of Supporting Contemporary Art*, Michener Art Museum, Doylestown (US)
- 2019 *Movie Night*, Ille Arts, Amagansett (US)
- 2018 *Wheel of Fortune – A Portrait of the World*, Joshua Tree Art Gallery, Joshua Tree (US)
- 2017 *Convergence*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe (US)
JTHAR 2017, Joshua Tree Art Gallery, Joshua Tree (US)
National Weather Biennial, University of Oklahoma, Norman (US)
- 2014 *Off Ramp: New Paintings by Tom Birkner and Don Stinson*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe (US)
- 2013 *Dwellings: Christopher Benson / Tom Birkner*, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe (US)
- 2012 *New Jersey Masters*, Kean University Galleries, Union (US)
Trame, Della Pina Arte Contemporanea, Pietrasanta (IT)

PREMI / AWARDS

- 2021 UTEP College of Liberal Arts, Arts and Humanities Career Enhancement Summer Award
- 2018 El Paso Department of Museums and Cultural Affairs, Artist Incubator Grant
Arts & Humanities Career Enhancement Award, UTEP
- 2017 Joshua Tree Highlands Artist Residency, Joshua Tree, CA
Rachelle Thiewes Endowment Award, UTEP Department of Art