

BRIDGE
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BRUCE LIEBERMAN

PAINTINGS



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MARCH 14 - APRIL 11, 2026

Bruce Lieberman's paintings are particularly relevant at this time, when the vast majority of representational paintings, currently being made, are photo based. Bruce's work joyfully returns to the art of painting the full 3 dimensional world that we all share. A direct and passionate response to his own experience. It is a world of tactility, deep space, air, color and recognizable forms. A seemingly lost world.

Bruce Lieberman's landscape paintings are among the finest produced in this country since the Hudson River School. Yet, his work departs radically from that earlier tradition, inspired instead by the raw energy of 1950s abstraction. More intense and personal than his predecessors, Lieberman is a product of his postmodern era. This exhibition is a tribute and celebration of his work.

Though Lieberman is now synonymous with the Long Island landscape, he began as a figurative painter with a deep love of European tradition. Before primarily focusing on landscapes, his range was diverse, spanning narrative works, portraits and still lifes. His mentors and teachers were figurative painters who began as abstract painters, but then transitioned back into figuration. Painters who were trying to come to grips with the huge problem of making representational paintings.

Lieberman drew from their struggle, but remained largely self-taught. The idea of painting from photographs seemed abhorrent at the time, and Bruce was most comfortable painting directly from his "motif" and with brushes loaded with color, hammering out his image.

In the late 1970's Bruce was living in Bridgehampton and was introduced to the painter Paul Georges. Paul had a house and studio near Sagaponack and he knew all the artists, including myself, and was a friend of Fairfield Porter and De Kooning—who was then living out in the Springs.

In those early days the Hamptons was a very different place. It was populated by farmers, artists and locals who lived and worked there. There were only a few galleries, so openings were crowded with painters and critics. I remember seeing Harold Rosenberg limping by at an opening at the Elaine Benson gallery, the most important one at that time in Bridgehampton. It was overwhelming for a young painter to be in the middle of it all. But it was still affordable and there was no internet, only a small radio station that, though tiresome to listen to, united everyone.

At their first meeting, Paul asked Bruce "So why do you want to paint? You have to want to be a hero? Do you?" to which Bruce replied. "Yes I do. I want to be like Michelangelo." Paul laughed his head off, but nevertheless insisted Bruce accompany him and his wife Lizette to the Educational Alliance, on the Lower East side of Manhattan. It is there that I too met the 19 year old Bruce Lieberman.

On Friday nights, anyone passionately interested in figurative painting gathered and listened to other artists and sometimes critics, debate and share their views. They came in large numbers and the meetings were loud and raucous. Sometimes fist fights broke out. On Bruce's first night, Alex Katz leaned against the wall with Pearlstein as four major critics debated. Then, Paul Georges stood up to speak and the room felt silent. "This was my real education." Bruce recalls of this period.

Bruce's first show was also on the Lower East side at the Pene du Bois Gallery, and in the same year he was in a group show at the Parrish Museum in Southampton. Subsequently his work has been shown in many galleries and museums in New York and Long Island including being nominated for the National Academy of Design and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, earning him critical acclaim from The New York Times and Newsday.



Big Fucking Tree, 84 x 44 in., oil on canvas, 1991



First Touch of Fall, 46 x 38 in., oil on canvas, 2022



Last Tree At Scuttlehole, 39.5 x 57 in., oil on canvas, 1999-2017

Born in Brooklyn in 1958, Bruce has painted for nearly fifty years. His education was a "who's who" of mid-century influence: he studied with Bobby White (grandson of architect Stanford White), Paul Georges at Brandeis (a student of Hans Hofmann), and Lennart Anderson at Brooklyn College.

His mature style crystallized with breakthrough "portraits" of trees. *Large Fucking Tree* (1991) and *Tree and Swing* (1992-3). Both are painted in Babylon, and are portraits of sorts. The former is a huge dark form, vigorous in its verticality and individuality. It's flanked by two white houses that are attendant to it and supply the contrast that allows the form to assert itself. The power derives mainly from value, but the color is local and is natural. The white dissolving cloud, leaking through and revealing the top branches, pushes the top part of the painting forward and speaks to the mysterious darks below, unifying the whole work.

Tree and Swing, (1992-3), is a less assertive work. The two primary forms are, like a couple posing, similar to Grant Woods' *American Gothic*. A gentler and more atmospheric painting, "*Tree and Swing*" has an expansive air that allows the viewer to go behind the two prominent forms. One senses the ongoing life in the spaces behind. The greenhouse makes a pyramid and the tree seems to lean toward her in the soft light coming from the right side of the work. The dancing lights and darks keep you on the surface but the spaces on both sides of the tree and through the greenhouse windows allow you entry into the space

Farm View from Studio, dates from 2017. Although a much earlier work, it is complex. The foreground, dominated by a rough patch of forest with yellow trees, leads us to the strip of yellow field which is cultivated. The yellows and blues with touches of red take one deep into the space.

In another painting of a tree begun in 1999 and not completed until 2017. *The Last Tree on Scuttlehole Road*, is also a portrait. In this case a big lady is softly painted. She fills the whole canvas and it is magnificent.



Tree and Swing, 55 x 40 in., oil on canvas, 1992-1993



Bruce loves to paint flowers. Two works that contain large bunches of flowers are *Tree Rising from Horizontal Lilies* (2018) and *Dark Flower Turf* (2018). The latter is a closeup of yellow flowers, so softly painted it could be by Renoir, but with an almost cubist space, except it's not. It's continual. The mass of dark, gently brings the picture plane forward as you enter from the bottom. One of the important lessons Bruce learned earlier from Paul, and put to great use here.

Focusing on some of the more recent and masterful paintings in the show, we are lucky to have so many grouped here for the first time. One of my favorites is, *View to Ranch* (2024). This magnificent painting has the power of a Courbet. It is broadly painted but carefully and meticulously worked out, and clear as a bell. In what appears to be a lovely early morning we see from above, the view of a massive hill up against the ocean. Every plane is described so one can almost take a walk and the walk is dangerous as the planes contradict each other as much as they flow into one another. The blues of the sky are also reflected in the ocean water. The tides crashing against the big red cliffs are astounding. It brings to mind Homer's paintings of the Maine Shore. That we can enjoy this almost physically is Bruce's great achievement.

Another major work that I love is, *First Touch of Fall*, (2022). This is quite a formal picture with a formal space. There is a foreground, middleground and a background and they flow back and forth into each other. Lush green summertime. A large tree is amongst other large trees with a piece of water in the center. It's late in the summer and a touch of fall color adds spice to the greens. The light is beautiful and coming in from the back left – something the old masters would rarely do. The slant of the cast shadow shows the foreground to be a slippery hill which emotes a sense of terror as you enter the space. The water is in the middle between the foreground trees, and the dark row of forest in the rear reflects the blue sky and white clouds above.

This painting and the *Pool thru Green Bushes*, (2020) are related in their approach to the space, as well as the body of water in the center. Both paintings are dramatic. In this painting the foreground is a series of ups and downs and filled with dark shadows. The light is similar and from the rear, but the body of water is an intense blue. The disposition of the blues in the sky, and the whites of the clouds, elevate the spirit of the work and make the tree an almost spiritual presence. The light forms a pyramid that elevates and surges out of the top as the space takes you up and out of the painting. The lights at the bottom pull you back down and so you remain inside the space of the painting.



Tree Rising from Horizontal Lillies, 40 x 72 in., oil on canvas, 2017



Lilac with Hose, 48 x 48 in., oil on canvas, 2023



View to Ranch , 48 x 48 in., oil on canvas,2024

Relating to the earlier works of large bunches of flowers, a recent work that sums up his earlier works is, *Roses Umbrella and Window*, (2026). The inclusion of the structural element of the white window panes added to the wild disarray of pink roses, make a very satisfying and beautifully developed composition. The white panes, the flowers and the sky, create a chiaroscuro that act like points of light in the dark. The lovely pale reds of the flowers have a gorgeous relationship. The sky appears actually on the upper right then as a reflection in the window on the upper left. The easy symmetry, as well as the entire design, are satisfying as all the forms open and spread out as they rise.

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Another two works that relate to each other, as they're both square and both have a sprinkling of flowers in the middle, are *Lilacs with Hose* (2023) and *Covid Driveway Quince* (2023). The former is a lovely and deceptively complex image of a group of bushes with an array of flowers near the water. What first appears to be dense and impenetrable, upon examination, has pathways that let you enter around and through the space. The depth is back on the left and to get there one has to climb up and down and over the receding ground. The water in the foreground echoes the sky, and the acid green of the rubber hose suggests a human presence, following the contour of the ground and through the water. The flowers are sprinkled in the middle and add another flow and layer of space. The water in the foreground echoes the sky, and the acid green of the rubber hose suggests a human presence, following the contour of the ground and through the water. The flowers are sprinkled in the middle and add another flow and layer of space

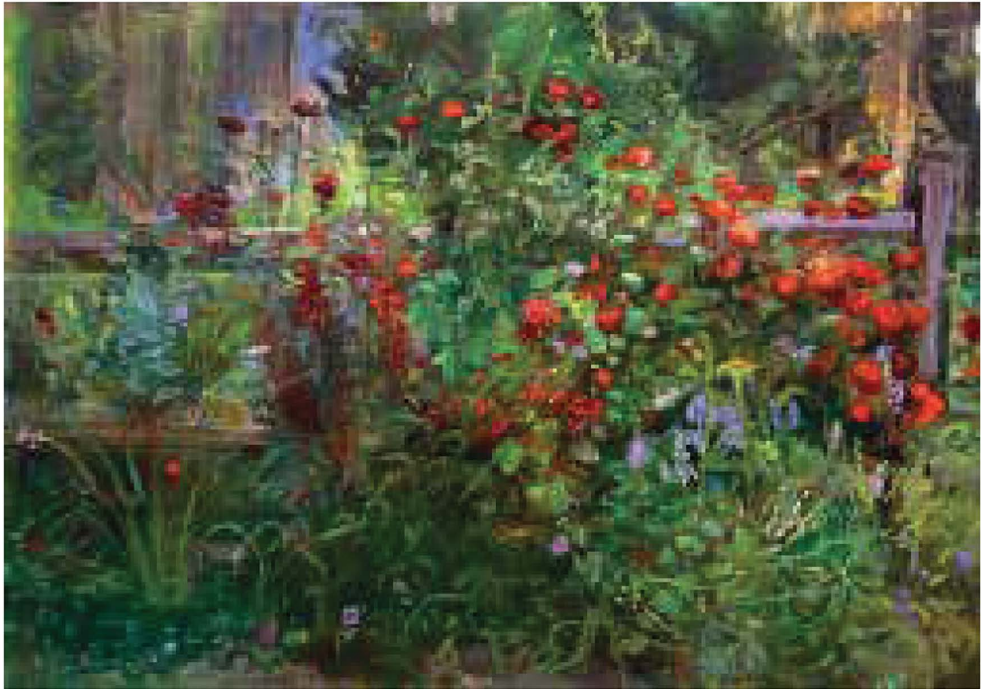
Covid Driveway Quince, (2023), is also a beautiful painting. A large space - mainly a warm light brown - red that recedes gently from front to back, and then a shockingly lovely and unexpected blue sky across the top back. The yellow flowers are lit up and are in a vigorous relation to the blue sky. The color experience dominates and makes the space seem natural and right.



Roses Umbrella and Window, 50 x 60 in., oil on canvas, 2026





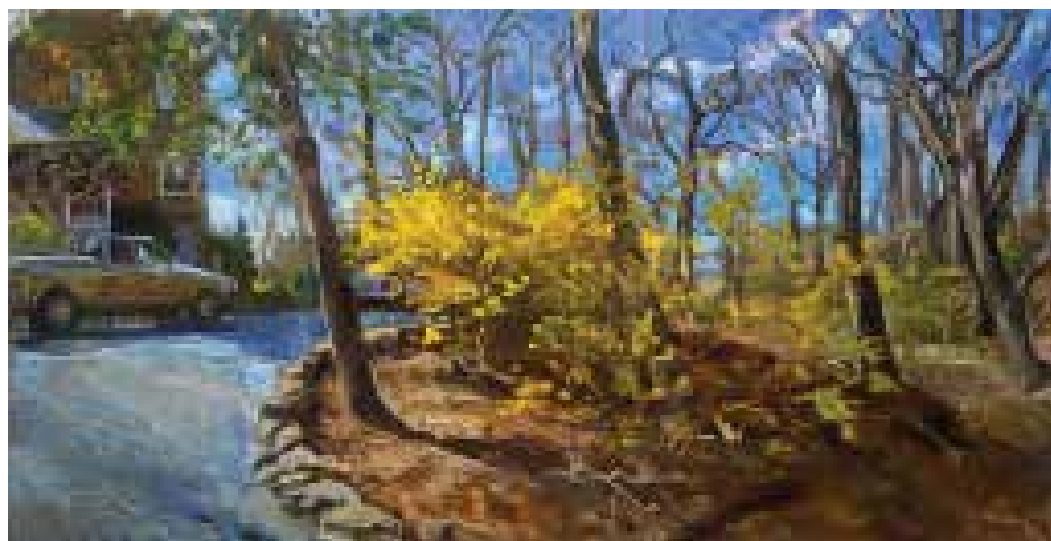












Bruce Lieberman

Born 1958 Brooklyn, NY

Bruce Lieberman currently lives and works in Watermill, New York. His work has been written about, collected and exhibited extensively on Long Island and in New York City. Over the course of his career, he has had numerous one-person exhibitions and participated in countless group exhibitions at institutions including:

The Center for Figurative Art, New York, NY

A.M. Sachs, New York, NY

Gotham Fine Arts, New York, NY

Pene Du Bois Gallery, New York, NY

M&M Gallery, Southampton, NY

Baruch College – Mishkin Gallery, New York, NY

Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn, NY

Long Island Museum, Stony Brook, NY

Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY

Guild Hall, East Hampton, NY

Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, NY

Ammo Gallery, Brooklyn, New York, NY

First Street Gallery, New York, NY

Artist Choice Museum, New York, NY

Islip Art Museum, NY

Haenah-Kent Gallery, New York, NY

Gallery North, Setauket, NY

The Educational Alliance, New York, NY

University of Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico

Elaine Benson Gallery, Bridgehampton, NY

Pamela Williams Gallery, Amagansett, NY

Julie Keyes Gallery, Sag Harbor, NY

Arlene Bujese, East Hampton, NY

SELECT COLLECTIONS:

Center for Figurative Art, New York, New
Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington New York
Long Island Museum of American Art, Stony Brook, New York.
Renaissance Technologies
Simons Center for Math and Physic, Stony Brook, New York
Lewis Lukens, Ambassador to Senegal
CUNY Brooklyn College
University of Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico
Cablevision Corporation, New York
Cindy Sherman
Robert Zimmerman
The Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, VA
Richard Elman

Front Cover:

Farm View From Studio, 62 x 62 in. oil on canvas, 2017

Inside Front Cover:

Shower, 34 x 46 in. oil on canvas

Back Cover:

View to Ranch, 48 x 48 in., oil on canvas, 2024

About the Writer:

Don Perlis (b. 1941) is a renowned New York painter whose career spans decades. He was the youngest member of an artistic group reviving representational painting in the 1960s that included Philip Pearlstein, Al Leslie, Jack Beal, William Baily, Paul Georges, and Lennart Anderson. He has held over twenty solo exhibitions in New York, as well as dozens of group shows in the U.S. and abroad, including at the National Academy of Design, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Queens Museum, and the Cleveland Museum of Art.



THE NATHANIEL ROGERS HOUSE
2539 MONTAUK HIGHWAY BRIDGEHAMPTON NY 11932