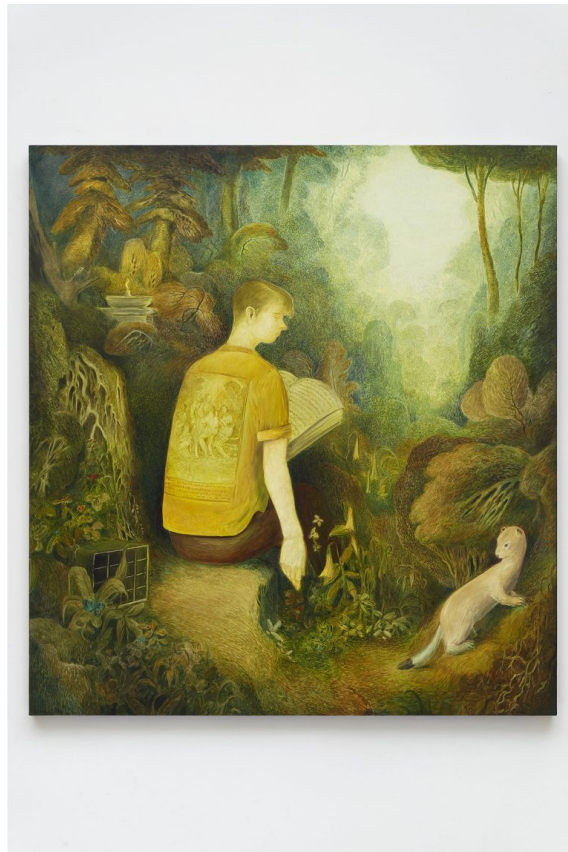


# TWO COATS OF PAINT

## SOLO SHOWS

### Mark Ryan Chariker's Romantic No-Man's-Lands

January 28, 2022 12:18 pm



*Mark Ryan Chariker, No Return, 2022, oil on linen, 48h x 44w inches*

Contributed by Patrick Neal / **Mark Ryan Chariker's** paintings have a romantic, brooding quality that sometimes leans toward the Gothic. In *All the Time in the World*, his second solo show at 1969 Gallery in Tribeca, he paints youthful figures residing in lush woodlands or dream-like interiors who behave somewhat like flâneurs, passively inhabiting time and space. These medium scale works in oil on linen and canvas are suffused with a glowing golden aura, and are defined by scenes that wistfully overlay the present onto the past.

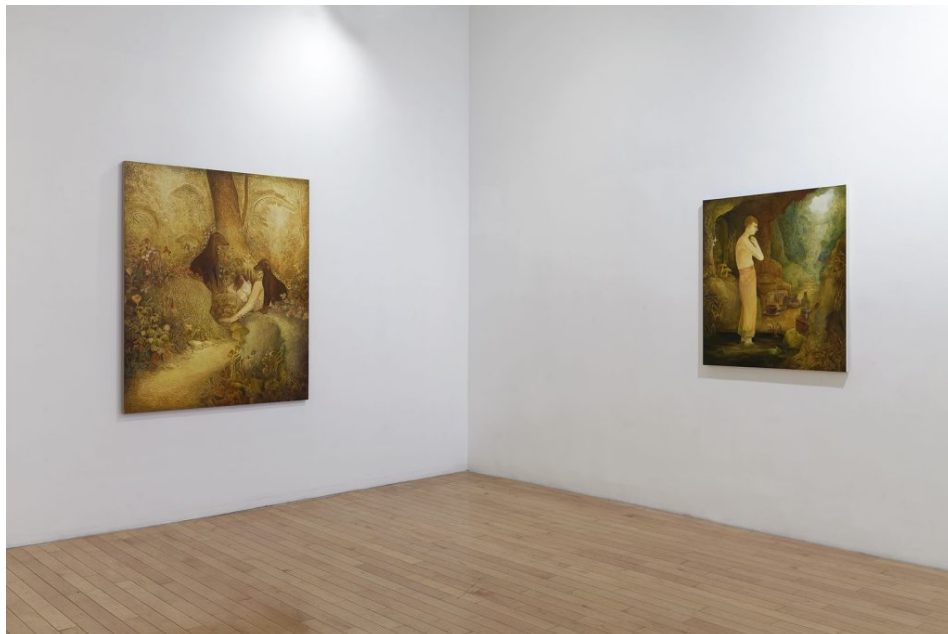


*Mark Ryan Chariker, The Long Book, 2021, oil on linen, 20 x 16 inches*

Chariker's characters are situated in settings that read as both art historical vignettes and candid snapshots. Their posturings intimate master paintings while remaining up-to-the-minute, like a candid iPhone portrait. Youths with androgynous, glowering visages mope in slumped arrangements, and the figure groups cluster and contort to fit the formations of the idyllic landscapes they reside in. We see people posing, drinking, conversing, propping each other up, and setting things on fire. The works are choc-a-bloc with nostalgic references to other eras. There are traces of the lonely and frozen-in-time forests of **Corot**, **Pierre Puvis de Chavannes** and **Caspar David Friedrich**. Echoes of the swings, gardens and manicured topiary of **Watteau**, **Fragonard** and **French Rococo** painting. And individuals that share some of the stylized expressiveness seen in figures by **Munch**, **Modigliani** and **Goya**.



*Mark Ryan Chariker, Passive Will, 2021, oil on canvas, 32 x 28 inches*



*Mark Ryan Chariker, All the Time in the World, 2022, 1969 Gallery, installation View*

Chariker's subjects wear simple garments, and the sleeves and backsides of several jackets are emblazoned with art historical motifs that resemble both pious liturgical vestments and opulent Versace frocks. Other references to words and pictures are indicated in depictions of hefty books and framed paintings hanging on walls. In some cases, solo figures engaged in banal activities like napping, reading or staring, are similarly transported to strange netherworlds, even if everyday props, like dog bowls, pet carriers, spray bottles and beer cans, remind us of their contemporaneity. When figures are seen inhabiting the confines of a domestic interior, one feels a similar sensation of indeterminate origin. Are we witnessing a vintage storeroom or basement storage space, as depicted in the painting *Burning Ceremony*, 2021, or are we in the middle of a rec room during a school activity or induction ceremony? Similarly, in *Intermission*, 2022, are we situated in a lounge during the intermission of a rehab meeting or performance, or in a canteen for missionaries?



Mark Ryan Chariker, *Burning Ceremony*, 2021, oil on linen, 24 x 20 inches



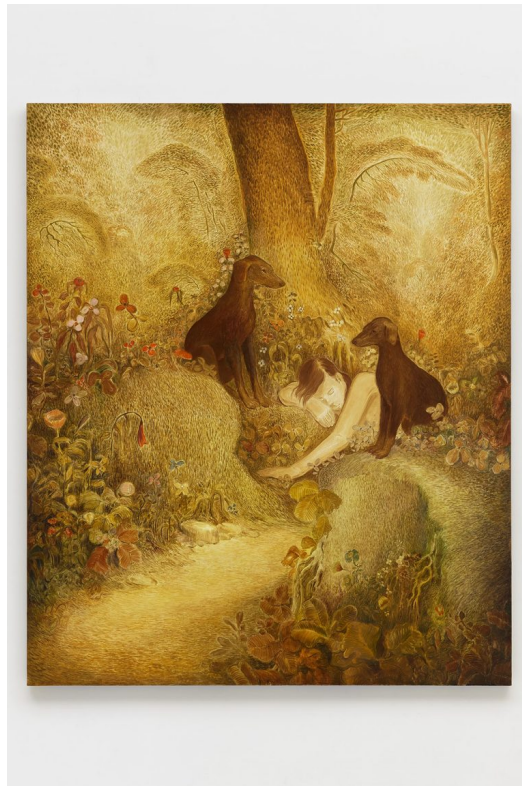
Chariker has a gentle touch, and his palette ranges from subtle browns, Venetian reds and rusts around the periphery of his compositions. Central figures are spot lit in madders, ochers and indigo and are offset with funnels of cyan skylight here and there. Seashell blues and coral pinks describe the tangle of flowers that sprout from the lower corners of many works. Bits and pieces of figuration fit together across a painting's surface; dog muzzles and tussled hair nestle nicely with willowy fronds and dipping gorges. Elevated bluffs, wide open valleys, root systems and tree trunks ring and rhyme across the picture plane. In what is close to a scientific botanic study, the painting *Far Away, So Close*, 2021, gives a cluster of eccentric flowers a moment in the spotlight. Bathed in heavenly rays, a mix of peculiar buds and petals ascend toward the light or reverently bow down, while a stream of water zig zags through the center.



*Mark Ryan Chariker, Far Away, So Close, 2022, oil on linen, 24 x 20 inches*

The artificiality of these vistas complement the passive ambivalence of the curious people who populate them, and elicit feelings of suspended animation. We live in a time when an art of transcendence and beauty for

its own sake has been discredited, preferring instead healthy doses of suspicion and inquiry. Much figurative painting today is embedded in a web of referentiality and self-consciousness, and requires a delicate balance between authenticity and derivation. Navigating this slippery slope works best when an artist eschews simulation, and chooses instead to embody and explore the facture of an artwork they admire through an apprenticeship of study and transcription. Chariker's work suggests a concentrated study of master painting techniques, in turn providing clues on how to piece together his own compositions. Prominent among these, is an attention to radiant light that emanates through tonal layers and glazes, while simultaneously exerting a dramatic and psychological force.



*Mark Ryan Chariker, Guardians, 2022, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 inches*

A clue to Chariker's process as a draftsman, and success as an image maker, might stem from his work as a printmaker. The simple and direct techniques involved in monotypes, drypoint and etching offer clues with which to reconcile abstraction with representation. For example, how figural shapes might be articulated through planes of dramatic chiaroscuro contrast. Or, how swarms of stippled dots and dashes can cohere to carve

out volume and mass, in this case, atmospheres abundant with thickets, fronds, shadows, soil, roots and ravines.



Mark Ryan Chariker, *Intermission*, 2022, oil on canvas, 38 x 42 inches

**In an interview**, Chariker has spoken about the pent-up intrigue that comes from not knowing, and how the physical act of painting allows momentary answers to questions forever eluding us. His Arcadian longing presents itself in landscapes on par with those of Eric Holzman, Joan Nelson, Stephen Hannock and Eileen Murphy, who similarly draw on an eclectic mix of source material to conjure up entirely new places. Chariker's philosophical pursuits, which suggests doubt while in search of meaning, might sit well amid the tenants of the New Sincerity, a movement espoused by the writer David Foster Wallace, that brandishes hope instead of cynicism. A solo figure in Chariker's painting, *The Long Book*, 2021, sits with an anxious expression, voluminous ledger on their lap, and hand placed over their heart, while appearing both awed and overwhelmed at what they are reading. A viewer wonders if they are asking the same questions that most of us ask. Do I matter? Will I be remembered? What is the meaning of it all?



*Mark Ryan Chariker, All the Time in the World, 2022, 1969 Gallery, installation View*



*Mark Ryan Chariker, All the Time in the World, 2022, 1969 Gallery, installation View*

**“Mark Ryan Chariker: All the Time in the World,”** 1969 Gallery, 39 White Street, Tribeca, New York, NY. Through Feb 26, 2022.

**About the author:** **Patrick Neal**, a regular contributor to *Two Coats of Paint*, is a painter, freelance art writer, and longtime resident of Long Island City. He will be having two solo exhibitions in 2022: At Joyce Goldstein Gallery, Chatham, NY, May 14-June 18, and at The Local NYC, Long Island City, NY, November 1 through December 31.