

PAINTERS' TABLE

Larry Groff at Prince Street Gallery

Submitted by Brett Baker on October 15, 2023.



Larry Groff, Will be Wild, 2022, oil on linen, 36 × 52 inches (courtesy of the artist and Prince Street Gallery)

Larry Groff: Flipped | Prince Street Gallery, New York | October 3 - 28, 2023

A lot is happening in Larry's Groff's recent paintings. The continuous tense is appropriate to describe them as we see in the paintings the same things that we are seeing in the "real" world. Conflict in its various forms pervades *Will Be Wild* (2022). Trump presides, glaring as waves of people (are they protesting, rioting, storming?) writhe in a collective chaotic melee. Their violence circles a mass of bodies piled in a Bruegel-esque tower. All transpires under bombardment from UFOs above. In the very bottom right corner, partially hidden by the artist's signature, a head lies lifeless on the ground, an apparent self-portrait. The world of this painting is a world that has forgotten art; it has killed the artist. In *Gracias a la vida* (2023) death moves at will throughout a celebration, conducting a band and cradling a baby. All this is rendered in bright color that recalls popular media.

Lest this all sound too dire or overly morbid, Groff presents another contemporary reality in progress in a series of paintings whose subject is the family at home. Whether quarantining or sheltering from the madness of contemporary life, the family members seem determined to spend their time well. They draw, paint, read books, and play chess. And yet we soon realize they aren't interacting with each other. Even the chess players stare at their pieces on the board (they are opponents after all). These homebound humans, immersed in cultural aspirations, are still disconnected. Each figure exists in their own world and each world is a small (and beautiful) painting within a painting. This compartmentalization recalls predella paintings; Piero's *Flagellation* feels like a formal touchstone.



Larry Groff, *Circling the Square*, 2023, oil on linen mounted on board, 36 × 36 inches (courtesy of the artist and Prince Street Gallery)

And yet there is another reality in these domestic scenes. The natural world moves in and around the figures as a Klee-inspired abstract music of pattern and form. As sunlight, it pours through windows and across floors and tabletops. It suffuses the entire environment: carpets, tablecloths, the paintings on the walls. In *Nap Dream*, 2023 an extensive library of

books spills from the shelves onto the floor. A cascade of colored rectangles, these books offer something beyond language. They are essential forms, symbols of a world of perceptual experience all but lost to contemporary culture. But, as the painting shows, this experience is *right there* if only we take the time to look. In these sections of “pure painting” lies an optimism, an affirming belief in the power of art, and in the power of the natural world to renew our experience even in these dangerous times.



Larry Groff, *Unbroken Circle*, 2023, oil on linen, 24 × 30 inches (courtesy of the artist and Prince Street Gallery)



Larry Groff, Nap Dream, 2023, oil on linen mounted on board, 36 × 36 inches (courtesy of the artist and Prince Street Gallery)



Larry Groff, My French Defense, 2023, oil on linen mounted on panel, 24 × 30 inches (courtesy of the artist and Prince Street Gallery)

PAINTERS' TABLE