

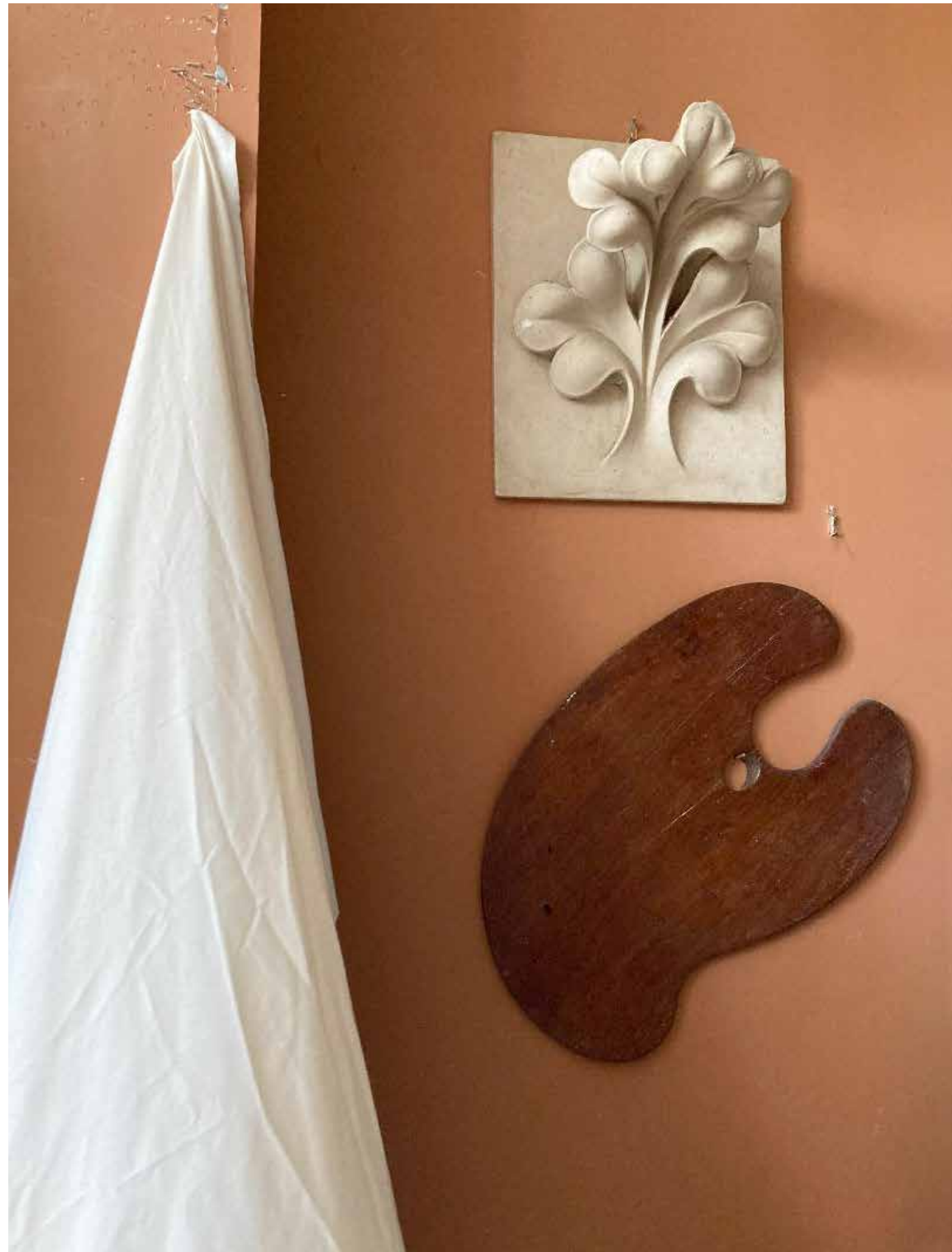


Paul DuSold

ENDYMION'S
DREAM




THE MYSTERY OF BEAUTY



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 wayne art center

413 Maplewood Avenue • Wayne, PA. 19087 • www.wayneart.org

(Front Cover [Detail]) Siren

(Opposite) In the Studio

I Died for Beauty

Oblations to Aphrodite in the Paintings of Paul DuSold

Emily Dickinson, in a poem I love, forgetting the conflict between Aphrodite and Athena or perhaps seeking to resolve it, equates Truth and Beauty; Homer, much as I love him, depicts Aphrodite as weak and silly next to Athena. (I imagine Homer to have suffered a broken heart.) My own choices early in life might have brought me into the temple of Athena, had she favored me, but she did not love me as she did the wily Odysseus. In my life as a painter, I have come to see Aphrodite as the stronger of the two. Our first and highest praise is always for Beauty, whatever we may mean by it. It is the first attribute we give to something we like. One may seek and desire truth. One may love order, clarity, justice, logic, prime numbers, etc., but no one ever ran after a creed or an idea because it was true and reasonable. We run after Beauty, because of Beauty, if and only if a thing is beautiful to us.

Everyone needs a way of living, and a religion may be but a way of living to which one is consciously and radically committed. A painter’s way of living unfolds in the studio, or wherever the paintings are made. That makes sense to me most of the time. On the days when it does not, I go to my studio anyway because that’s where I make my paintings, and long periods of time without going there are disorienting and force cracks in my fragile ego. It may be a common thing to find one’s identity in one’s vocation, but speaking as a painter, I would argue that it is not the work that gets produced that matters so much as one’s daily offering. As soon as my sights shift from wanting to make a painting to wanting to have made a painting, I have made a terrible step. This focus from painting (the action) to painting (the product) also marks the fundamental shift from devotion to ego, a powerful and primal duel, which is often couched in religious terms.

Painters USE their work to be and to become, and as Paul DuSold tells me, to connect to something larger — which is another way to map one’s identity. That is because to ask, “Who am I?” is also to ask, “What do I care about, what do I love?” and to share experience, to share what you love and to argue for it, is to return oneself to community. Years of studio practice will teach you how to be alone with yourself, but no one can live and work in a vacuum.

But isn’t the whole point to make something? Yes and No. Artists make things; that is, paintings do get made — at least sometimes. But the paintings, the objects, are the by-products of painting, the action. Painters go to work with themselves, with canvases and paint, and with a subject; and, when they walk away at the end of the day, there is a record on the easel of all the thoughts that were thought and all the things that were paid attention to.

Paul’s paintings are the perfect example of this. Unless you were witness to their evolution, you might not know that Paul sometimes takes whole figures — finished, developed, modeled, life-scale bodies — and paints them out of his painting with an extreme sensitivity to their placements relative to one another and to the proportions of his canvas. He moves the figures around freely, and sometimes tries the same figure in more than one canvas. This takes a powerful and ambitious painter who not only understands his powers and limits but also believes wholeheartedly in his process.

The specifics of Paul’s process may vanish into the finished pieces, but what he loves, his obsessions, and his commitments are written all over them. The size and scale of the paintings is a good first clue. Reproductions are nice; but, large or small, a great painting is built to be viewed in person. One must pilgrimage to a great painting. (This may be one of the reasons why painting, which is such a readily available medium and which is so satisfyingly suited to individual self-expression, remains a somewhat rarefied activity.) The size and scale of a work help to transfer the painter’s unique energy and establish the viewer, painting, and painter in an automatic relation. These paintings of Paul’s exalt, and the scale of the figures is Paul’s exhortation to identify with them in all their magnificence.

The person who makes these paintings clearly loves bodies, and so do I. All bodies — indiscriminately. Paul and I worship at the same altar. And to contemplate a nude body in paint, without apologizing, is one of a painter’s privileges.

Paul’s paintings are grounded in the bodies of real people — in the representation of naturalistically conceived bodies which are painted into imagined landscapes, a tradition that goes at least as far back as classical frescoes. Don’t, however, try to put his paintings into any category, or you might miss something. Painting as an activity quite naturally raises questions about looking and about the nature of the observable visual world. Sometimes people mistakenly think that painting representationally means trying to faithfully reproduce that world. That is as impossible an endeavor as it is meaningless. Paul, like all representational painters, lingers at the intersection of the observed, the felt, and the imagined. It is one of the most beautiful places to be.

The spaces in Paul’s paintings are imagined and meant to be seen as such, and they don’t make sense in ways we are used to. Music of the Spheres is a vortex of space which is strange and compelling. A male figure at the top of the canvas has a wonderful pose, and I can trace the space from his arm pit forward to his left front big toe. The woman who appears twice here appears in many of Paul’s paintings. I recognize her as a model I have worked with myself in the past. She gazes steadily at me in all her particularity, no mere symbol, for all her elegance, but a real person.

But most often the space in Paul’s paintings is pressed up close to the surface, where the action takes place in rhythms of limbs, in shape and color, and in carefully controlled paint textures, varying thick and thin (but never messy or wild as in my own paintings). This gets at Paul’s temperament and tuning of course. Paul’s paintings feel both self-assured and reassuring. The paintings have their own sense of order, calm, and clarity, underscored as much by the arrangements of the bodies as by the settings.

Of course, the real subject of Paul’s paintings may be Beauty itself. About Beauty we may only raise questions. We may conclude nothing at all about what it is. All we know is that it is the thing that we are always chasing, and that the work we make gives us murmuring feedback. It is not only the work we make, but also the work we look at that does this for us. In fact, the real miracle and power of art in all its forms is that it is as useful to the viewer, the listener, the reader, as to its creator. Paul uses his work, but so may I. In the things we find beautiful, we find something we need to know about ourselves. Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Emily Dickinson, Tom Petty — I use them all to give voice to my own poorly articulated and often poorly understood feelings.

In this very real sense, all of us are pledged to Aphrodite, to Beauty, whether we are aware of this or not. Paul’s paintings help to make that clearer and his devotion inspires my own. In Dickinson’s poem, one fails for Beauty and one for truth, the two are one... but, for me, Beauty, in all its manifestations, is always first.

Carolyn Pyfrom

July 2022

Diana and Endymion oil on canvas 66" x 64"





(Above) *Siren* oil on canvas 32" x 40"



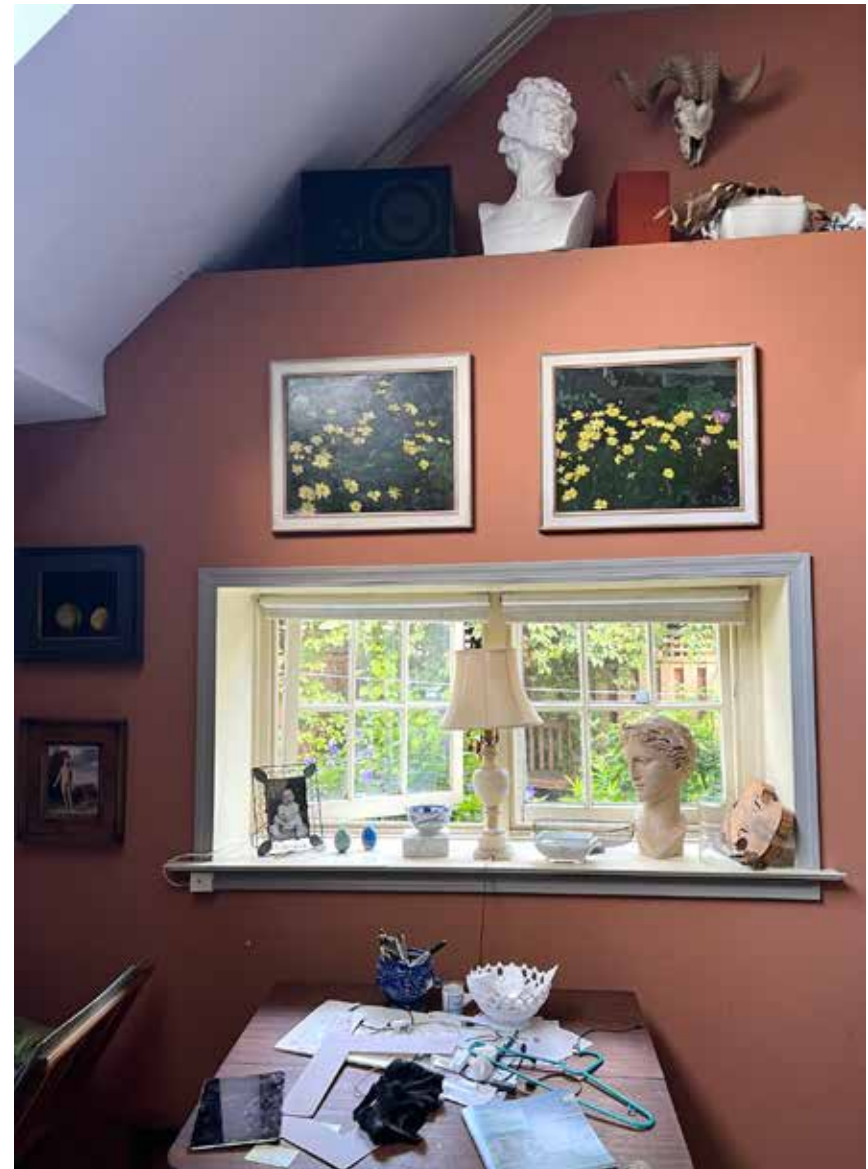
(Opposite) *The Mystery of Beauty* oil on canvas 42" x 56"

Music of the Spheres oil on canvas 64" x 66"





(Opposite) *Spirit in the Forms* oil on canvas 44" x 46"



(Above) *In the Studio*

(Overleaf) *Paul in the Studio*





Endymion's Dream oil on canvas 66" x 64"



(Opposite) *Adagio* oil on canvas 22" x 22"

(Above) *Props in the Studio*

(Overleaf) *Alexandra* oil on canvas 36" x 70"







(Above) *Paintings in the Studio*

(Opposite) *Ardmore* oil on canvas 72" x 64"





Lyric oil on canvas 32" x 40"



Elysium oil on canvas 64" x 68"



Ariel oil on canvas 35" x 42"

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Nancy Campbell and Pam McLean-Parker of the Wayne Art Center for giving me the opportunity to create this exhibition in the Davenport Gallery at WAC. The Davenport gallery is one of the finest exhibition spaces in the Philadelphia area and I feel extremely fortunate to show my work in it.

I am very grateful to Carolyn Pyfrom for creating a beautiful essay to accompany the work reproduced here.

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It was a pleasure to work with all of these wonderful people.

Paul DuSold

Paul DuSold is a graduate of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He currently lives and paints in the Mt. Airy section of Philadelphia. He teaches painting and drawing at the Woodmere Art Museum and the Fleisher Art Memorial.



Dedicated to enriching our community through the arts, the mission of the Wayne Art Center is to afford artists and the broader community an interdisciplinary venue to explore, share and learn, while fostering a sense of community for arts education and appreciation.

Nancy Campbell, *Executive Director*
Pam McLean-Parker, *Exhibition and Program Coordinator*

(Opposite) *Bust in the Studio*

