

Featured Artists

curated by

Lili Huston-Herterich

Dana Slijboom, Brian Rideout and Darby Milbrath all currently work with oil paint on canvas. They all have fantastic artist names. I tried to resist fetishizing each of their practices for their propensities to energetic color, daydream triggers and figurative content, but ended up fetishizing all the same. They all live and work in Toronto.

I was running late to Dana Slijboom's studio and starving, so I put two eggs on to boil and figured it'd take me exactly seven minutes of boiling to shower. But that day was the kind of day I caught myself falling into a deep daydream about nothing under the water (it's something that's kept me tardy since grade school). By the time I snapped out of it the eggs were rubber and I was late, so I clumsily ate them out the door.

When I arrived the conversation led, ironically, to digestion, and the way in which combined materials affect the comprehension of a work. Slijboom mentions the idea of plastic, its pervasiveness and dumbness as an everyday material, and it's not hard to see how this material as a concept informs her practice. For example, she doesn't mix colors for both efficiency of production and speedy digestion. Her studio is hung from floor to ceiling, tightly spaced and inconsistently leveled, many of her paintings bloated with synthetic stuffing. It's perhaps a waste to talk about the elements of graphics, canvas as textile, or overt colors. Slijboom's work is like white bread: exciting in its banality, sweet, easy to digest and keeps you as hungry as ever. I could go further and say that Slijboom's work is like white bread in the 2010's: cynically counter-culture, shoving in your face something so blatant that it stops you adversely or amiably, depending on your gluten tolerance.

I leave feeling satiated and head north for Brian Rideout's house. Rideout paints from photographs and the largest painting in his studio (still in progress) is from a photograph of a baptism. We start talking about the subject matter of a black man being baptized in front of a mural of a white Jesus. The conversation turns, unsurprisingly, to the history of painting. I admit I'm thinking more about the staggered shadow cast on the domed ceiling of the church—and how explicitly it references the

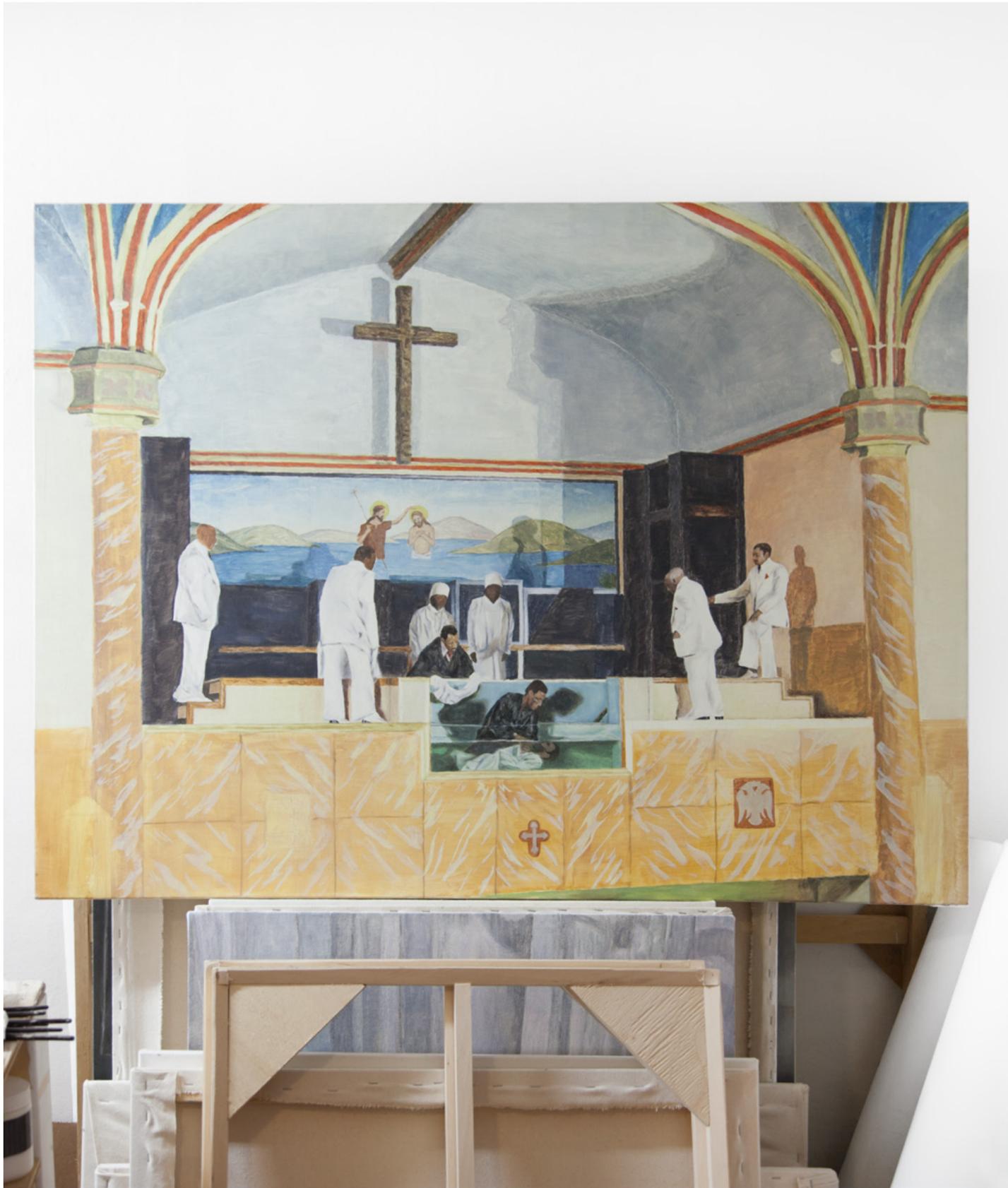
camera's flash—than the content of the image. He says that's fine and when I ask why, he offers a really nice anecdote: perhaps if we could share Rideout's work with an enthusiast of David from the late 18th century, they wouldn't be able to recognize this photographic realism I can't ignore. In his flattened painting style and the copious database of imagery he sources from, Rideout's work is a telling commonplace in our current interpretation of culture and our patterns of society.

It's the next day and Darby Milbrath is showing me the first painting she ever made. She recalls how frustrated she was making it. It's a portrait of a woman that Milbrath crudely smushed together with her fingers. She paints on cut canvas sheets and her work is mostly pinned to her wall or kept in a flat file, the way my parents kept the loose drawings that my sister and I made when we were kids. Darby also has a sister, whose work is interspersed with hers on the walls. She mentions her when I ask about influences, and I quickly realize my understanding of her work is rooted exclusively in the context of her own life. There is a reverse chronology in getting to know a person as an adult that is mirrored in the unfolding of Milbrath's practice. We talk about the summer and she asks whether or not I had ever tried drawing with ink on a blade of grass. A particular drawing of a naked woman with fluffy wings hypnotizes me as she describes how frightened she's always felt of sunflowers. I realize that yesterday in the shower I accessed a tenderness for my imagination that I see Milbrath accessing daily—her drawings and paintings are scraps of soft, violent, sad, and playful possibilities.

The images of selected work were all photographed on site by Lili Huston-Herterich in each artist's studio on July 14th and 15th, 2014.



Dana Slijboom, *Ampersand Flipped*, screenprint on canvas, 30 x 20 in., 2014 (top left)
Dana Slijboom, *Puppytar*, oil on canvas, 30 x 20 in., 2014 (top right)



Brian Rideout, *Baptism*, 2013, oil on canvas, 36 x 48 in.



Darby Milbrath, *Men at table* 10 x 14 in., oil on canvas (top)
Charlie and Darby, 10 x 14 in., oil on canvas (below)