

## *Likely Story* Artist Statement

My work consists primarily of large-scale narrative figure paintings which draw on traditional art historical models and techniques to depict contemporary themes. The content in my work is personal, and the paintings are allegories of subject matter that relate to my life experience. They tend to be either multiple figure compositions, which explore the dynamics between individuals, or single figure pieces that are more introspective and iconic. I am inspired by crisis, and many of my paintings address the emotional impact that difficult events or personal interactions have had on me. The specificity of this content is veiled, however, and I hope to communicate a general emotional climate, imbued with equal doses of pathos and humor, that resonates with each viewer in an individual way instead of being read as a particular, documentary narrative.

*Likely Story* is an exhibition comprised of works from the past eight years of studio work. Although the themes among these paintings are diverse, they are tied together by the notion of story and the way that narratives play out among people and within pictorial space. I would identify all of these works as autobiographical, in that they touch on themes that are significant to me. However, some of the earlier pieces in this show are more specifically personal and attempt to depict emotional states that I experienced at a particular time. These states are ones of crisis, as mentioned above, and their translation into pictorial form acts as both a catharsis for me and a way to form connections with viewers who respond to the emotional climate of the works. Works like *Slave 1* and *Slave 2* typify this kind psychological space within a perceptual space and reflect a kind of paralysis and chaos of figures buried by objects. Similarly, *Paint it Black* depicts a figure reckoning with pessimism through his interaction with objects. Other paintings in *Likely Story* address the idea of narrative itself as subject matter. I have lately been interested in the idea of storytelling as both a construct that reflects an agenda (as opposed to a representation of fact) and a battleground for dominance among competing forces. This amounts to a kind of fracturing of the line between truth and fiction; a highly topical notion in these times of conflict. Works like *Storytellers 2* attempt to visualize this idea. I've also recently been exploring the fracturing of the self through the depiction of an internal mental landscape of shifting and ephemeral thoughts and preoccupations. *Conversation*, the most recent work in the show represents this development wherein the form and space of the painting are starting to rupture and dissolve in ways that represent the psyche decoupled from linear narrative.

**Perin Mahler**