

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

CLASSICAL ART HAS ONE OF THE RICHEST ROOTS IN HISTORY, with some of the greatest paintings of all time arising out of moments of renaissance in skill and thought. Historically this type of art has aimed for a realistic, technically proficient representation of its subject while respecting the Old Master lineages of the past. Modern art arose in opposition to the principles and mindset of classical art, in an effort to break free from convention and tradition. For modern artists, conveying novel concepts inspired by intellectualism and experimentation was more important than verisimilitude. Modern artists felt traditional artists were indoctrinated in technique and produced unoriginal work that was stuck in the past. Traditional artists felt modern artists lacked respect for the craft of painting and created commercial work that left viewers with more questions than answers.

Flash forward to the present, and we are still dealing with several of the same divisions between the two art worlds. Both classical art (also labeled “traditional” or “realist”) and modern art (also labeled “avant-garde” or “contemporary”) had their inherent merits but have also developed deficiencies as they’ve progressed. If modernism took too drastic a turn from traditional order and beauty, and if the post-modern resurgence of classicism went too far into static technical prowess, we are now feeling the push and pull of art being brought back to center—and the artists coming to the surface embody the best of both worlds. The exhibition “Converge” will capture this movement by highlighting painters who demonstrate both the skill and tradition of the classical world and the content and critical thinking of the contemporary world. Rather than looking in confusion or disdain at a particular approach, “Converge” aims to bridge the divide between the classical and the contemporary by bringing high-level paintings in various styles and subject matter together for mutual acknowledgement.

There is a common thread throughout the work of all the artists chosen for this exhibition, whether executed in a representational or experimental manner: All the painters have some form of traditional training that they use as their foundation, many through the same academies and ateliers in Florence, New York City, and Philadelphia. All bring intelligent thought and reflective examination to the works they create. They each have a desire to reach beyond surface appearance and paint something of meaning and significance. And all have been given the artistic freedom to create outside of commercial confines for “Converge,” to showcase work that is an honest reflection of their individual motivation and the time to which they belong. Through their unique skill and vision, these 30 exhibiting artists—and others like them—are breaking barriers between classical and contemporary art, redefining the rules of those respective worlds, and pointing the way toward the art of tomorrow.

~Allison Malafronte, curator

Allison Malafronte—the former senior editor of *American Artist* magazine—is an arts writer, editor, columnist, and curator based in New York City and the creator of “Converge: Where Classical & Contemporary Art Collide.”