

OFF PARADISE

Peter Nadin, *The Invisible World*

January 17 — March 27, 2024

Opening Wednesday, January 17, 4-8pm



Off Paradise is pleased to present *The Invisible World*, Peter Nadin's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Reality, in Peter Nadin's work, is not restricted to observed phenomena, but inclusive of memories, associations, ideas, and dreams. What one sees is shaped by what one has seen before. With *The Invisible World*, as with the preceding series (or chapter), *The Distance from a Lemon to Murder* (2020), Nadin seeks to represent, in all its murkiness and incongruity, the cognitive interaction between the inner self and the external world. The canvas or panel offers a blank slate on which to freely explore the constant churning of consciousness. After all, paradoxical and contradictory images can coexist in art, as they do in the mind. Fish, for instance, can leap out of the pond and fly through the air. Lemons can up and leave the hothouse.

For over three decades, Nadin has made art on Old Field Farm, working closely with the land in an isolated part of the Catskills. The farm's labor, activities, and output, as well as the surrounding landscapes and communities, have increasingly informed his practice. When he returned to figurative and narrative painting in early 2020, after "unlearning how to make art" with his "Mark Series," the grafting process he used to cultivate citrus provided a metaphorical framework for the merging of ideational and representational approaches. In the greenhouse, Nadin splices a branch from the desired tree to the rootstock of another. In the studio, he "grafts" ideas and images onto the canvas, but they are not always so faithfully recorded. Unexpected results can occur, the narrative can veer off course. He began with studies of lemon trees, painted from life inside the greenhouse. But the still life refused to sit still. When the artist left the greenhouse for the studio, the lemons followed.

Populated with family and neighbors, Nadin's recent paintings find him returning to human narratives for the first time since the early 1990s. On trips to the Milk Run, a local diner and truck stop, he catches up with neighbors, many of whom appear as characters in the paintings. There is Gary, the farmhand, and his son Rick; Sharkey, a South Bronx detective turned dairy farmer; the local historian, Doug; and Dimitrios, dubbed "The Greek." The local goings-on punctuate his farm diary, interspersed amid reports of crops and livestock, homecooked meals, changes in the weather (meteorological and emotional), and battles with ever-encroaching predators. There are weddings, divorces, and deaths; a house burns down; Balashek, "the bee man," tragically freezes to death while caring for a pregnant cow. There is also the lingering presence of Selah Strong, the initial farmer of this land, whose body is buried nearby. The stories accumulate, whether real or imagined, like marks on a painting.

Reassembling the characters and the scenery, Nadin produces oneiric scenes in which nothing is restricted to its individually perceived reality. His realistically portrayed figures roam landscapes of the mind, abstract but uncannily familiar vistas rendered turbulently with swirling and scribbled brushstrokes. Skies, mountains, and trees overflow with agency. Everyone and everything seem untethered. Nothing is, for instance, as successfully bound as the motorboat is to a dock in *The Blue Rope*, 2023. In *The Crow Catches a Golden Orfe (Sharkey and Amanda See It)*, 2023, a man is flung into the air, destined to leave the picture frame. But the entire scene—the coiling trees, swelling cliffs—appears in the process of being swept up into the atmosphere. The migrating flock of golden orfe depicted in several paintings and sculptures are, in actuality, confined to the water. But once Nadin observes the fish in the pond, they are, as he says, "free to swim in the mind." In one painting, Sharkey's donkey gazes at an orfe swimming in the waters below a picturesque cliffside village, while other fish take flight behind its back. Like the ass, we can never know with certainty what happens when we are not looking.

Nadin conceives of painting as a dialogue with the paint itself. What, he wonders, do the oils and brushes bring to the painting? How do they guide him? How does one brushstroke lead to another, or suggest unintended forms? Within the space of a single painting, he utilizes the full range of marks, from precisely rendered figures and houses to more gestural landscapes. Scratched and curled lines resemble distorted letters approaching language. Unruly brushstrokes trespass onto the hand-painted frames, as the pictures push beyond their proscribed borders. A series of small nocturnal landscapes are rendered swiftly with a minimum of animated, fluid brushstrokes, as if the view threatened to disappear before his eyes. While the narrative paintings attempt to describe a self and its multifaceted reality, these scenic studies suggest a self seeing. Throughout the exhibition, the self is defined—in its presence and absence—as an accumulation of thoughts, perceptions, and experiences. A tattered shoe is just as much a record of the self as any visage or likeness.

Imbued with a sense of myth and allegory, Nadin's chimerical paintings and sculptures demonstrate a concern with the stories we tell ourselves, and how those stories, in turn, mold our perception and conception of reality. "Our stories," he has written, "are so beautiful in their evocation and complete misconception. We need a story in which to dwell no less than we need a house for shelter." The Garden of Eden is one such story: a shared vision that many have come to accept as reality, despite its absurdity; an imaginary world that only becomes visibly manifest through artistic interpretation. In Nadin's hands, the Garden is a fiery purgatory in which Adam digs a trench, laying the groundwork for civilization's infrastructure. His vision of Paradise may be haywire, but, like *The Invisible World* at large, it is no less real for it.

— Chris Murtha

Peter Nadin (b. 1954 in Bromborough, near Liverpool) is a key figure of the downtown New York art scene in the late 1970s and 1980s. A painter, sculptor, and poet whose work explores the practice of mark- and image-making as fundamental, evolutionary human functions, Nadin is the son of a sea captain whose family roots stretch back centuries in northwest England. He arrived in New York in 1976 on a Max Beckmann award from the Brooklyn Museum and became involved in a downtown art scene that included Christopher D’Arcangelo, Daniel Buren, Louise Lawler, Richard Prince, Jenny Holzer and Lawrence Weiner. Along with D’Arcangelo, he founded the artist-run space 84 West Broadway located in his own Tribeca loft, in 1978. Two years later, he became a founder of an unlikely artists’ collective called The Offices of Fend, Fitzgibbon, Holzer, Nadin, Prince & Winters whose members, including Richard Prince and Jenny Holzer, offered up their talents as critical thinkers to solve real-world problems for clients. From January through June 2022, Off Paradise hosted a pair of sequential exhibitions, “A Proposal to Peter Nadin, 1979; realized 2022” and “The Distance from a Lemon to Murder,” exemplifying two very singular aspects of Nadin’s career: his early conceptual projects and his ongoing exploration of pictorial conventions and mark-making. Nadin has been included in numerous exhibitions, including ones at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, Brooke Alexander Gallery, Gavin Brown’s Enterprise and James Fuentes Gallery. Nadin’s work is in public and private collections in the U.S. and Europe, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, the Yale Center for British Art and the Centre Pompidou.

Off Paradise is a gallery located on Walker Street founded by Natacha Polaert in the fall of 2019. The name evokes the old neighborhood of Five Points, at the center of which was a small, triangular park, full of hopes and grime, called Paradise Square. It also invokes Paradise Alley, the artists’ and poets’ colony on the then-godforsaken corner of Avenue A and East 11th Street that is referenced in Jack Kerouac’s novel *The Subterraneans*. Off Paradise is a fictional place, right off Paradise, adjacent to it, but not exactly it.



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Clockwise



Peter Nadin

Dave-Id Looks in a Mirror (Sees Himself), 2022

Oil on panel

49 ½ x 41 ¾ (125.73 x 105.09 cm)

PN1397OP



Peter Nadin

Drum with Nose, 2023

Painted Terracotta

21 ½ x 11 ¾ x 13 in. (54.61 x 29.85 x 33.02 cm)

PN1400OP



Peter Nadin

Adam Installing Utilities in the Garden of Eden Under the Devil's Fire, 2023

Oil on panel

48 ¾ x 44 ¾ in. (123.83 x 113.67 cm)

PN1395OP



Peter Nadin

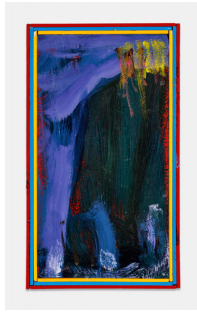
Three Self Portraits with a Ripening Lemon, 2023

Painted bronze

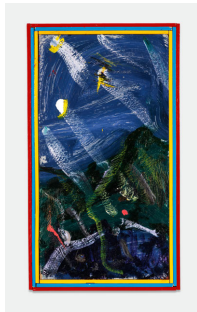
6 ¼ x 15 x 6 in. (15.88 x 38.1 x 15.24 cm)

Variation of 3 + 2 AP

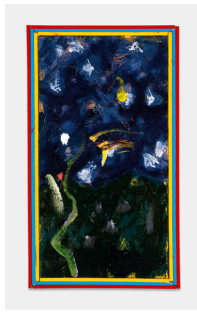
PN1401OP



Peter Nadin
Cliff, 2023
Oil on panel
16 ¼ x 9 ¼ in. (41.28 x 23.5 cm)
PN1403OP



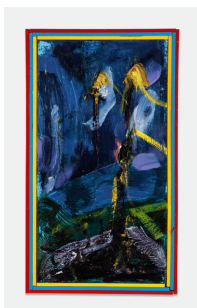
Peter Nadin
Looking North, Seeing Mount Pisgah, 2023
Oil on panel
16 ¼ x 9 ¼ in. (41.28 x 23.5 cm)
PN1404OP



Peter Nadin
Looking at Southern Night Sky, 2023
Oil on panel
16 ¼ x 9 ¼ in. (41.28 x 23.5 cm)
PN1405OP



Peter Nadin
A View East Before Dawn, 2023
Oil on panel
16 ¼ x 9 ¼ in. (41.28 x 23.5 cm)
PN1406OP



Peter Nadin
Seeing Night Sky, 2023
Oil on panel
16 ¼ x 9 ¼ in. (41.28 x 23.5 cm)
PN1407OP



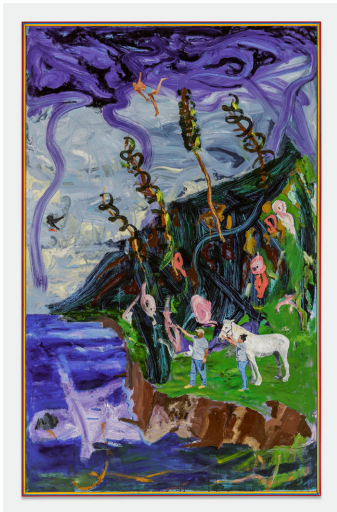
Peter Nadin

How I Look, What I See in Baracoa When I'm Not There (Self Portrait in Absentia), 2022

Oil on panel

57 3/8 x 49 1/2 in. (145.73 x 125.73 cm)

PN1398OP



Peter Nadin

The Crow Catches a Golden Orfe (Sharkey and Amanda See It), 2023

Oil on panel

78 x 49 in. (198.12 x 124.46 cm)

PN1396OP



Peter Nadin

Jar with Nose, 2023

Painted Terracotta

20 1/2 x 12 3/4 x 14 1/2 in. (52.07 x 32.39 x 36.83 cm)

PN1402OP



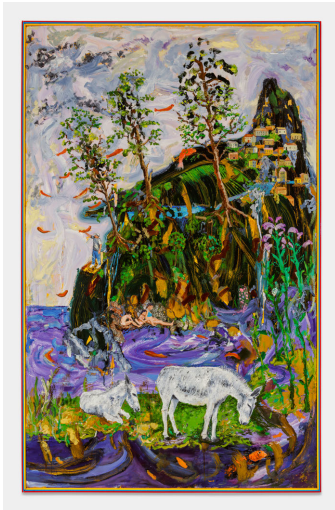
Peter Nadin

The Secret Wedding of the Invisible Man, 2022

43 3/4 x 34 7/8 in. (111.13 x 88.58 cm)

Oil on panel

PN1205OP



Peter Nadin

Sharkey's Donkey Watching a Fish (A Migration of Golden Orfe), 2023

Oil on panel

77 5/8 x 49 3/8 in. (197.17 x 125.41 cm)

PN1312OP



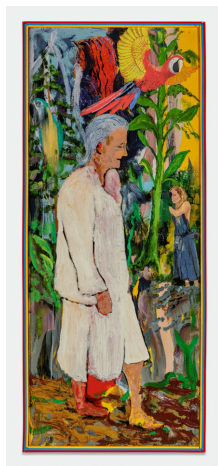
Peter Nadin

The Blue Rope, 2023

Oil on panel

77 5/8 x 49 3/8 in. (197.17 x 125.41 cm)

PN1311OP



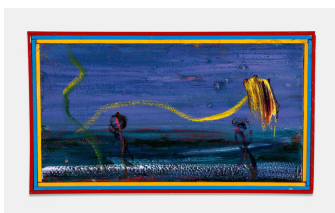
Peter Nadin

The Programmer, 2022

49 1/4 x 20 3/4 in. (125.10 x 52.71 cm)

Oil on panel

PN1399OP



Peter Nadin

Looking East, Seeing West, 2023

Oil on panel

9 1/4 x 16 1/4 in. (23.5 x 41.28 cm)

PN1408OP