

Hollywood Moment: Gus Van Sant has always been a painter at heart.

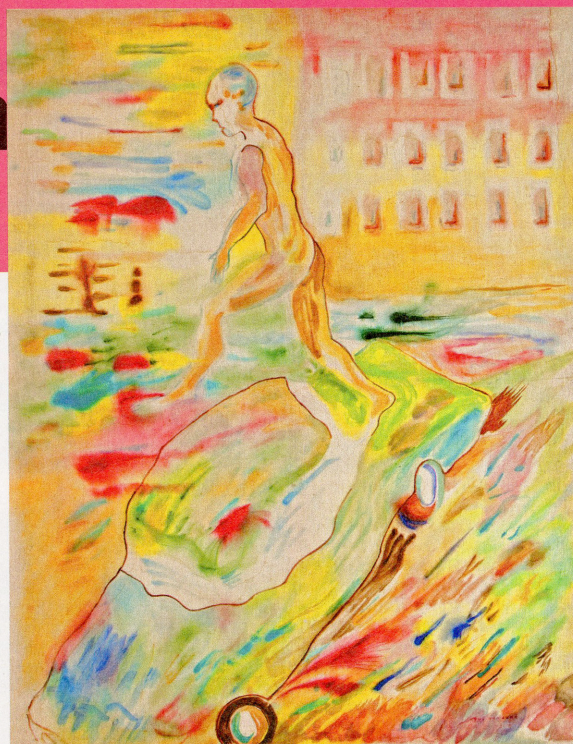
by Paul Laster
October 2-15, 2019

Art & Museum

Edited by Howard Halle
timeout.com/nyart @HowardHalle

Hollywood Moment

Gus Van Sant has always been a painter at heart. By Paul Laster Photographs by Ali Garber



Untitled (Hollywood 1)

WHEN YOU HEAR the name Gus Van Sant, you probably think of the auteur behind indie classics such as *Drugstore Cowboy* and *My Own Private Idaho* or Hollywood hits like *Good Will Hunting*. Most likely, you don't think of him as painter, but that's what he studied at the Rhode Island School Of Design (RISD). After setting aside his art to pursue film, it's front and center again with his New York solo gallery debut at Vito Schnabel Projects. Titled "Hollywood Boulevard," the show presents nine haunting canvases of nude men traipsing through Los Angeles. Sitting in the gallery dressed in a jean jacket worn over a black T-shirt and pants, the mild-mannered Van Sant talks about his show and the part L.A. plays in the paintings.

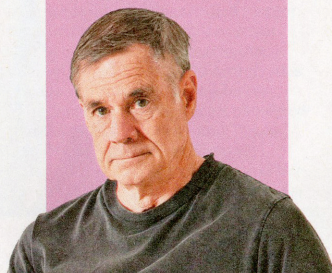
When you were at RISD in the 1970s, did you expect to make it as an artist?

No. The people in the classes ahead of me used to come back with scary stories about trying to succeed as artists in New York, so I figured the odds would be against me.

Wasn't David Byrne at RISD when you were there? Did you know him?

Yeah. I think he was one year ahead of

"I landed on Hollywood Boulevard when I first got to L.A., and I'm still always on that street."



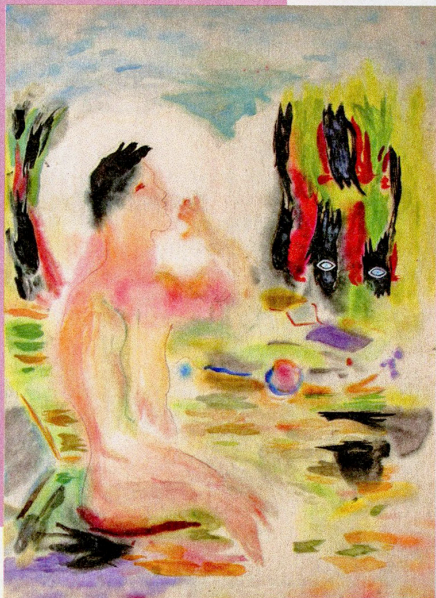
me. Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz, his bandmates in the Talking Heads, were there, too. We shared some close friends, but they moved to New York by the time I was in my senior year.

Once you started making films, you always seemed to associate them with art in some way. Didn't Larry Clark's photos of junkies influence *Drugstore Cowboy*?

Yeah. Bruce Weber gave me copies of Larry's *Teenage Lust* and *Tulsa* while I was shooting the movie. I hadn't been aware of him or his work before then, but I saw that we were on a similar wavelength.

How did you wind up being a producer on his film, *Kids*?

Around 1993, I introduced myself at a talk Larry gave and asked if he'd be interested in a film project tied to an AIDS fund-raiser. The money fell through, so I introduced him to my agent, who had also become a producer by that point. *Kids*



Untitled (Hollywood 11)

came a couple of years later, and I was given a credit for making that connection.

What compelled you to start painting again?

I always made paintings on the side. I'd sometimes give them as gifts to the actors and crew from my films. But I started painting more seriously when I was helping out James Franco for a show he was doing at the Gagosian Gallery. He had this idea to remake *My Own Private Idaho* with his own footage and with outtakes that I provided. Then Gagosian said they wanted something from me for the walls. I thought this would be my big chance, so I made a series of paintings for the show.

Where do you have your studio?

At my house. I paint on my porch.

Most of the paintings here depict solitary male figures walking through Los Angeles. What do they represent?

Mainly, I was thinking about all those people who come to Hollywood to become movie stars. You see them all the time on Hollywood Boulevard. I actually saw someone standing there in the middle of traffic with all their clothes off, I guess he blew an audition somewhere.

Is that why you've titled the show "Hollywood Boulevard"?

Absolutely. I landed there myself when I first got to L.A. in 1975, and I'm still always on that street. It's been a huge influence on me.

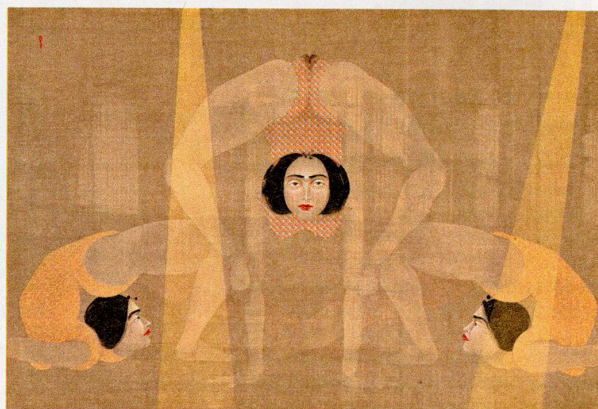
→ Gus Van Sant's "Hollywood Boulevard" is on view at Vito Schnabel Projects (vitoschnabel.com) through Nov 1.

THE THREE
BEST ART SHOWS
RIGHT NOW

→ **Leonhard Hurlzmeier**

The German artist presents new paintings and sculptures in the gallery's recently enlarged space. Bold color and flat, hard-edged forms impart the look of a children's book to the former, while the latter, cobbled together from found objects, seem to occupy a space between toy and totem. Together, the works unpack the elusive nature of narrative and how the meaning of stories depend on the way they're told.

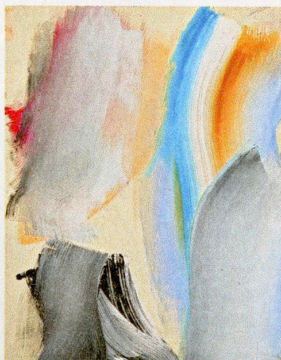
→ Rachel Uffner Gallery (racheluffnergallery.com). Through Nov 3.



↑ **Hay Kahraman**

Tradition and intersectionality collide in Kahraman's subversively feminist paintings that show contorted female figures in cramped quarters.

→ Jack Shainman Gallery (jackshainman.com). Through Oct 26.



← **Ed Clark**

One of the few African-American artists to gain exposure during the heyday of Abstract Expressionism, Clark is enjoying a late-career revival. This show—his debut with the gallery—features paintings characterized by sweeping strokes of color applied with a push broom. Tough yet lyrical, the work reveals the 93-year-old artist at the height of his powers.

→ Hauser & Wirth New York (hauserwirth.com). Through Oct 26.