

## Outer limits

Now open at the Lodge Gallery in New York City is *The Outer Boroughs: Brooklyn, Queens & the Bronx*, a group exhibition that will examine urban landscape painting in Manhattan's famous neighbors across the East and Harlem rivers.

One of the seven artists in the show is **Derek Buckner**, who turns his attention to Brooklyn's Gowanus Canal, an industrial area (and Superfund site) that is known for its machinery, shipping barges and industrialized structures that loom over the narrow waterway. "Having grown up in Brooklyn I've seen the Gowanus area go through a lot of changes. For most of my upbringing it was kind of a no man's land with a lot of factories and abandoned buildings, etc. When I returned to New York in the early '90s I was drawn to it yet again and surprised to see that more artists were moving to the area," he says. "Now it has become a hotspot, and there are a lot of large residential buildings being built. I have to say it's a bit disappointing because many of the iconic industrial structures which I found so compelling have been torn down to make way for the new developments."

In **Laura Shechter's** *D'Art III*, she paints a view of the city from the Manhattan Bridge.

Except for graffiti on a building, the view is mostly timeless and could be from 1918 just as easily as 2018. "My work has always been involved with decoration. For me graffiti are decorative motifs that happen to be on buildings and trucks," she says. "There was one early cityscape, *Painted Wall, Williamsburg* from 2006. I was told about 5 Pointz in Long Island City. After visiting it in 2010, my paintings shifted to graffiti in the cityscape. I believe that graffiti beautifies urban blight. I walk the five boroughs and ride the subways, photographing graffiti. I revisit what I consider important walls. My interest are the tags not murals. Some of these walls change for the better. Some of these walls don't exist anymore."

Painter **Todd Gordon** also visited 5 Pointz before the famous graffiti mecca was torn down in 2014. He captures the landmark in *5 Pointz, Loading Dock*, in which nearly every surface is covered in graffiti murals. "I think the first time I saw 5 Pointz was from the window of the 7 train. I was awestruck by this seemingly living three-dimensional canvas that appeared to rise up amidst the factory buildings in [Long Island City]," he says. "The entire building seemed to vibrate with its electric spectrum of color, rhythmic

patterns and shapes. I just had to paint it."

**Tun Myaing** paints a 5 Pointz interior in *The Metal Dome in the Boiler Room at 5 Pointz, Queens*. "I used to work in the 5 Pointz building before it got torn down... The building was mostly known for being the graffiti mecca of New York since the exterior was covered by beautiful murals from various local and international graffiti artists. Inside were artists and their studios in varying levels of their art careers," she says, adding that her and a friend found a way into the depths of the building. "We descended into darkness breathing in the thick moldy air while trying to not to get stabbed or step on sharp objects that were jutting out all around us. After passing through the gauntlet of abandoned paraphernalia it opened up to a huge, cavernous room that housed the oldest boilers I've ever seen. It was an amazing experience and I knew right then what I would be painting for the next two years."

**Valeri Larko** focuses on a street scene in the Bronx with her *Train Trestle, E. 133<sup>rd</sup> Street*. "What attracted me to the train trestle was the way the light hit the trestle along with the combination of graffiti and weeds/foliage that are filling in the gaps



1 **Todd Gordon**, *5 Pointz, Loading Dock, Queens*, oil on canvas, 29 x 59"

2 **Derek Buckner**, *Gowanus Canal, Ninth Street Bridge*, oil on linen, 44 x 60"

3 **Laura Shechter**, *D'Art III, View from Manhattan Bridge*, oil on canvas, 35 x 30"

4 **Valeri Larko**, *Train Trestle, E. 133<sup>rd</sup> Street, Bronx*, oil on linen, 32 x 52"



along the structure," she says. "I added my car to give a sense of scale. When I need a car in a scene and it is feasible, I will often use my car because I can repeatedly park it in the same spot."

Other works in the show include **Pamela Talese's** *McCarren Pool, Brooklyn*, which shows an abandoned pool with a large "Ink Head" graffiti tag on the front façade, and **John Wellington's** *Air Raid Over*

*Greenpoint, Brooklyn*, which shows an fictional attack over New York "inspired by the fragility of empires." Wellington says the city has and likely always will call to artists of all mediums. "New York beckons artists from all over the world, not just for visual reasons, but for the exchange of ideas," he says. "New York is usually not considered a beautiful city when compared to Rome, Barcelona or Paris. New York has

been during my life dangerous, filthy and expensive. However, there is beauty that can be found in the decay of a building's walls, covered with layers of posters and graffiti, and even in the litter that settles into the crack of a sidewalk. Those painters that find New York their muse, are often not painting the newest condominium to pop up on 57<sup>th</sup> Street. They are painting and finding their beauty in the darker sides of this city." ●