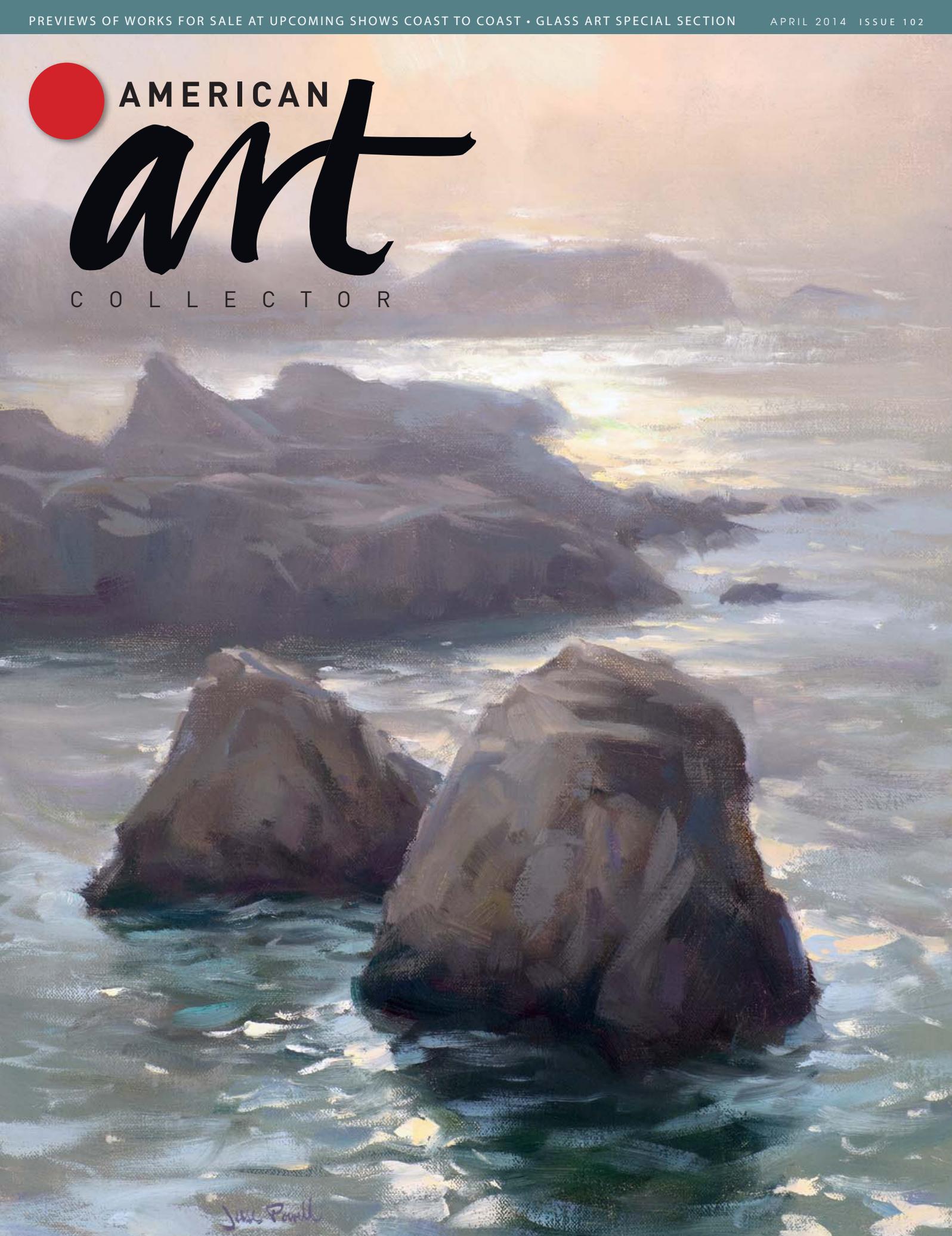


AMERICAN
art
C O L L E C T O R



Jim Pavitt

DEREK BUCKNER

Industry and nature unite

Derek Buckner will be the first to admit he doesn't live in the best neighborhood.

The Gowanus area of Brooklyn, its central corridor bisected by the notoriously polluted Gowanus Canal, is home to one of the borough's more industrial zones, with whole blocks made up of holding tanks, clamoring machinery and massive structures, their sheet-metal exoskeletons holding back steam, smoke and sparks.

To Buckner, though, Gowanus and its adjacent communities are prime painting subjects—he turns the grime and rust into stunning and dramatic explorations of industry and its relationship with nature, be it mesmerizing sunsets towering over metal silos or blackened ponds filling

dirty lots.

"There is a haunting quality about these areas. Industry creates these buildings that are not aesthetically pleasing, and they create juxtapositions and colors you don't normally come across," Buckner says. "I see the area in different ways each day. Every day I walk to my studio—sometimes I'll use different streets and pathways—and the light is always different, always remarkable. I love that drama of the light and of the haunting atmosphere."

As Gowanus grows and develops—gentrification is now in full swing—Buckner can't help but think he's capturing the area during an important era of change, one spurred, in part, by Hurricane Sandy. "We really are quite vulnerable in New York.

After the storm, the skies were clearing and it was suddenly beautiful amid all this chaos," he says.

In *After the Storm*, an orange-vested construction worker plucks debris from a pool of rainwater on a small rowboat bobbing in a reflective pond. In *After the Flood*, two men cling to a tiny barge floating in debris-laden water, an ocean of clouds swirling over their heads in the dusk light. Both pieces were painted from scenes Buckner saw near his studio. "These strange boats that these people have here, these oblong tugboats and other things, you won't see these things anywhere else," Buckner comments. "These images just aren't in your regular vocabulary."

The Brooklyn artist, whose works will



- 1
After the Flood,
oil on linen, 60 x 70"
- 2
After the Storm,
oil on linen, 50 x 60"
- 3
*Gowanus Factories,
Clearing Storm*,
oil on linen, 44 x 60"



2



3

hang at George Billis Gallery in New York from April 29 to May 17, says he plans to rediscover some new subjects after his next show, possibly more figurative work, interiors and landscapes.

“I’ve been enjoying exploring layering and the plasticity of paint. I’ve also been trying to get a sense of texture and depth more and I feel strongly about that aspect of my work,” Buckner says, adding that he’s been doing more drawing lately.

“I’ve been going to free drawing sessions with models each week and I’m enjoying that more and more,” he says. “I can take it all with me where I go and they inform my oils. By the time I get home with a drawing I’m ready to paint.” ●