

PAINTED LANDSCAPES

Contemporary Views

LAUREN P. DELLA MONICA



4880 Lower Valley Road • Atglen, PA 19310

DEREK BUCKNER

(B. 1970)

For Derek Buckner, painting the city provides an opportunity to construct a scene from memory or instinct. Buckner's paintings depict actual places but reflect the artist's mind in their elaborate and rich coloration. Buckner's subjects include both natural landscapes and urban landscapes, as well as piles of marshmallows, clusters of brightly colored trucks, and complicated freeways. Regardless of the subject matter, his handling of paint and attention to the brilliance of light on the subject of the work remain paramount.

Buckner's *Sunlight on Water (New York Harbor)* (Fig. 35), a high-rise view of the urban sprawl around a Brooklyn canal, captures the glow of a warm, atmospheric sky, its pastel tones reflected on the low-lying structures in the center of the canvas and across the water. Five cranes form silhouettes against the river and cross the horizon line to visually fuse the upper and lower registers of the painting. This colorful landscape, as Buckner presents it, shows natural beauty and urban grandeur as one. The artist takes a grey, urban jungle and tames it, rendering it softer and more beautiful with his choice of colors, which glow most warmly in the center of the canvas. Buckner's complex brushwork gives both a sense of realism in its level of specificity and of abstraction in its thick, loose application of luscious paint and its impressionistic style.

Domino Sugar Factory (Fig. 36) is a smaller, more painterly urban vista. The factory stands at the center of the work, commanding most of the canvas from top to bottom and thus the viewer's attention. The surrounding landscape and sky appear lighter in color and play supporting roles. Areas of purple, grey, and blue paint converge to form buildings and streets. Nearly every color one can think of appears somewhere in the work, enlivening an area of the canvas. Buckner thickly layers his paint, applying it in intersecting lines and bands of color. The free style of brushwork suggests changing light, glinting sunshine, and shadows.

Buckner's jewel-toned color palette illuminates the otherwise cold, industrial landscape in *Gowanus Canal, Evening* (Fig. 37). The large metal tanks, rather than feeling drab and cold in their material and heft, are warm and enticing as rendered in emerald and minty shades of green. The composition comes alive in shades of blue, purple, orange, and yellow. The loose brushwork allows the viewer to sense how the scene feels rather than focus on the specific details of form or location. The juxtaposition of urban structures (tanks, pipes, highway overpasses, and signage) with the natural elements of water and sky creates an enticing composition when rendered with such skillful brushwork and an enlivened color palette.

Derek Buckner lives and works in Brooklyn. He has studied at Vassar College, the Art Students League of New York, and the Boston Museum School's stone-carving program in Carrara, Italy. He received his BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has had 18 solo exhibitions since 2001 and is represented by George Billis Gallery, New York.



Fig. 35: Derek Buckner. *Sunlight on Water (New York Harbor)*, 2012. Oil on linen: 30 x 40 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and George Billis Gallery.



Fig. 36: Derek Buckner. *Domino Sugar Factory*, 2011. Oil on panel: 11 x 14 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and George Billis Gallery.



Fig. 37: Derek Buckner. *Gowanus Canal, Evening*, 2011. Oil on canvas: 22 x 28 inches.
Courtesy of the artist and George Billis Gallery.