

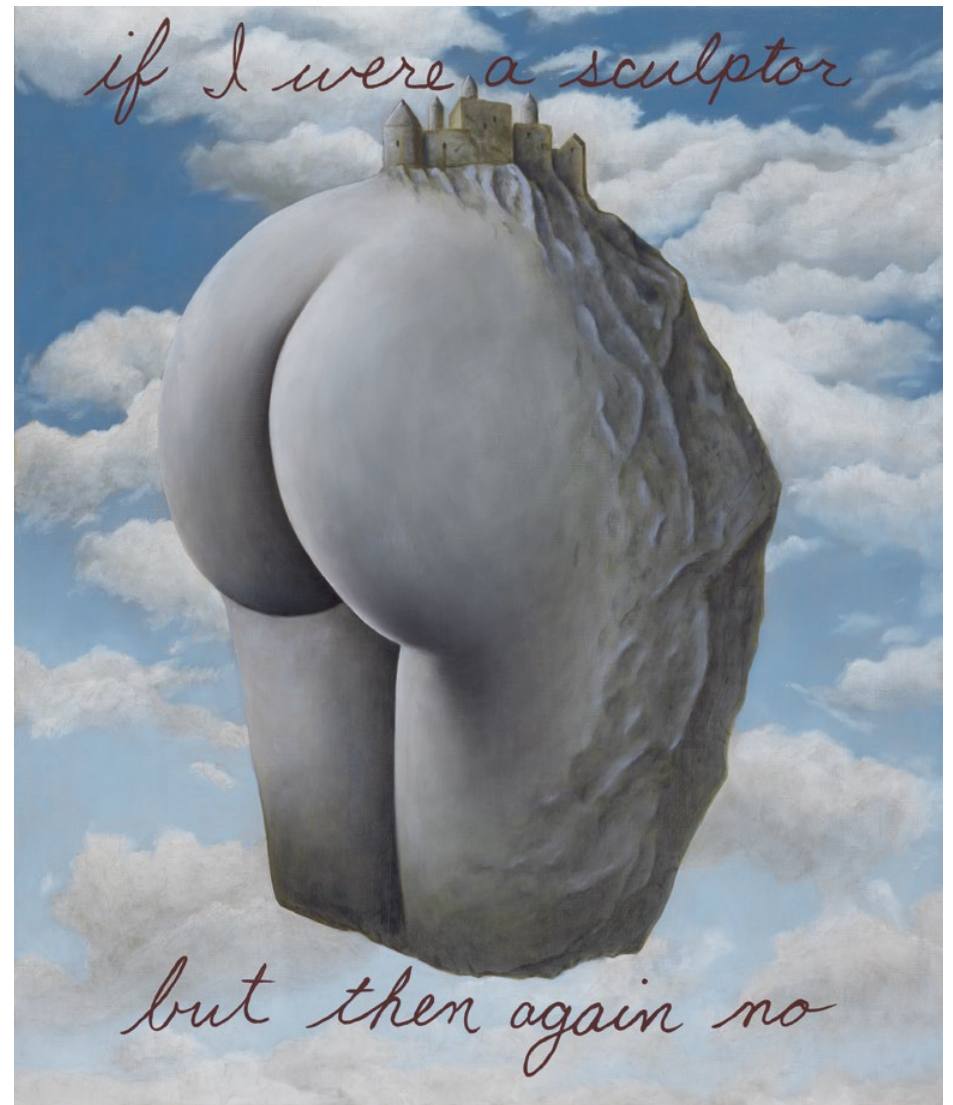
Sean Landers

November / December 2019

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If I Were a Sculptor, 2019
Oil on linen
96.5 x 81.3 cm
38 x 32 1/8 in

For his third solo exhibition at rodolphe janssen, Sean Landers continues to explore the meaning of what it is to be a contemporary maker of art. For the last three years Landers has been defining and clarifying themes he has pursued over his three decades long career. Here he will present three distinct groups of paintings, each re-examining the relationship of the artist to his work.

In the series of four paintings depicting a figure made out of wood, Landers has quite literally devised a character out of the materials which support his canvas while painting. The simple and functional design of Landers' easel can be found in the figure he calls "Plankboy." Made of wood planks, hinges and nuts, bolts and screws, "Plankboy" is defined by the fact that he does not quite fit into the world in which he exists. Making his first appearance twenty years ago in a body of work signifying Landers' renewed interest in Rene Magritte's 1947-48 "La Période Vache," Plankboy has been making periodic appearances in the work and has become a visual touchstone for the artist, as if to say, "this is where I am now."

While Plankboy bridges the past with the present, he is also bridging artistic truth with mythology. Here the figure becomes a symbol for the struggle of artistic endeavor and the odds that must be overcome in order to continue to create. In a sense, Plankboy is describing the nature of his own existence. When depicted as an iconic figure in enduring ancient Greek mythology, he is revealing traits inherent in successful makers of art with respect to their work—Pygmalion: make what you love; Daedalus: let it go and hope it endures; Sisyphus: keep trying despite fear of failure; and Narcissus: belief that there is something worthy to offer. These deeply personal tenets to which the artist has remained true throughout his practice were examined in depth in prose in a series of Library Book-case paintings exhibited in Landers' first solo show at the gallery in 2012. Not coincidentally, Landers utilized wood-grain as the literal basis for containing the books, the vehicle for the prose.

The wood grain makes a reappearance in a number of the small-scale paintings reminiscent of those from his Small Brass Raffle Drum series, which was devised to mine his own oeuvre via a ready-made device. Here Landers is breaking the prior constraints he gave himself, and relying more on spontaneity, photographs from his own travels, popular

culture, and art historical references; Landers has allowed himself to free-associate. The resulting paintings hold an element of whimsy and are the direct descendants of the Surrealism proposed by André Breton, Salvatore Dalí, and René Magritte's "La Période Vache."

Rounding out the exhibition are two larger scale paintings depicting old-fashioned wooden signage, such as one would find at a rural crossroads or hiking trail. Here, the wooden signage gives up its purely directional functionality to become a vehicle for prose. Reinventing the visual language of a sign as they are read from top to bottom, and left to right, they impart a greater truth about their eternal existence in the prose they present. Serious and funny at the same time, they provide a direct contact between artist and viewer.

(next page)
Both Things at Once, 2018
Oil on linen
151.1 x 196.2 cm
59 1/2 x 77 1/4 in



SOME PEOPLE READ
THESE WORDS

SOME WERE AMUSED
SOME WERE CONFUSED

SOME OF THEM
REALIZED THAT

SOME PEOPLE THOUGHT
A BIT MORE

SOME RECONSIDERED
THE PAINTING

AND THE WRITING

SOME THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT THAT
MEANS AND WHAT IT IMPLIES

IT MADE SOME
THINK ABOUT WHETHER

SIGNS ARE
MEANINGFUL

IN ART

LITERAL SIGNS
FIGURATIVE SIGNS

ART IS A
THING ITSELF

OR IF IT'S A
DEPICTION

OR IT CAN BE

BOTH THINGS
AT ONCE

MAYBE THIS PAINTING
IS JUST A PICTURE OF SIGNS

NOT A SIGN OF
ANYTHING ELSE

OR A DEPICTED
THING?

ISN'T THAT OK
THOUGH?

THAT THIS
COULD JUST BE

THIS?

IS THAT WORTH
THINKING
ABOUT?

HOW MUCH
OF OUR
DAILY

LIVES
EXIST AS A
TRUE THING

BUT NOTHING'S
THAT SIMPLE
THOUGH
RIGHT?





(previous pages)
Plankboy (Daedalus), 2019
Oil on linen
109.2 x 149.9 cm
43 x 59 1/8 in

Plankboy (Narcissus), 2019
Oil on linen
109.2 x 149.9 cm
43 x 59 1/8 in

The New Englander, 2019
Oil on linen
91.4 x 76.2 cm
36 x 30 in





(previous pages)
Plankboy (Pygmalion), 2019
Oil on linen
109.2 x 149.9 cm
43 x 59 1/8 in

Barry Lyndon, 2019
Oil on linen
91.4 x 76.2 cm
36 x 30 in





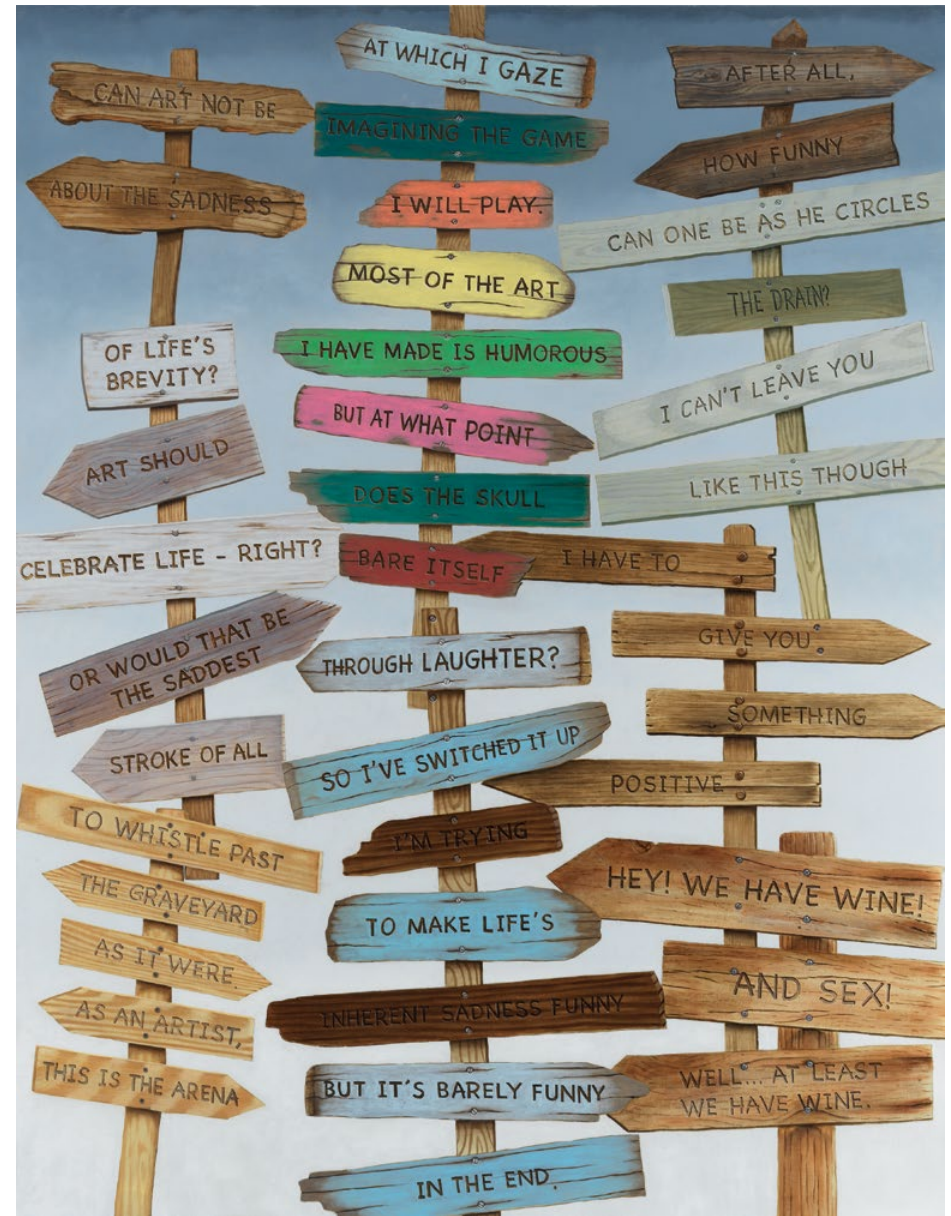
(previous pages)
Plankboy (Sisyphus), 2019
Oil on linen
109.2 x 149.9 cm
43 x 59 1/8 in

The Original, 2019
Oil on linen
96.5 x 81.3 cm
38 x 32 1/8 in





Daphne and Apollo, 2016
Oil on linen
127 x 109.2 cm
50 x 43 in



At Least We Have Wine, 2019
Oil on linen
202 x 156 cm
79 1/2 x 61 3/8 in

Biography

Sean Landers was born in 1962 in Palmer, Massachusetts, USA. He received a BFA in 1984 from Philadelphia College of Art and an MFA from Yale University School of Art in 1986. Landers lives and works in New York City.

In 1996, Landers began to use imagery to represent the stream-of-consciousness. His first solo exhibition, "Art, Life and God," opened in 1990 at Postmasters in New York, where he first exhibited a semiautobiographical quasi-screenplay as art, along with wet terra-cotta sculptures housed in plastic bags. Solo exhibitions soon followed at Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York in 1992 and 1993, incorporating video with terra-cotta sculptures and handwritten stream-of-consciousness text drawings. With a marked shift in materials, the next solo exhibitions were comprised of large-scale handwritten stream-of-consciousness oil paintings and cast sculptures, as seen at White Cube in London, Bruno Brunnet Fine Arts in Berlin, and Regen Projects Los Angeles in 1994, and in 1995 at Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York, as well as Galerie Jennifer Flay in Paris. Group exhibitions in which this type of work could be seen were "I, Myself and Others" at Le Magasin in Grenoble (1992), "Backstage" at the Kunstverein in Hamburg and the Venice Biennale (both 1993), "Young Americans" at the Saatchi Collection in London (1996), and "Heart, Mind, Body, Soul: American Art in the 1990s" at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (1997).

In 1996, Landers began to use imagery to represent the stream-of-consciousness writing that had been his previous hallmark. Clowns in peril in nature, colonial revelers, and chimpanzees were most often portrayed and featured in shows at Rebecca Camhi Gallery in Athens, Stuart Regen Projects in Los Angeles, and Studio Guenzani in Milan. Landers's entire "A Midnight Modern Conversation" series, inspired by a William Hogarth painting, was included in "Wunderbar" at the Kunstverein in Hamburg.

Magritte's *Periode Vache* informed the work in solo exhibitions from 1998 to 2003 at Crown Gallery in Brussels, Taka Ishii Gallery in Tokyo, Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York, Contemporary Fine Arts in Berlin, and greengrassi in London, where *Plankboy* made his first appearance.

In 2004, Landers began to re-incorporate the written word, until 2011's "Around the World Alone" exhibition at Friedrich Petzel Gallery, in which a sailor-clown, embodying interior thought, once again made an appearance. Tartan-clad animal paintings and paintings of shelved books bearing highly-edited texts on their spines were shown in 2012 solo exhibitions at greengrassi and Galerie Rodolphe Janssen in Brussels, where Landers's sailor-clown resurfaced, this time in a snow globe on a shelf in each library painting.

"Moby Dick (Merrilees)", a large-scale painting commissioned in 2013 for "Unlimited" in Basel, became a new starting point for Landers with respect to Magritte's *Periode Vache*. This painting embodies Landers's continued pursuit of artistic freedom, necessary to make a work of art that remains relevant throughout time. The paintings shown at Petzel Gallery in 2014 and Galerie Rodolphe Janssen in 2015 are direct descendants of this giant tartan whale.

In 2016, Landers embarked on his *Small Brass Raffle Drum* series, directly referencing imagery from older work. This series was shown in solo exhibitions at Capitain Petzel in Berlin in 2016 and Galerie Rodolphe Janssen in 2019. In this later show, a new series based on *Plankboy* was shown, nearly two decades after his debut in 2000.

Major survey exhibitions of Landers's work have been presented at Kunsthalle Zürich (2004) and the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (2010).

Work by the artist is included in numerous museum group exhibitions, most recently in "Magritte, Broodthaers & Contemporary Art" at Musée Magritte, Brussels (2017), and "Portraits from the Whitney's Collection" at the Whitney Museum of American Art (2016). Also, "Picasso in Contemporary Art" at Deichtorhallen Hamburg (2015), "After Picasso: 80 Contemporary Artists" at Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2015), "NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star" at the New Museum, and "Drawing Time, Reading Time" at the Drawing Center, both in New York. His work has been presented in exhibitions at MoMA PS1, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Serpentine Gallery, London; Saatchi Gallery, London; and the Venice Biennale, Athens Biennale, and Berlin Biennale.

His work is represented in numerous major museums as well as other public and private collections, including the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson; Denver Art Museum; Des Moines Art Center; Falckenberg Collection, Deichtorhallen Hamburg; Fundación Jumex, Mexico City; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; The Kistefos Museum and Sculpture Garden, Jefnaker; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Nasher Museum of Art, Durham; Sammlung Goetz, Munich; Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin; Sammlung Landesbank Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart; Seattle Art Museum; Soho House, New York; Tate Modern, London; The Art Hotel, Denver; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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for all images

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