



Left: Twilight, lucid and serene, 2024, Oil on linen, 72 x 64 inches Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved

Top: The Great Circuit of the Stars, 2024, Oil on linen, 36 inches diameter Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved

ERIC UHLIR:
**ARMIDA
& RINALDO**



WINSTON WÄCHTER FINE ART
ERIC UHLIR: ARMIDA AND RINALDO
MAY 9TH, 2024 - JULY 3RD, 2024



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Eric Uhlir (American, b. 1979) grew up in Southern California and earned his BFA from the University of Texas at Austin in 2003. His work is both figurative and abstract, examining the Anthropocene in the context of art history. Uhlir has received numerous awards and recognitions, such as The Boynes Artist Award and the Washington Commission on the Arts and Humanities Fellowship. His work has been written up in the Washington Post and is held in private collections internationally. He exhibited at IA&A at Hilyer in Washington, DC, in 2019 and with Caitlin Berry Fine Art at Culture House in 2021. He lives and works in Washington, DC.



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An Exclusive Interview
With **ERIC UHLIR**

Left: Eric Uhlir in the studio © All rights reserved

Top: Beyond the point, we know as the world's end, 2024, Oil on linen, 60 x 90 inches. Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved

BY ARIEL SU

We are delighted to feature an exclusive interview with an outstanding artist, Eric Uhlir, and to celebrate the upcoming unique solo exhibition at the Winston Wächter Fine Art, New York. His fantastic "ARMIDA AND RINALDO" series of paintings are lush, large-scale paintings that combine references to art history, pop culture, and Renaissance poetry in swirling

compositions reflecting human history's cyclical nature.

The series is a reimagining of the legend of Armida and Rinaldo, a 16th-century epic poem set during the First Crusade. Wildly popular at the time, the story inspired countless Baroque artworks, yet this tale has all but vanished from our collective memory today. As the story goes, the sorceress Armida lures Roman soldiers with

her charms to neglect their military duty. Armida falls in love with Rinaldo mid-attack and steals him away to her idyllic garden. In this exhibition, Uhlir embraces the tension between figuration and gestural abstraction to explore age-old themes of love and duty through a modern lens.

In Uhlir's nuanced exploration, Armida serves as a dynamic symbol of love's complex power and the

BY ARIEL SU



Eric Uhlir at the studio © All rights reserved.

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GIVEN THE PLETHORA OF ISSUES FACING THE WORLD, MOST CENTERED ON THE VIOLENCE OF NATION-STATES, I WAS FASCINATED BY THIS LOVE STORY WHERE THE HERO HAS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN LOVE AND DUTY.

ART MARKET MAGAZINE: Congratulations on your upcoming solo exhibition, "ARMIDA AND RINALDO," at the Winston Wächter Fine Art in NYC. Before we discuss your art and the influence on your recent series of artworks, please tell us a bit about your childhood? Were you raised in an artistic family? Where did your passion for art come from?

ERIC UHLIR: Growing up in LA, we used to go to LACMA all the time. Our mom was an art major and would

delicate balance of identity, while Rinaldo embodies the desire to balance a personal sense of duty amid societal pressures. Uhlir adopts the grand scale of history painting while drawing inspiration from a wide array of visual material, including pop culture, gay erotica, images of 1960s biker culture, and art historical canons. Looking at Eric Uhlir's work is like flipping through pulp magazines and art history books. Images blur together on the edge of expressive abstraction, where a chaotic landscape can evoke both a literal battlefield and the conflicting emotions of inner tumult.

These paintings reward close looking, inviting viewers to find their own narratives among the compositions, where figures emerge amid a bucolic palette of blues, pinks, and greens. The lavish scene in the triptych *Beyond the Point*, known as *The World's End*, depicts characters in repose, set in a hedonistic Garden of Eden. The images in the triptych panels don't quite match up, like the idea of an idyllic past that one yearns to return to but that might not have ever really existed.

In drawing from materials throughout history, Uhlir considers the spiraling repetition of human history and its destiny to continually repeat itself. By positioning age-old characters in today's world, *Armida & Rinaldo* explore themes of identity, conflict, and desire and boldly assert the power of painting as storytelling to convey human experience.

pile my twin brother and me in her little red Fiat convertible and take us on weekends. I used to love climbing the glass-railed ramps in the Japanese art pavilion. Being immersed and encouraged to take an interest in art at an early age was definitely formative. I've always loved making art and have drawn or painted obsessively for as long as I can remember. I used to skip recess in school just to sit at a table and draw, so I've always felt the need to create, even as a kid.



In a gloom orchard, 2024,
Oil on linen, 18 x 14 inches
Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved



A hermit lover when his love is gone, 2024, Oil on linen, 74 x 80 inches
Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved



The total arsenal of entropy (lush games and foolery), 2024, Oil on linen, 64 x 72 inches
Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved

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ART MARKET MAGAZINE: You obtained your BFA from the University of Texas at Austin in 2003 after growing up in California. Has your academic background influenced your artistic style, journey, and success?

ERIC UHLIR: I like to tell people I grew up in the sunshine. That's probably where my saturated palette comes from. We moved from Los Angeles to San Antonio when I was a teenager. I became a National Merit Scholar and received a full-ride to the University of Texas. I had a lot of great professors at UT, but the most influential was probably Dan Sutherland. He taught me the importance of color specificity and the

esoteric oil painting techniques that the more conceptual New York school of professors eschewed. The faculty was very generous in scheduling one-on-one studio visits with visiting artists and critics. Vito Acconci once told me I was afraid of color! I've never forgotten that. My drawing professor at the time, Sarah Canright, said he didn't know what he was talking about! I've always appreciated her sticking up for me. Austin is a great music town but has virtually no art scene. That's a big reason I moved to DC, to be in a city with larger and more established institutions like the Hirshhorn, Glenstone, the National Gallery of Art, and now the Rubell Museum.

The freedom of experimenting with style and technique away from the pressure of places like New York now found a firmer foundation in the deep references available within walking distance of my studio.

ART MARKET MAGAZINE: Let's talk about your artistic style, which we can describe as Abstract figurative art.' Which art periods and styles influenced your creative style, and

what is the philosophical idea behind your latest series of works, Armida & Rinaldo?

ERIC UHLIR: I've always loved good history painting, especially artists like John Singleton Copley, Tintoretto, and Delacroix. I'll always stop for Cecily Brown, Joan Mitchell, Richard Diebenkorn, or a good Fragonard. My work's blend of figuration and abstraction functions like a history

painting; it's a way of folding space and time so many potential realities and narratives can exist simultaneously. The layers in each painting are essential; if you look closely, you notice that there often seems to be a painting underneath what you thought was the primary pictorial space.

Armida and Rinaldo's series was inspired by a series of Tiepolos at the Art Institute of Chicago.

A fox, for the first time,
2024, Oil on linen,
48 x 36 inches Eric Uhlir ©
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“ ARMIDA FALLS IN LOVE WITH RINALDO MID-ATTACK AND STEALS HIM AWAY TO HER IDYLIC GARDEN. IN THIS EXHIBITION, UHLIR EMBRACES THE TENSION BETWEEN FIGURATION AND GESTURAL ABSTRACTION TO EXPLORE AGE-OLD THEMES OF LOVE AND DUTY THROUGH A MODERN LENS.

Given the plethora of issues facing the world, most centered on the violence of nation-states, I was fascinated by this love story where the hero has to choose between love and duty. It was melancholy in how relevant that concept still feels. Rinaldo is ostensibly bewitched by the sorceress Armida, and I found that idea at odds with the world we live in and evolving notions of the romantic. I wanted to imagine a version of the story where Armida's desire and agency weren't a cynical magic spell but something more human and beautiful.

ART MARKET MAGAZINE: What is the primary purpose of choosing large-scale canvases for your art?

ERIC UHLIR: I don't think history paintings function as well at a small scale. I also physically enjoy making larger paintings and the freedom of movement it allows me. We live in an age of spectacle and short



attention spans, so there also needs to be something audacious and a little confrontational that forces you to engage. There are more modest works in the show, but the main narrative exists in the large tableaus and dripping pools of color. Big paintings are just sexier and more intense to me.

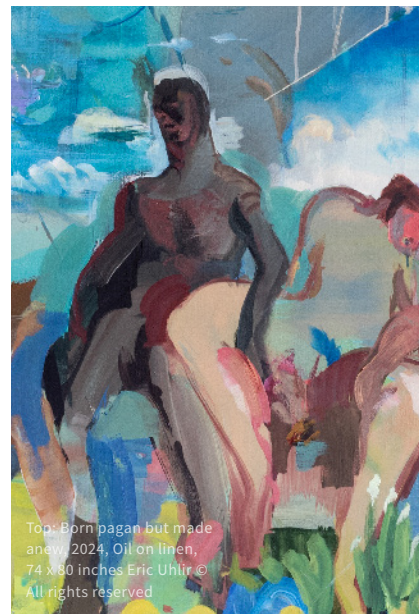
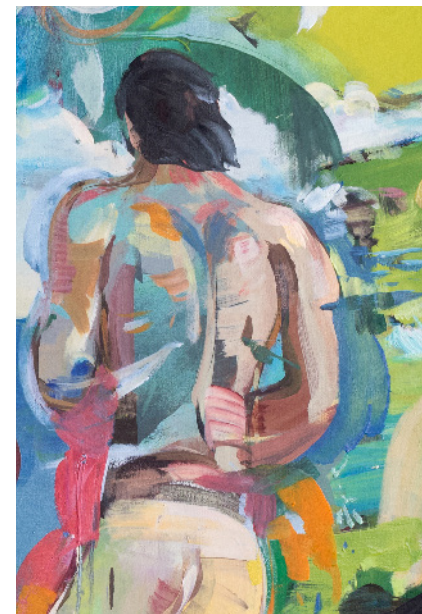
ART MARKET MAGAZINE: Is there also an intention to light up the femininity position, maybe the need to empower the female figures in your art?

ERIC UHLIR: It's a fine needle to thread in a new era of heightened enlightenment, and you have to approach depictions of the figure with more intention and empathy. Tintoretto's interpretation of the story is that Armida plays a temptress, and Rinaldo is the bewitched hero. I wanted Armida to be a fuller character with more agency and allowed to have her own desire and need for love. I want to imagine a version that gave these characters back some hope that their love is actually



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more important than another senseless conflict. Unlike many of the depictions of this story, I intentionally don't provide the viewer with a clear ending, and that's partly a strategy to preserve Armida's agency. I also focus almost entirely on the two of them, free of Rinaldo's meddling comrades. The final painting in the show is intentionally somewhat ambiguous, depicting a solitary figure climbing over a tangle of trees, limbs, and animals into an undefined new world. Like real life, beginnings and endings aren't always clear cut, and the viewer is left to decide about these characters.



Top: Born pagan but made anew, 2024, Oil on linen,
74 x 80 inches Eric Uhlir ©
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ART MARKET MAGAZINE: Digging into your background, we found that connecting your work to past historical events is essential. How do you focus on these events, and please describe how this led to your current exhibition and its theme?

ERIC UHLIR: A central theme of my work is our inability to recognize the impact we have on the world around us and learn from our past mistakes. Whether it's our impact on nature or examining colonial history, I think we often take

historical images for granted and don't spend enough time actively questioning the narratives we're presented with. My previous series of paintings was based on American colonial history and was my reaction to coming face-to-face with the antagonists of January 6th here in Washington. I had taken a few classes on colonial-era art history while at Texas, and I relied on those notes to inform an understanding of how our history repeats itself in cycles. We tend to think our struggles are unique to us, but in reality, they always have

roots that run much deeper than our contemporary concerns.

Torquato Tasso wrote his epic poem "Jerusalem Delivered," in which Armida and Rinaldo are two of many characters from the 1560s. The Ottomans had just concluded a twenty-year conflict with the Portuguese empire over trade routes in the Middle East and India and were moving up the eastern edge of the Adriatic. So much of art history is concerned with glorifying conflict as a way of picking winners and losers while ignoring the

longer arc of history and the real impetus or impact of these conflicts. Hundreds of years later, we're still fighting over some of the same things as in Tasso's era.

Art should inspire us to choose a new path, and my art's historical references are a mirror. I hope the viewer sees this reinterpretation of Armida and Rinaldo as a narrative of choosing love over conflict.

ART MARKET MAGAZINE: What reaction do you notice from the viewers, and what expectations do you have from the upcoming solo exhibition?

ERIC UHLIR: Someone once made a comment to me during a studio visit that my painting rewards the process of looking. I hope people find something new every time they look at the work, whether with the content or the physical presence of the paintings. To me, these characters of Armida and Rinaldo represent the possibility of choosing love over conflict. The layers and the vibrance of the palette reward the process of looking, coming back over time to find new meanings and moments. I'm active on social media, but that experience of the work doesn't always give you a sense of the scale of the work or the details. I'm always delighted at how excited people are to see the work in person. Winston Wächter has a beautiful and unique space that provides a lot of moments for exploration. We've been very intentional with the work selected and how the show will be laid out; I hope people have an opportunity to get lost in the world I've created and these characters. I think we all deserve a little romance and adventure again.



Left Page: A happiness so slow burning, 2024, Oil on linen, 60 x 72 inches Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved

Top: Some intimacy in my dream, 2024, Oil on linen, 64 x 72 inches Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved

The quarrel (you did it for your own amusement), 2024, Oil on linen, 74 x 80 inches Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved

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ART MARKET MAGAZINE:

What advice do you have to share with the young artist trying to make his way into the current art market reality?

ERIC UHLIR: The market is always a cycle, and it's easy to get lost in your own perception of what is valued. The art historical wheel has been broken for decades; anything is permissible. Stick to your guns, and don't chase the trends. I'm a big fan of writers like the late great Dave Hickey. I think younger artists can learn a lot from his plain-spoken approach to art and practical approach to meaning. Social media is a necessary evil of our modern age and can be a really powerful tool for young artists trying to find an audience. What sustains a practice is your own grit and passion, not the randomness of "likes" or algorithms designed to reward sensationalism and provocation. It's cliché but steals voraciously and unapologetically. Jeff Wall has a great quote: references are not a secret; they're a condition of the work. And show up every day, no matter what. The only way you get better is by building a body of work that shows the strength of your vision. And keep your studio clean. When I embraced being more organized, I became ten times more productive. Get rid of what doesn't serve you and focus on what brings life and energy to your work.

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Winston Wächter Fine Art is a fine art gallery with exhibition spaces in New York City and Seattle. Established in 1995 by Stacey Winston Levitan and Christine Wächter-Campbell, the gallery's mission is to present a global mix of contemporary artists with a continuing focus on introducing new voices and highlighting female artists that comment on environmental concerns, including Zaria Forman, Sally Gall, and Margeaux Walter. The gallery represents over forty nationally and internationally known contemporary artists whose diverse practices include painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and mixed media. Winston Wächter Fine Art is the United States representative of the Estate of Tony Scherman, most notably known for his series Chasing Napoleon, an internationally toured exhibition whose first solo show with the gallery was in 1999. Marking a new chapter of curatorial ambition, Alicia Brown, Eric Uhlir, Matt Gagnon, and Paulette Tavormina have recently joined the gallery's program. In addition to gallery artists, Winston Wächter Fine Art also assists in secondary market placement of Masters of Impressionism including, Claude Monet, Raoul Dufy, Gustave Loiseau, Henri Le Sidaner to Early Modernists including Marc Chagall and Henri Matisse to top Blue-chip Contemporary artists including Damian Hirst, Sean Scully, Anish Kapoor, Annie Morris, Shirazeh Houshiary, Alex Katz, Donald Sultan, Louise Nevelson, to name a few.



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OPENING RECEPTION:
MAY 9TH, 2024, 6-8PM



According to the whim of the wind, 2024, Oil on linen, 36 x 48 inches Eric Uhlir © All rights reserved

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