

**Lennart Anderson**



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**Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, LLC**

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## Reticence: The Still-Lives of Lennart Anderson

By Steven Harvey

"Being alive and yet doubting one's existence..."  
—Lorenzo Lotto

WHEN LENNART ANDERSON arrived in New York in 1953, he says there were two artists who equally obsessed him—Edgar Degas and Willem de Kooning. It is easy to see his relationship to the former. Hilton Kramer subtitled a review of a 1995 exhibition of Anderson's three major "Idylls" paintings, "A Degas for Our Time." Anderson's connection to both of these artists is intriguing in how it reveals something about his own work.

In the book *The Art of the Real* Anderson described first coming across the auction catalogs from Degas' studio sale at the home of a fellow student: "I was very excited by this austere man, whose work reflected such pain, almost disgust, as well as a passion for his goal. His heroic effort to maintain the nude as a noble subject for art, inspired me and still does."

Anderson's connection to Degas and de Kooning has something to do with their approach to drawing. Degas wanted Forain to deliver a eulogy at his funeral that read in toto, "He was very fond of drawing." Degas and de Kooning both placed a great deal of importance on drawing as an independent and yet inter-related part of the process of painting. They

shared an awareness of the extreme difficulty in making a mark that will acceptably hold the page. This admixture of doubt and obsession led them to draw and re-draw on sheet after sheet, through tracing and reversal, cropping and reshaping the image in relation to the frame. Anderson's drawings may appear gentle and succinct in comparison with both Degas' and de Kooning's attacks, yet underlying Anderson's whole endeavor is a deep and kindred hesitance. The ethos that Anderson shares with these artists about mark-making combines the highest level of artistic ambition with a profound suspicion, even melancholia about what can be done. He proceeds, as de Kooning put it, "With anxiousness and dedication to fright maybe. . . ."

Anderson works in all the traditional genres of painting, landscape and still-life, portraiture and figure studies, large figure pieces including his three major paintings of figures in the landscape, called the "Idylls" which he worked on over twenty-five years. Recently much of his studio time has been devoted to still-lives. He often paints on small canvas panels that he fashions himself by mounting muslin over museum board. These small panels allow him an ideally scaled arena for his precise brand of "gestural abstraction." Anderson's "abstraction" reminds one of looking at Velasquez under a magnifying glass—the relaxed yet exacting painterly shorthand for things.



The protagonists in Anderson's still-lives include an artist's mannequin, a cardboard box, a small broken statue, a salt cellar, muffins and miniature bialys, fruits and vegetables. These objects exist in an intense intimate space. The artist's mannequin may appear as an actor amidst the furniture of the still-life table, but it is not only the mannequin that is personified. All the objects possess a vivid quality, the dull luminous sheen of living matter. The space that they occupy may seem as dry as an attic yet his lettuce and muffin breathe—they exude freshness. This has much to do, I think, with Anderson's own blend of verisimilitude and abstraction, which stems from his teacher Edwin Dickinson who extracted it, in turn, from his teacher, Charles Hawthorne. Hawthorne told his students that if you can give even one part in a picture a feeling of the freshness of how we see, then the viewer will forgive a great deal. Anderson goes a great deal further than that but there is in his work a quality of parts of things, of individual objects that suddenly veer into focus. Neutral space surrounds his objects like a worn scumbled copper fog. The table space is upended in a manner that we have become accustomed to from Cézanne. Rusty hues recall the color in Chardin.

We are shocked when he pulls back to reveal the whole table as he does in two larger still-lives. A cardboard box, the mannequin and a cloth lie about hap-

hazardly. The abrupt change of scale takes us by surprise. It is as though the stage curtain has risen too early revealing the props simply strewn about on the stage.

His still-lives are both stoic and sensual. The reticence that they exhibit as painterly statements is extremely seductive. The surfaces are as dry as frescos. The paint film is built up out of washes. The color is restrained with occasional brilliant notes. The harmonies are subtle and rich. Though he is after the look of things Anderson is not as John Russell remarked about someone else, "an abject realist." There is nothing dogged or illustrational in his painting. This is painting as classical music, as glissando, as an alchemy of tone. And it is ultimately physical. "It is the tactile identification of paint with form that is interesting to me."

Anderson has described himself as a "tonal" painter: "... I tend to find a tone (basically a value) from which the other tones in the picture are found. This approximates what one sees in the motif (nature) and supports a conviction that one paints what one sees." I would add that tone is also the three aspects of color—value, chroma and hue combined into one melodic application.

A case can certainly be made for Anderson as one of the finest still-life painters of his period. It is inter-

esting to think of who else might be included. Certainly there is no one else who possesses his elliptical touch. In Lorenzo Lotto's late painting, *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple* from Loreto, figures crowd before an apse, they are hunched like little clay sculptures. Above them the altar space is like an empty stage. It is in shadow and the strange lemon and gray tone recalls some of Anderson's pale yellow and white harmonies. On the right side of the stage almost invisible is an open door. An old man is peering through at the dark empty stage. This could be Lotto. He is barely on the stage but he is there. Anderson is also in his still-lives. His character is revealed in the integrity and economy of his application. Like the old man wreathed in shadow in Lotto's altarpiece his gifts are subtle even obscure but altogether enlivened with quality.



## Lennart Anderson

By Louis Finkelstein

ONLY A VERY FEW people paint still-lives seriously. By "seriously" I mean with the capacity to impose certain standards of achievement. Without such standards the painting is left to be a more or less skillful rendering of objects. However, what the standards may be is not known in advance, and, when found, pertain perhaps only to that artist and maybe for only a few works.

Except for the painter who discovers a starting point in the way things just happen to be found, and Lennart Anderson is not one of those, the setup itself constitutes a problem in that it is a foreproject of intentions that are not altogether clear. This is because what is seen in nature is never the same as what is seen in the picture. This goes for everybody who attempts still-life: be it Kalf, Chardin, Cézanne, Morandi, Giacometti, Matter, and is particularly demanding because the setup is always there.

Anderson deals with the problem by moving the objects in the setup after the painting is under way when he finds it necessary. For some artists this would be a copout or a sacrilege, but the very fact that he will do this furnishes a clue to what his priorities are, which is to say what it is he is serious about.

The objects in the painting influence the way they are apprehended in a way which does not occur in the real world. This imposes the artifactual requirement that the elements of rendering which impart the integrity and specificity of the objects: smoothness, continuity, surface description, relative clarity, are all subject to the considerations of their relative disposition, size, proportion, orientation, location, the relations between the things contained and the container, and the like, at the same time as they constitute and justify that disposition.

Absent the mechanical expedients of perspective or mechanical projection, the interplay between these cannot be known in advance; rather that is what the painting process discovers. Touch, tone, the movement of the glance and of the mind's interpretation are all at work, and are only brought together intuitively and empirically.

The result, even when it appears natural is not a natural fact, but the consequences of a struggle on the part of the artist, as it should be, as well, on the part of the serious viewer, to determine those judgments which are germane to, and are brought into being by the art of painting.



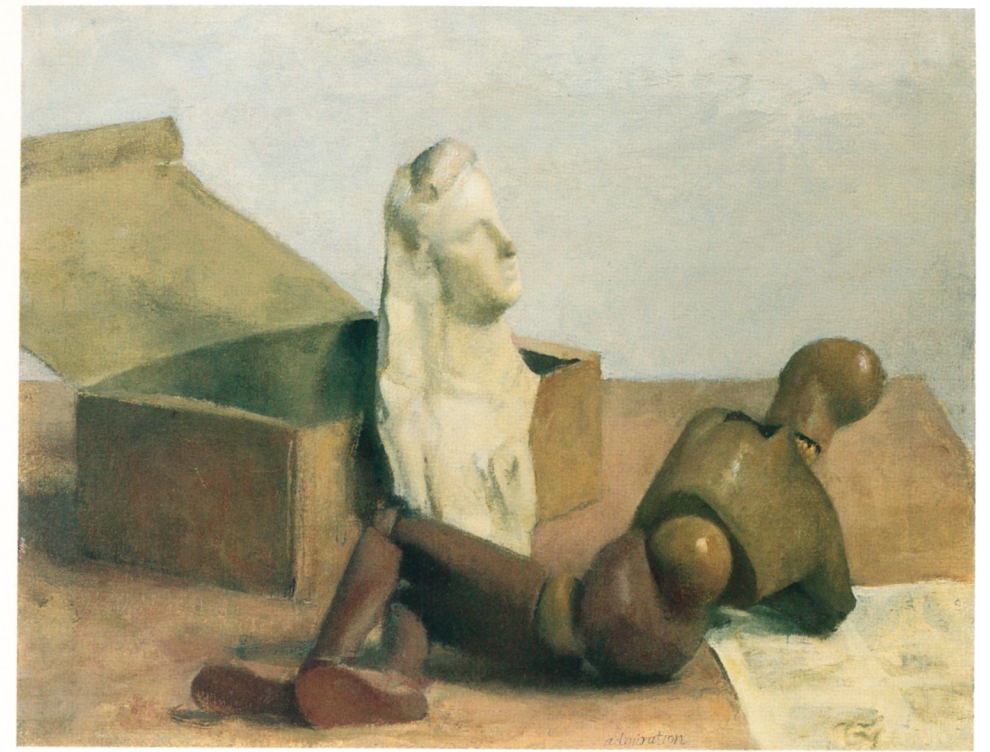
1. *Still-Life with Muffin and Salt Shaker*, 1998. Oil on muslin mounted on board, 12 x 15 inches



2. *Still-Life with Muffin, Checkered Napkin and Plums*, 1998. Oil on muslin mounted on board, 11 × 14 inches







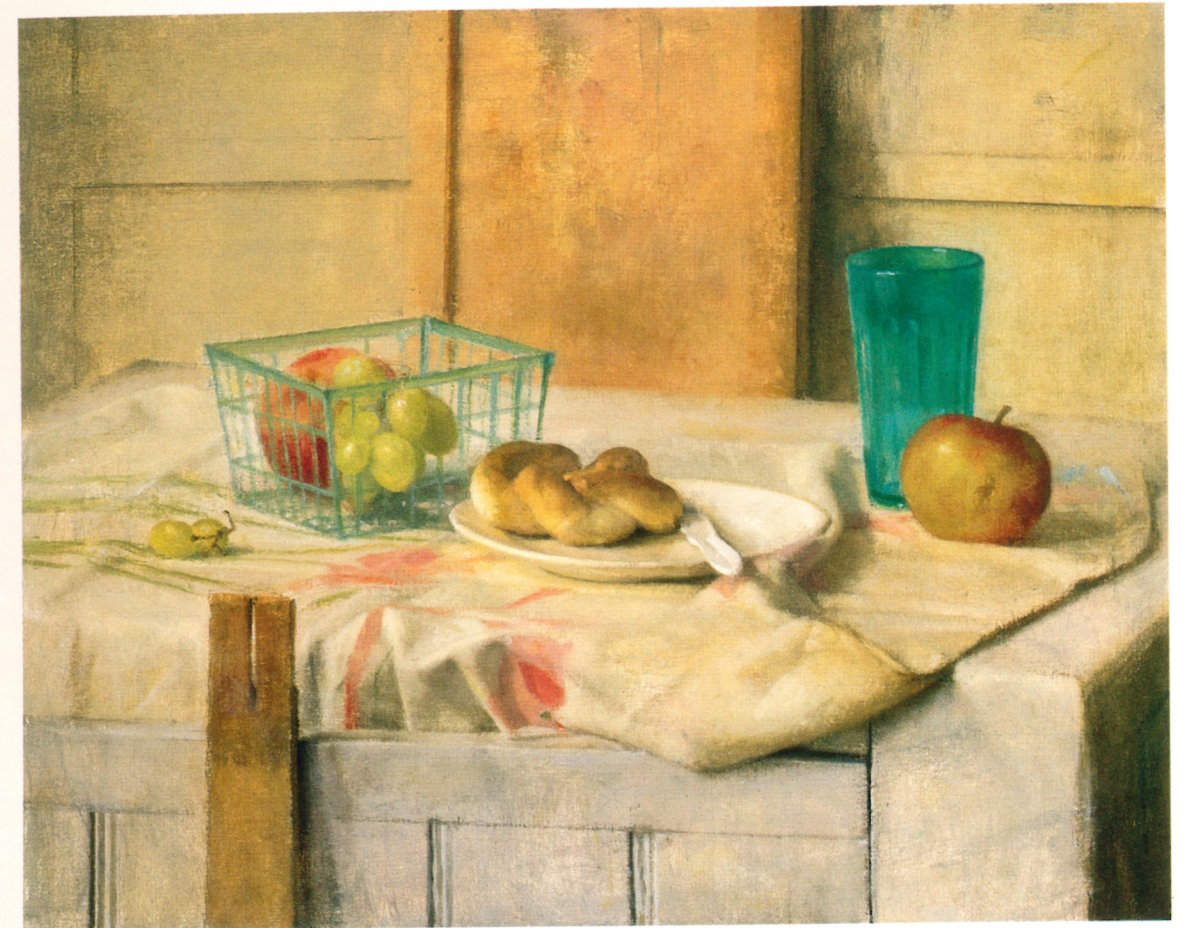
3. *Still-Life with Mannequin (Admiration)*, 1997. Oil on muslin mounted on board, 11 x 14 inches





4. *Still-Life with Mannequin and Red Cloth (for L. Lotto)*, 1998. Oil on canvas, 29 × 37 inches





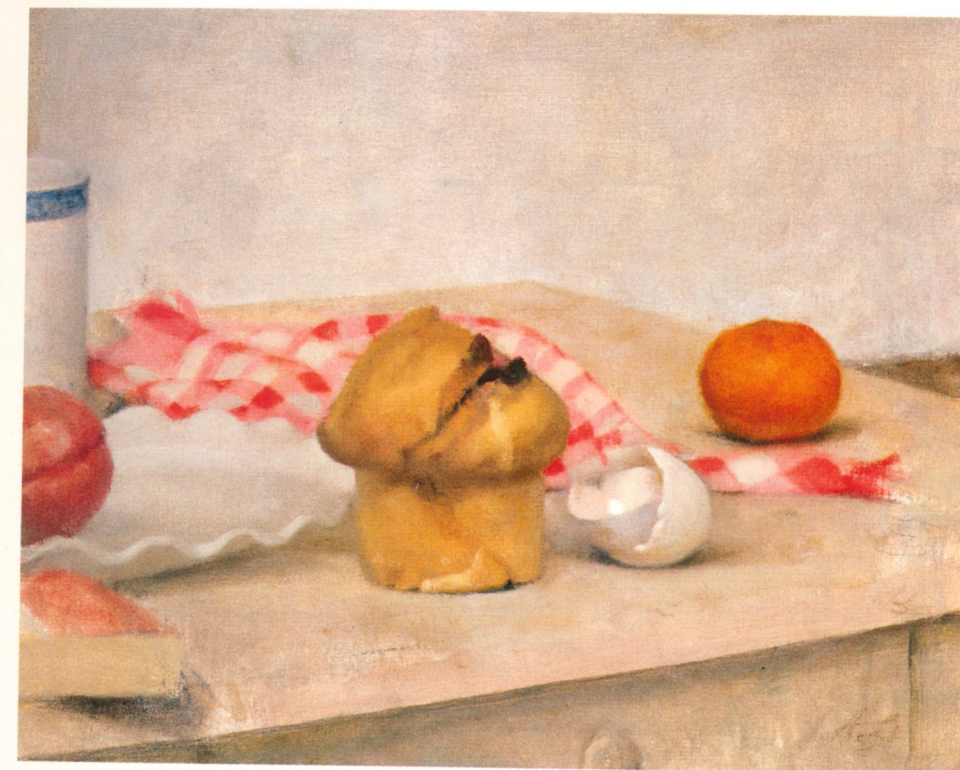
5. *Still-Life with Green Plastic Glass*, 1998. Oil on muslin mounted on board, 16 × 20 inches





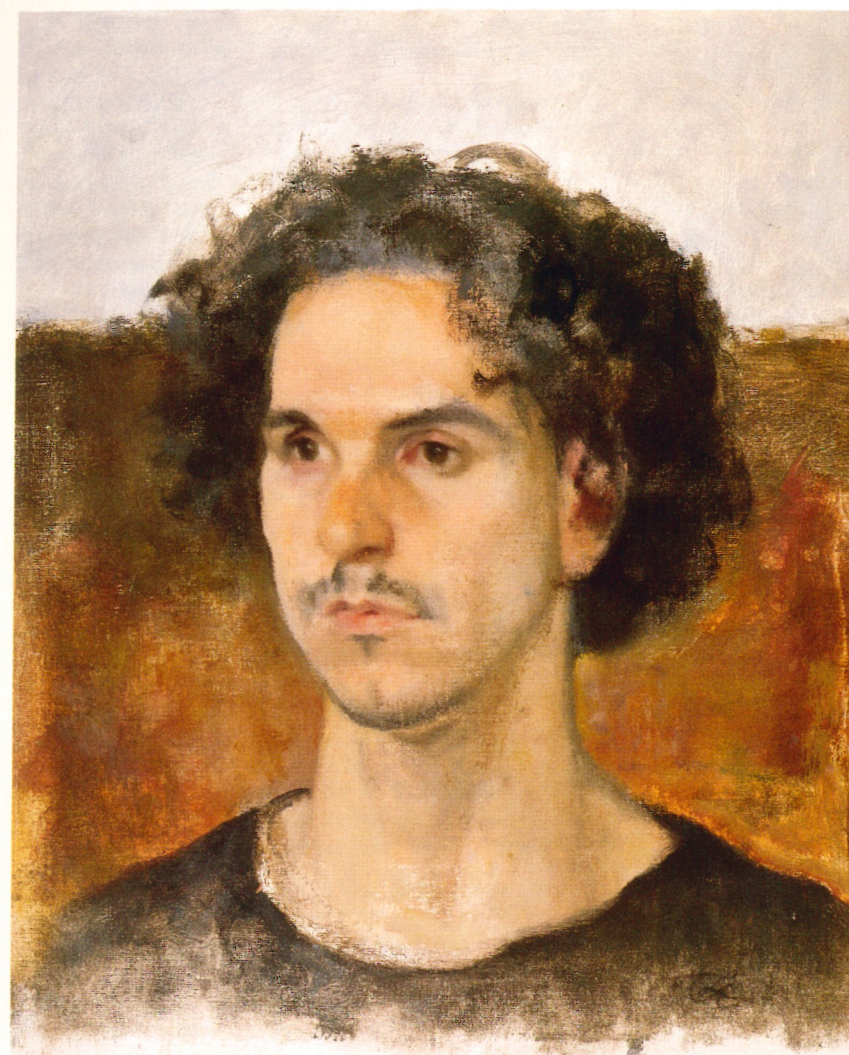
6. *Still-Life with Red Cloth*, 1998. Oil on muslin mounted on board, 16 x 19 1/4 inches





7. *Still-Life with Muffin, Egg and Fruit*, 1998. Oil on muslin mounted on board, 12 x 15 inches





8. *Portrait of Edwin Vasquez*, 1997. Oil on muslin mounted on board, 16 1/4 x 13 1/4 inches



## Lennart Anderson

Born August 22, 1928

### Education

1946–50

Art Institute of Chicago, B.F.A.

1950–52

Cranbrook Academy, M.F.A.

1954

Art Students League (studied with Edwin Dickinson)

### One-Person Exhibitions

1999

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York, NY, *Paintings*

1997

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York, NY, *Lennart Anderson: Landscapes*

1996

Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO, *Lennart Anderson: Three Idylls*

1995

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York, NY, *Lennart Anderson: Three Idylls*

1992

Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE

Davis & Langdale Company, New York, NY 1991

Davis & Langdale Company, New York, NY 1988

Hollins College Art Gallery, Roanoke, VA

1986

The Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

1985

Davis & Langdale Company, New York, NY

1984

The Darien Library, Darien, CT

Davis & Langdale Company, New York, NY, *Drawings*

1982

William Crapo Gallery, Swain School of Design, New Bedford, MA

1981

Davis & Langdale Company, New York, NY 1976

Suffolk Community College, Long Island, NY

Davis & Long Company, New York, NY

1974

Meredith Long and Company, Houston, TX

1972

Graham Gallery, New York, NY

1970

Bard College, Annandale, NY

1969

Graham Gallery, New York, NY

1967

Graham Gallery, New York, NY

1963

Graham Gallery, New York, NY

1962

Tanager Gallery, New York, NY

### Group Exhibitions

1996

Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO, *Private Worlds: 200 Years of American Still Life Painting*. December 19, 1996–April 6, 1997

Hopper House Art Center, Nyack, NY, *Realism at 7 A.M.*, November

1995

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York, NY, *John Dubrow, Lennart Anderson, Leland Bell, Graham Nickson*

1994

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York, NY

1993

Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM, *Still Life 1963-1993*

Carlotten Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, WI, *Drawing on the Figure*

1992

Contemporary Realist Gallery, San Francisco, CA, *New American Figure Painting*

1990

Oglethorpe University Art Gallery, Atlanta, GA, *Art with a View*

1989

Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, NY, *Direct Response: Contemporary Landscape Painting*

1988

National Academy of Design, New York, NY, *163rd Annual Exhibition*

Montserrat College of Art, Beverly, MA, *Fictional Images: Tableaux, Allegory, Narration*

1987

American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York, NY, *Portraits from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters*

1986

The Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY, *Form or Formula: Drawing and Drawings*

1985

Museum of the Borough of Brooklyn, NY, *From Brooklyn to the Sea: Ships, Seafarers and New York Harbor*

One Penn Plaza, New York, NY, *Contemporary American Still Life*

Hermitage Foundation Museum, Norfolk, VA, *The Still Life*

The Art Museum at Florida, International University, Miami, FL, *American Art Today: Still Life*

1985

Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, New York, NY, *Recent American Portraiture*

1984-85

Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, New York, NY, *Nine Realist Painters Revisited: 1936-1984*

1984

Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, New York, NY, *Recent American Still Life Paintings*

Artists' Choice Museum, New York, NY, *Artists' Choice Museum: The First Eight Years*

The Allen Priebe Art Gallery, The University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, WI, *Modern Masters of Classical Realism*

The Maryland Institute, College of Art, Baltimore, MD, *Drawings by Contemporary Artists*

Atrium Gallery, The University of Connecticut at Storrs, CT, *Two Figurative Painters: Lennart Anderson and Philip Pearlstein*

Forum Gallery, New York, NY, *Drawings, Drawings, Drawings*

1983

Artists' Choice Museum, New York, NY, *Bodies and Souls*

Charles More Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, *Intimate Still Life*

One Penn Plaza, New York, NY, 'New Landscape': *Contemporary Art at One Penn Plaza*

National Academy of Design, New York, NY, *158th Annual Exhibition*

The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA, *Reallegory*

Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE, *Contemporary Paintings from New York Galleries*

1982–83

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA *Contemporary Realist Painting: A Selection*

1982

Robert Schoelkopf Gallery, New York, NY, *Contemporary Arcadian Painting*

Prince Street Gallery, New York, NY, *Invitational: On Color*

Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA, *Still Life/Interiors*

Fine Arts Museum of Long Island, NY, *Director's Choice*

1981

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA, *Contemporary American Realism Since 1960*

1980

The Brooklyn Museum, Community Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, *Interior-Exterior: Figurative Artists of Park Slope*

1979

Artists' Choice Museum, New York, NY, *Figurative-Realist Art*

Parsons School of Design, New York, NY, *Paintings by Faculty and Visiting Artists, MFA Program*

1978

The American Academy in Rome, (New York), *The American in Rome: Five Painters*

Harold Reed Gallery, New York, NY, *Selected 20th Century American Nudes*

Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO, *Drawing and Painting on Paper*

1977

Harbor Gallery, Cold Spring Harbor, NY  
Spoleto Festival, Charleston, SC, *The New Figurative Painting*

1976

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, *Alumni Exhibition, SAIC*

Bennington College, Bennington, VT

University of Maryland, College Park, MD  
Department of the Interior, Washington,

D.C., *Traveling Bicentennial Exhibition*  
New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ, *This Land is Your Land*

1975

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, *Trends in Contemporary Realist Painting*

The New York Cultural Center, New York, NY, *Three Centuries of the American Nude*

Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI

The Queens Museum, Queens, NY, *New Images: Figuration in American Painting*

1974

Museum of Art, The Pennsylvania State University, *Living American Artists and the Figure*

1972

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH

Hall Gallery, Miami, FL

Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MI  
Boston University, Boston, MA, *The American Landscape: 1972*

1971

Allan Frumkin Gallery, New York, NY, *Contemporary Drawing*

Columbus Gallery

1970

Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD  
St. Cloud State College, MI

State University of New York, New Paltz, NY  
Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME

1969

Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME

Quinata Gallery, Nantucket, MA

Gallery of Modern Art, New York, NY, *Art Students League: Student and Faculty Show*

American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY

J.L. Hudson Gallery, Detroit, MI

The Wilmington Society for Fine Arts, Wilmington, DE

1968

Swarthmore College, PA

Ravinia Festival Association, IL, *Natives Return*

Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY

1967

Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA



Yale University, New Haven, CT, *Visiting Faculty Exhibition*

1966

Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences, VA, *Contemporary USA*

Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, PA  
1965

American Federation of Arts, New York, NY

Albright Knox Gallery, Buffalo, NY

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., *Biennial*

The Wilmington Society for Fine Arts, Wilmington, DE

1964

Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, PA  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Drawing Society, Huntington Hartford Gallery of Art, New York, NY

Art Lending Service, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Byron Gallery, New York, NY

Fitzgerald Gallery, New York, NY

Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT

Zabriskie Gallery, New York, NY

Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

Boston University, Boston, MA

Schoelkopf Gallery, New York, NY

Osborne Gallery, New York, NY

IBM Galleries, New York, NY, *American Heritage*

Davis Galleries, New York, NY

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, *Annual*

Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO, (two-man show with Edwin Dickinson)

1963

IBM Galleries, New York, NY, *American Heritage*

Davis Galleries, New York, NY

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, *Annual*

Silvermine Guild, New Canaan, CT

1962

Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO (two-man show with Edwin Dickinson)

Balin-Traube Gallery

1960

Palazzo dell'Esposizione, Rome

American Academy in Rome

1959

Palazzo dell'Esposizione, Rome

American Academy in Rome

1958

Palazzo dell'Esposizione, Rome

American Academy in Rome

March Gallery, New York, NY

1957

March Gallery, New York, NY

Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, NY

#### Bibliography

Gerds, William. *The Great American Nude*, 1974.

Goodyear, Jr., Frank H. *Contemporary American Realism*, 1981.

Grillo, Stephen. "A Celebration of Reason: The Drawings of Lennart Anderson," *Artist' Choice Museum Journal*, 1984. pp. 2-7, illustrated.

Gussow, Alan. *A Sense of Place*, 1972.

Jencks, Charles. *Post Modernism: The New Classicism in Art and Architecture*, 1987.

Kramer, Hilton. "Riverbank Idylls Show, A Degas for Our Time," *The New York Observer*, November 6, 1995.

Perl, Jed. "On Art," *The New Republic* (July 14-21, 1997).

Pisano, Ronald. *Long Island Landscape Painting Volume II: The Twentieth Century*, 1990.

Raynor, Vivien. "Surveying Realism in Celebration of Hopper," *The New York Times*, November 24, 1996. p. 20, illustrated.

Strand, Mark. ed., *Art of the Real: Nine American Figurative Painters*, 1983. pp. 137-153, illustrated.

#### Public Collections

The Brooklyn Museum, New York

The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY

Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MI

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Museum of Art, The Pennsylvania State University, PA

Weatherspoon Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

University of Virginia Art Museum, Charlottesville, VA

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA

Mellon Bank, Pittsburgh, PA

Yale Law School, New Haven, CT (*Portrait of Dean Harry Wellington*)

Yale University, New Haven, CT (*Portrait of President A. Bartlett Giamatti*)

Harvard Club of New York City (*Portrait of President Richard Kimball*)

Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE



**Salander-O'Reilly Galleries**

NEW YORK