

An abstract painting featuring several thick, vertical brushstrokes in shades of yellow and light blue, set against a dark blue background. The strokes are textured and expressive, with some showing signs of dry brush or impasto. The word "TALISMANS" is centered in the middle of the composition in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

TALISMANS

Robert Berlind
Susanna Heller
John L. Moore
Levent Tuncer

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Talismans

February 3 - February 28, 2015

Curated by Jane Farver

THE PAINTING CENTER	547 WEST 27TH STREET SUITE 500, NY, NY 10001 WWW.THEPAINTINGCENTER.ORG HOURS: TUES - SAT, 11 - 6 PM (212) 343-1060
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Talismans

The privilege of being invited into an artist's studio is something that many never have a chance to experience. *Talismans* offers a glimpse into the studios of four New-York based painters—Robert Berlind, Susanna Heller, John L. Moore, and Levent Tuncer—by presenting their paintings accompanied by objects and images from their studios. These objects or talismans represent people and things that have influenced and inspired the four. The idea for the exhibition is credited to the photographer John Coplans (also a former museum director, curator, and founding editor of *Artforum*), who told John L. Moore that he would have liked to organize an exhibition of artists' bulletin boards, as he was always attracted to what artists chose to keep on view in their studios and how it related to their work.

In this exhibition, Robert Berlind says that he has made selections of works by others that he keeps in his living/working space, and that he has limited his choices to a poster for Alex Katz's 1972 exhibition at Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum, *Sky*, a 1980 lithograph by Philip Guston that was likely among his last works, and a photograph by George Woodman. Berlind writes:

I have been looking at each more or less daily, Katz when I am upstate in Cohecton, Guston when I am in New York. Both are for me utterly contemporary, that is to say, a beat ahead of me and therefore ongoing challenges. They always show something new. It would be too facile and not quite accurate to characterize them respectively as "cool" and "hot." Katz's extreme technical refinement is grounded in a strongly felt response to the particular, stylish beauty Ada represents; while Guston's airborne pandemonium is held in place by his flawless, improvised composition. And yet the two pieces are based on antithetical approaches and procedures. I imagine many of us work with the pressure of such contrary impulses.

Susanna Heller has been in her Brooklyn studio since 1994, a place that she describes as a deeply layered space, created over time, where she spends every day, thinking, working, and living. Along with scores of drawings piled up to the fourteen-foot ceiling, Heller says she has:

...a mixed bag of things I would describe as "treasure/trash." These are a divergent collection of objects, photos, postcards, pictures of old work, quotes, notes, drawn painting reminders, chunks of paint, tiny painter's palettes, and more. They have collected over the years here...and the "outer surface" is constantly in flux depending on current work, walks, and drawings or collages that are in the forefront of my thoughts. Often these things are in groups that I consider stories for possible paintings. I will display several of these "groupings" in this exhibition.

Heller says that for her:

...a painting, like a walk, connects the physical experience (feet on the ground/paint on the canvas) to movement, energy, and space...I paint tactically, not strategically. The work is without a formula and I work with no physical hierarchies or imperatives...for me as a painter, drawer, or walker, I follow the "thicks" and "thins" of urban space and marks on surface. In taking in my painting, it is important that you can travel the ins and outs of your eye's trajectory, as they travel over the surface, into a color, or back

towards a distant horizon: one either seen or imagined. These are the stories I need to tell myself as I work in the studio, so the studio itself becomes the raw material source or the staging for the paintings.

John L. Moore has chosen to present a selection of objects he lives with that are related to people and events in his life. Moore met John Coplans when he was director of the Akron Museum where Coplans began the photography work that brought him recognition as an artist. They had dinner together at least once a month for twenty years and Moore says he learned a lot from Coplans; a small photograph by Coplans is included here. Other objects include photos of his first influential art teachers, military buddies, a drawing by self-taught artist Nelly Mae Rowe, an African Mask (Gabon), and a poster for *Aquarian Artists*, an exhibition organized by international curator and artist Willoughby Sharp. There is also a post card sent by the young Jimi Hendrix to his father regarding his experience in paratrooper jump school. Moore writes:

*My work is informed by memories. Memories of things that I have experienced, or were told to me, things that I have read or dreamed. Since they are recurring, they often shape my thoughts and visual images. Readings on the history of the middle passage, particularly, the two million slaves that died in transit crossing the Atlantic, raised many unanswered questions that became the focus of my paintings. I often use the image of a mirror or mirror-less frames in my paintings as a metaphor for various contemporary issues of our own often conflicting histories. In this exhibition, *Black Grey*, (2013) and *Jimi* (2012) are paintings that ask the question: How did I get here? One unknown ancestor made the crossing. The middle passage is in my DNA.*

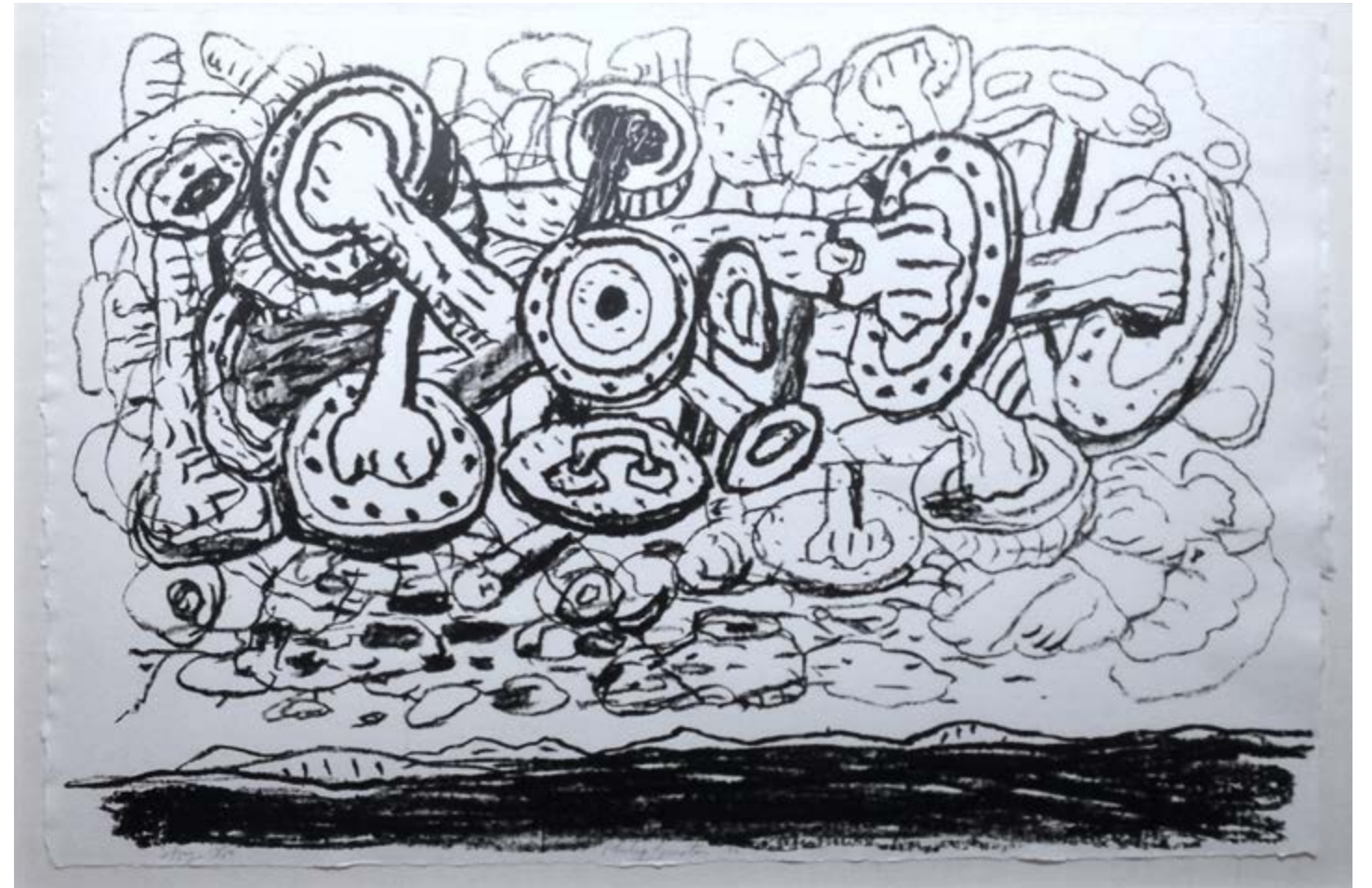
Painter Levent Tuncer, whose recent monumental paintings are inspired by a 15th-century Iranian drawing, lives and works in a large duplex, semi-raw loft in Bushwick. There he is surrounded by talismans, small items, and pictures that are out in the open in a seemingly disorganized way:

I have photos from my first year on earth next to some music CDs, a carved Indian head next to books, stones from Peru, turtles carved in stone, photos of friends, lovers, and family as well as art. Drawers open, with passing glimpses to my past. Many books I read at the same time, some notes on the walls...It is as though, as this space is my life and time is a giant, intricate spider web; all these items and things are tiny little knots that connect the sections of this...conduits that make it possible for me, to place myself in relation to everything and thus live both in present and past tense at the same time, but also review who I am, afresh each time my gaze or hand touches these things. This is why at times I will paint and not go out for days and days, yet visiting a lifetime, in a sort of time travelling.

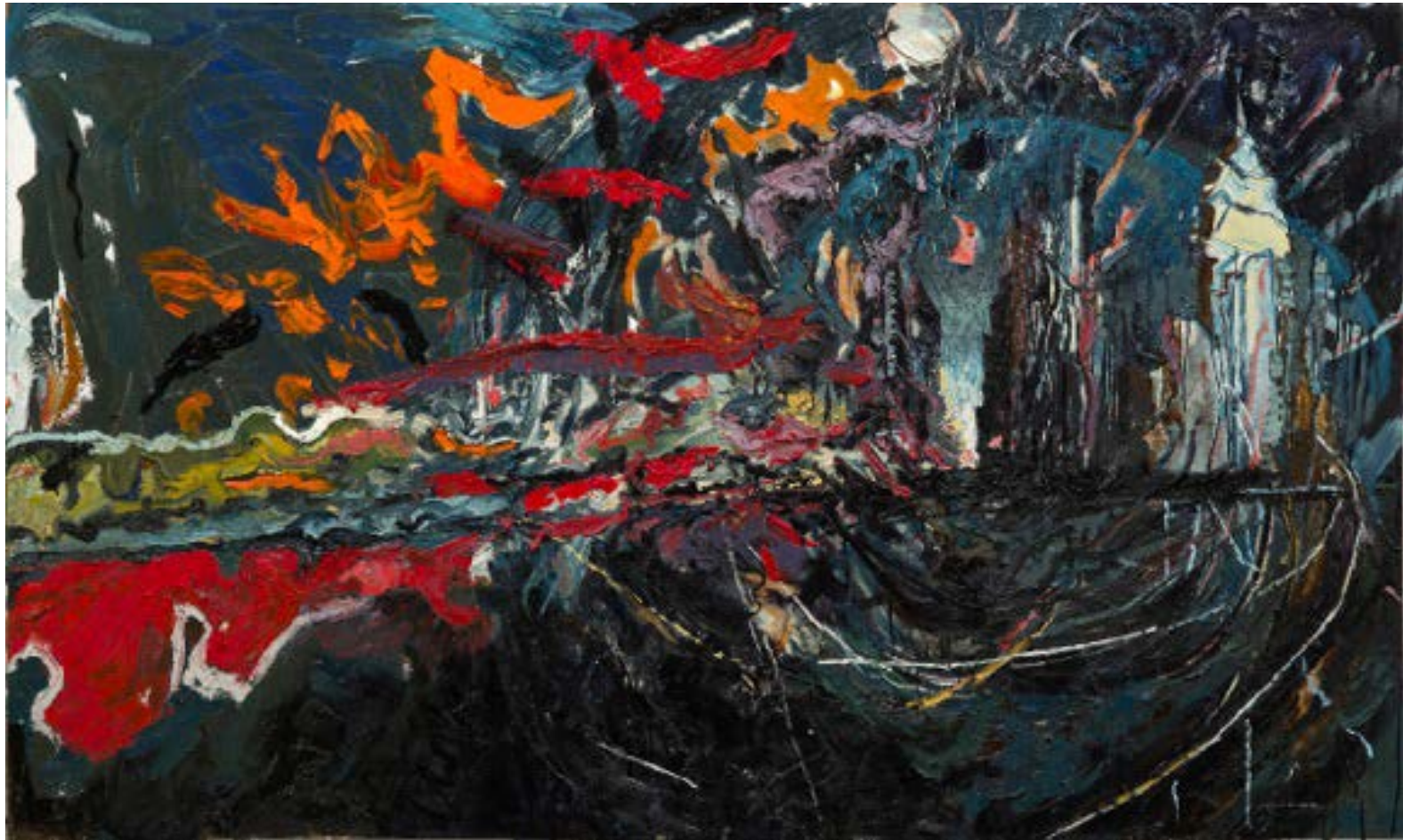
Turkish American Tuncer's intuitive, psychological paintings deal with dualities: order and disorder; history and fiction; repetition and change. His works are influenced by cross-cultural emblems including architecture, textiles, and tiles. Tuncer says that by repeating these images while still allowing them to mutate, he is able to create: a complex visual equivalent of cultural disjuncture...[that] subverts their repetitive rigidity...and suggest that order, like authority, is vital only when it evolves, and that it evolves only when challenged and made to diverge from its historical context.



Robert Berling, *Night, Five Sycamores*, oil on linen, 84" x 48"



Philip Guston, drawing, from the studio of **Robert Berling**



Susanna Heller, *Night Bright*, 2014, oil on canvas, 36" x 62"



99% banner and drawings from the studio of **Susanna Heller**



John L. Moore, *Jimi*, 2012, oil on canvas, 80" x 67"



John Coplans, *Back with Hands Above*, photograph, from the studio of **John L. Moore**



Levent Tuncer, #26, 2014, oil on canvas, 106" x 96"



Collection of objects from the studio of Levent Tuncer

Biographies

Robert Berlind paints on site and in the studio, where he develops the results as large paintings. Based on direct experience of his subjects and of painting per se, his work brings a revelatory quality to the experience of seeing. He lives and works in New York City and in Cohecton, NY. He has received the American Academy & Institute of Arts and Letters Award in painting and the B. Altman Award in painting at the National Academy as well as grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Berlind also writes on art for *Art in America*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and other publications as well as museum and gallery catalogues. He received an Art Writers Grant from Creative Capital and the Warhol Foundation. He is a member of the National Academy and Professor Emeritus of the School of Art and Design, Purchase College, SUNY.

John L. Moore lives and works in New York City. He has received numerous awards, including: a Joan Mitchell Fellowship for Painting, and fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Ohio Arts Council. He has exhibited extensively at national and international venues, which include: Howard Scott Gallery, NY, High Museum of Art, GA, the Columbus Museum of Art, OH, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Bronx Museum, NY the Gyeongnam Museum in South Korea, the Tokushima Modern Art Museum. His work is held in museum collections around the country. He has been Professor of Fine Art at Skidmore College as well as visiting artist at many institutions. He has curated numerous exhibitions, including *Emilio Cruz: Spilled Nightmares, Revelations and Reflections* and *Bill Hutson: Paintings 1978-1987* for the Studio Museum in Harlem, NY.

Susanna Heller paints the high-pitched intensity of cities (mostly New York), through abstract, chaotic masses of paint that explodes above and below minimal skylines that shift and disappear. They are sourced from hundreds of drawings done on sight during long wanderings on foot throughout the city. The paintings are about the city, but mostly they are about “the thickness of paint and the ability of the human hand to move it”. She was born in New York, raised in Montreal, and now lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts in Painting, A Joan Mitchell Foundation award, and multiple Canada Council Grants. She shows regularly in Toronto at Olga Korper Gallery, in New York at MagnanMetz Gallery, in Hudson NY at John Davis Gallery. Recent projects include a major 30-foot mural in the lobby the Mies van der Rohe tower in Toronto. She is also an adjunct professor of painting and drawing at Purchase College, SUNY.

Levent Tuncer intuitively reinterprets formal stylizations from the history of art, most recently focusing on 15th century Iranian drawings. He creates cross-cultural syntheses of dream-like worlds blending figuration, imagination and memory. He is a Brooklyn-based Turkish American artist, born in Edirne, Turkey. He attended St. Martins School of Art in London and graduated from Hornsey School of Art in the UK in 1979. He won a full scholarship to University of Hartford Art School where he received an MFA in 1981. He has been awarded grants from the Pollack/Krasner Foundation, Artist's Space, and been a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. He has exhibited nationally and internationally for the past three decades including venues located in: the Netherlands, Ireland, Kuwait, Dubai and Columbia. He installed 22 commissioned paintings at The University Church, Dublin Ireland in 2007. He recently was included in *Come Together: Surviving Sandy*, a 2013 exhibition in Brooklyn, NY.

Jane Farver is currently a visiting critic at the Cornell University AAP NYC program and is editing the catalogue for Joan Jonas's exhibition at the U.S. Pavilion for the Venice Biennale in 2015. She has received awards from the Asian Cultural Council, the Ohio Governor's office, and, in 2011 she was awarded MIT's György Kepes Fellowship Prize. She has formerly held positions as: director of the MIT List Visual Arts Center; Director of Exhibitions at the Queens Museum of Art in New York; director of the Lehman College Art Gallery, City University of New York; and assistant director of the Alternative Museum in New York. She was one of six co-curators for the 2000 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Design: Shazzi Thomas

