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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Matthew Swift Gallery presents Peter Lyons at the Hamptons Fine Art Fair 2023

GLOUCESTER MA, 30 MAY 2023

Matthew Swift Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of paintings by Peter Lyons at the Hamptons Fine Art Fair, to be held in Southampton, New York, July 13–16, 2023. The Gallery is pleased further to report that Rick Friedman, Executive Director of the Fair, has selected Peter Lyons as a Spotlight Artist of the Fair.

Matthew Swift Gallery will exhibit 10 oil paintings by Peter Lyons in Booth 366 (in the Pollock Pavilion, the main tent), and the Gallery will have additional paintings by Lyons on location.

The exhibition will be the public debut of Lyons's newest major work, a monumental painting entitled *Café, Friday Morning, Querétaro, Mexico* (2023, 50 x 96 in.) which continues the artist's series of paintings inspired by the architecture of Mexico. The exhibition includes two other monumental paintings in this series, which the artist began in 2020: *Botica, Querétaro, Mexico* (2021, 42 x 78 in.) and *Coyoacán, Mexico City* (2023, 50 x 60 in.).

A group of five smaller paintings includes *Saturday Morning, Querétaro, Mexico* (2020, 14 x 26 in.) and two earlier architectural paintings that anticipate the disciplined compositions of the Mexico series, which all depict building façades straight on over cobbled streets and sidewalks: *Providence RI* (2019) and *Department Store* (2018). Another painting in this group, *I-90, Natick, Massachusetts* (2018), emphasizes the playful, surrealist dimension of Lyons's work and the degree of intention and control with which the artist renders architectural perspectives.

Complementing the architectural paintings are two nocturnes, *Milky Way* (2015, 14 x 24 in.) and a superb large nocturne from an earlier period, *Elements* (2004, 36 x 72 in.). Rounding out the exhibition is the remarkable *Threshold* (2019), whose intense colors and luminescent storm clouds, hovering between metaphor and depiction, invoke feelings of sublime awe at vast and strange celestial power.

Most of the paintings we know, says Lyons, are attempts to distill the big blooming buzzing confusion of the world into recognizable and understandable forms, in order to “examine our condition.” In his paintings, however, he attempts the enterprise in reverse, believing like the Transcendentalists that elements of the known world, arranged and illuminated just so, can act “as a lens focusing awareness of wonder and joy” and put the mind in contact with truths beyond the senses, time, and space—with, in a word, divinity, however we may conceive of it.

All of us in some measure can recall moments like those we recognize in Lyon's paintings, moments of elevated awareness, glimpses of divinity in the mundane coupled with joy at being in the world, moments in which we are granted a transient, ecstatic vision of perfection. Lyons's paintings operate by rekindling and intensifying our personal memories of these moments. He is a shaman, a spirit guide: the phenomenal precision in his paintings is a prompt on a journey through personal associations toward a

place of elevated perception, from which height the ladder of representation may be kicked away, just as the artist did previously in the act of elevating a scene into a painting.

In these significant respects, Lyons's paintings emulate luminist landscapes of the 19th century: beauty is immanent, serenity is palpable, and spiritual fulfillment is imminent. And in other respects, they are unabashedly 21st-century paintings, taking pleasure and finding wonder in color, form, and abstraction.

Lyons's paintings take various forms, reflecting the variety of portals to transcendent perceptions, which arrive in the mind directly, not through the senses. Among the many on-ramps to that spiritual highway which unifies times and places are childlike joy in bright colors, an egg-shaped cloud poised on a rooftop, nocturnes in which briefly the veil drops which obscured the starry heavens, and a telltale wind sleeve taking the measure of invisible inspirations. The dramatic and emotional *Threshold* echoes the storm paintings of Bierstadt and Church in a 21st-century vernacular. Along with the nocturnes, it is evidence of Lyons's engagement with traditions of mysticism winding through western religious, philosophical, and literary history. The darkened shadows of doorways and windows within the patinated façades of Mexico invite us to consider the ongoing human life within them and the ongoing generations of life which proceed under the enduring light above. We have stepped out, we can imagine, momentarily into this light for a moment of reflection, this light into which we humans reach with architecture and art.

**Peter Lyons** was born in 1960 in Dunedin, New Zealand, and as a young man chose to devote himself to painting. He emigrated to the United States in 1990 and lived in Los Angeles for six years before moving to eastern Massachusetts, where he now lives and works. Lyons's talent was identified and championed in the early 2000s by Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr. distinguished scholar and curator of American art at Yale University, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and the Harvard Art Museums. Stebbins has written that Lyons's paintings "evoke...the luminism of Martin Johnson Heade, the precisionism of Charles Sheeler, and the enigmatic eeriness of Edward Hopper" while also "operating on their own level". Matthew Swift Gallery has had the privilege of representing Peter Lyons exclusively since 2015.

**Matthew Swift Gallery** helps individuals and organizations acquire art which enchants the mind and spirit as well as the eye. To this purpose, the Gallery, founded in 2013, shows beautiful and intelligent contemporary art at national fairs and in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where it maintains an extensive, carefully selected inventory of art offered to clients worldwide. Founder and Director Dr. Matthew Swift curates the artists and the inventory, drawing on over 30 years of multidisciplinary research in the arts.

For further information about Matthew Swift Gallery, visit [MatthewSwiftGallery.com](http://MatthewSwiftGallery.com) or call the gallery at 978-491-7785.

For further information about the Hamptons Fine Art Fair, visit [HamptonsFineArtFair.com](http://HamptonsFineArtFair.com).

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# Peter Lyons

## Biography

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b. 1960 in Dunedin, New Zealand. Resides in Natick MA.

Peter Lyons was born in 1960 in Dunedin, New Zealand, and as a young man chose to devote himself to painting. He emigrated to the United States in 1990 and lived in Los Angeles for six years before moving to eastern Massachusetts, where he now lives and works.

## Director's Introduction

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On one side fading away into infinity, on the other, boldly projected into the life of finite existence, [Nature] must ever be a medium of communication between the two.

Amory Dwight Mayo, 1852

The meticulous precision of a Peter Lyons painting offers more than the delights of a beautiful scene rendered skillfully in paint. It is also an attempt to rekindle and intensify in its viewers a state of awareness beyond the senses which, being human, they have already experienced in some measure. The painting's otherworldly light grants a renewed vision of harmony among the natural, human, and transcendent orders of being. "Bathed in this elevating light," says Lyons, "the beauty of the ordinary is released, and the image acts as a lens focusing awareness of wonder, joy, and spiritual anticipation in the viewer."

In significant respects, Lyons's paintings emulate luminist landscapes of the 19th century: beauty is immanent, serenity is palpable, and spiritual fulfillment is imminent. And in other respects, they are unabashedly 21st-century paintings, taking pleasure and finding wonder in color, form, and abstraction.

MATTHEW SWIFT

## A Curator's Views

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"His landscapes have the mystical stillness and celestial light of Vermeer," a *Boston Globe* critic observed (12 Feb 2003) in a long profile of Peter Lyons, a painter of dreamlike yet realistic landscapes. Trained as a physicist, Lyons treats the subjects of his paintings ... with an awed and respectful eye. The places and things he represents are inspired by real places and real things captured, as he puts it, "in a moment of revelation" in which his scientific and poetic appreciations of the world coincide.... Lyons creates paintings that evoke memories of other artists: the luminism of Martin Johnson Heade; the precisionism of Charles Sheeler; and the enigmatic eeriness of Edward Hopper.

exhibition catalogue for the Richard York Gallery, 2003.

The paintings of Peter Lyons look somehow familiar, but they are distinctive, different, memorable. They seem realistic, but they speak of memory and myth. They evoke dreams of different times and different places. One cannot recall seeing exactly such landscapes in nature, yet one easily recognizes each seen: they have both strength and credibility....

Lyons's work looks like photorealism but it isn't.... He sees something, an object, a detail, that brings to mind for him a complete finished painting. Then he goes through a laborious preparation of a gessoed panel, the making of a series of ever larger pencil drawings until he has one that is full scale, the transfer of the sketch to the panel, then the painting of it, glaze after glaze. It is a long, slow process. Yet the finished painting conveys only a hallucinatory sense of mystery and suggests nothing of its laborious construction.

2015

THEODORE E. STEBBINS, JR.

2014– Consultative Curator of American Art, Harvard Art Museums

2000–2014 Curator of American Art, Harvard Art Museums

1977–2000 Curator of American Paintings. Museum of Fine Arts Boston

1968–1977 Curator of American Paintings and Associate Professor of Art History, Yale University

## Artist's Statement

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The triangular tug-of-war between man, nature, and super-nature is the essence of what we call human. To search for metaphors to capture and transform what is vast and incomprehensible into understandable and recognizable forms is to try to communicate what is incommunicable—the essence of what we call art.

The making of images enables us to examine our condition and to test reality. But this process is dynamic and reversible, allowing us to take what is known and quantifiable and transmogrify it into something beyond time and form, back into an original state free of physical and temporal constraints.

Since the painting of Christian icons, western culture has represented light as directly transmitting the authority of God. Later, light in a church was not just light but divine light. As painting became more secular, particularly in the first landscapes, the Dutch flat, uninspiring countryside became majestic through the magical agency of light. In America the fulfillment of the Enlightenment and the flood tide of Romanticism reasserted the divine nature of every human soul and the entire universe they inhabited. The American landscape became a metaphor for man, the clay from which Adam, like unleavened bread, was raised and made more than kinetic with something of God's own condition, animated by the divine power of light.

When bathed in this elevating light, the beauty in the ordinary is released, and the image acts as a lens focusing awareness of wonder, joy, and spiritual anticipation in the viewer.

Before something becomes immortal it must first pass away. What is unworthy finds a new life through expanded perception and imagination. The junkyard is restored and Calvary becomes Eden.

PETER LYONS

## Notable Exhibitions and Collections

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**Peter Lyons's paintings are in the Sandra B. Lane Collection, the Boston Athenaeum, and numerous significant private collections.**

- 2023 Palm Beach Modern + Contemporary, Art Wynwood, and Hamptons Fine Art Fair art fairs with Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2021 Art Miami art fair with Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2020 Palm Beach Modern + Contemporary, Art Palm Beach, and Art Wynwood art fairs with Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2019 Philadelphia Fine Art Fair with Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2018 group exhibition *New England Now* at the Shelburne Museum (Shelburne VT)
- 2018 solo exhibition *On Ramp* at Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2017 solo exhibition at Paul Dietrich Gallery (Cambridge MA)
- 2017–2018 Boston International Fine Art Show with Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2016 solo exhibition *American Spring* at Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2015–2023 group exhibitions at Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2015 Boston International Fine Art Show with Matthew Swift Gallery
- 2010 commissioned painting, Boston Athenaeum
- 2005 solo exhibition, Paul Dietrich Gallery (Cambridge MA)
- 2005 solo exhibition, Meredith Ward Fine Art (New York NY)
- 2003 solo exhibition, Richard York Gallery (New York NY)
- 2002–2003 solo exhibition, St. Botolph Club (Boston MA)

More information

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[matthewswiftgallery.com/artist/peter-lyons](http://matthewswiftgallery.com/artist/peter-lyons)