



## **PAUL FENNIAK**

(b. 1965)

Works by Montréal artist Paul Fenniak in *Stillness of Life* are characteristic of the Artist's complex narrative works, the product of autobiography, dreams, historical references and implications for contemporary life.

With a painting style that is fully traditional, exhibiting luminous surface, masterful modeling and attention to detail, Fenniak's characters do implausible and unreadable things, although they seem totally unaware that their actions are out of the ordinary. Fenniak's paintings are like viewing a dream, the action frozen in space for the viewer to take time to interpret.

About Paul Fenniak's paintings, curator and art critic Donald Kuspit writes: "The best realism is not just about careful observation and descriptive nuance—in which Fenniak excels—but about discovery and insight. The best realism is not simply descriptive, however meticulous the description, but reflective – reflective on reality – and Fenniak's works are profoundly reflective." Kuspit calls him "a master of the psychological realism that has existed in secular North European painting from Dürer through Rembrandt to Degas and Max Beckmann."

Writing in *The New York Times*, critic Ken Johnson says of Fenniak's work: "...there is a genuinely haunting, cinematic monumentality. It reminds one that the narrative as well as painterly possibilities of traditional, figurative representation are still far from exhausted."

In thinking about his most recent paintings, Paul Fenniak notes: "It is popularly assumed that realist painting dishes up a common sense view of what is real by simply attending to appearances. It relies on our habitual perception. But another, stranger kind of realism, although it also pays close attention to 'normal' appearances, takes some further steps and ends up in an unpredictable place – not confirming our comfortable notions of what we already know but making us suspicious of them, making us aware of their inadequacy. My recent paintings have been influenced by my reading of short fiction in this vein, primarily by the British author Robert Aickman, as well as several others such as Arthur Machen and Walter De la Mare."

Fenniak's unique vision has been recognized with grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation in 2000, the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts in 1998 and the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation in 1993 and 1994. Paul Fenniak's work has been shown in museum exhibitions across the country, including Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts in Little Rock, Arnot Art Museum in Elmira, New York, Delaware Art Museum, in Wilmington, Indiana University's Grunwald Gallery in Bloomington, the Louisiana Art & Science Museum in Baton Rouge, Naples Museum of Art in Florida and The Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, Canada. In 2016, his work was included in group exhibition, *Contemporary Old Masters*, in Baton Rouge, LA. Next year, he will be included in *Big Stories*, at The Bo Bartlett Center at Columbus State University in Georgia.