

BLUEBIRD

PETER HEINEMANN



Summer Still Life, 2007
oil on linen
52 x 38 inches

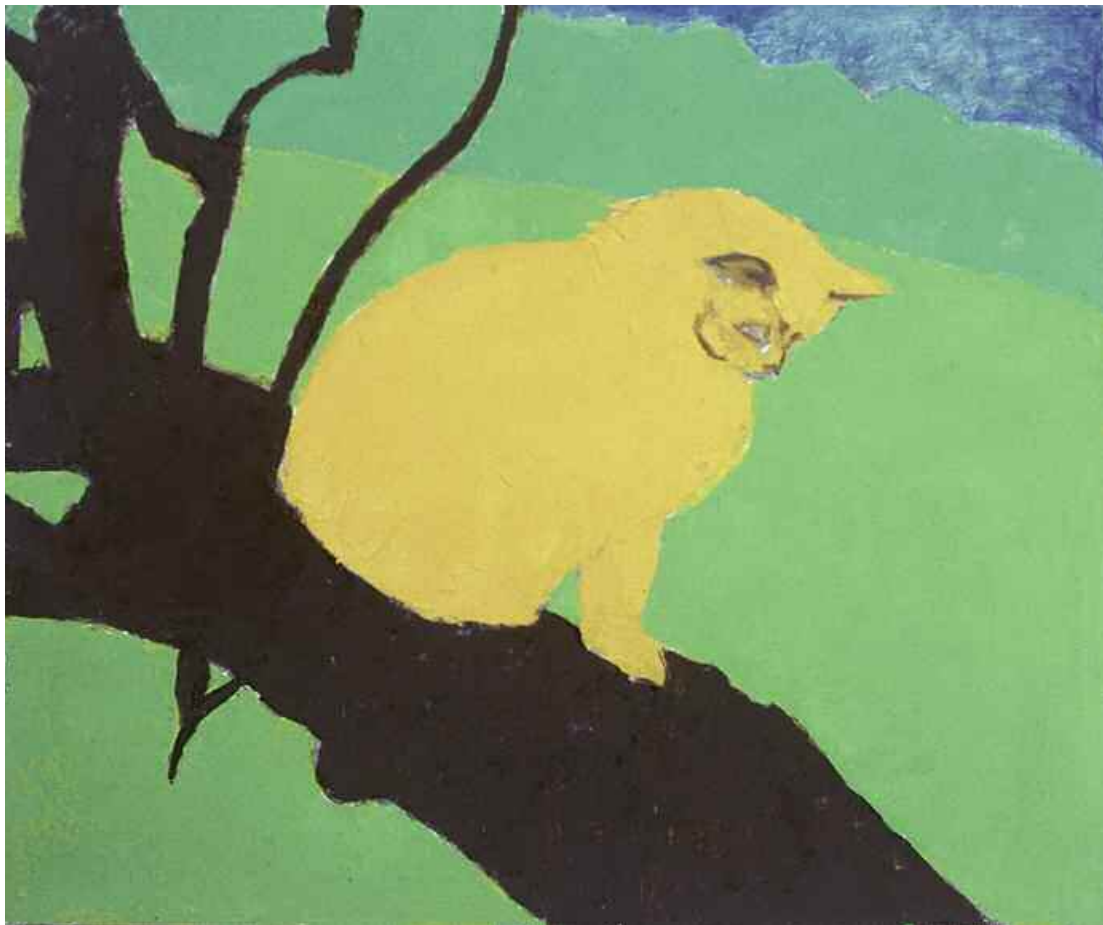
BLUEBIRD
PETER HEINEMANN

RECENT PAINTINGS

April 8 through May 10, 2008

ESSAY BY DAVID COHEN

Gallery Schlesinger 24 East 73 Street, New York
Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects llc, New York



Orange Cat In Tree, 2007, oil on linen, 30 x 36 inches

LIKE THE BLUES, Peter Heinemann's paintings put you in a place that is simultaneously sentimental and hardnosed.

Culturally, he is an intriguing amalgam of European and American sensibilities. I think of him as a kind of blue-collar symbolist. His motifs—cats, flowers, his beloved, the countryside—are sensual, bucolic, recreational. We are in the land of “calme, luxe et volupté.” But a note of Yankee pragmatism frustrates this sense of ease and indulgence—puritan opposites, on each count, to Baudelaire's formula, present themselves in the guise of the work ethic, humble objects, restraint.

The things that populate his grand still lifes such as *Studio Still Life*, *Summer Still Life*, and *Prophet Pirate Poet*—or rather, cohabit these interiors with his faithful cast of feline companions—partake of a similar fusion of the prosaic and the metaphoric: they are rich with associations, and have put in time as useful, well-used things. An electric fan, a kerosene lamp, a clock, kitchenware, furniture. Even the cement chicken feels as practical as it is whimsical. Each seems the

ideal of itself and at the same time an all-too-real presence. Their rendering, similarly, is in equal measure schematic and observed.

Heinemann gives us flatness and depth. *Orange Cat in Tree* reduces the observed scene to five elements: the cat and tree of the title are the figures, a field, trees and sky, the ground. Each element is a solid, in terms, alike, of shape and color. The branch is gnarled and complex, but in a single dark color that stands out in stark contrast to the soft warmth of the cat, and the textures and tones of the layers of landscape beyond. The simplicity and rigor of the composition compact these volumetric and receding forms into an energized, flattened picture plane.

Studio Still Life is set in a barn in the artist's upstate home that, for many years, felt too cramped for him to be able to work in. You sense the claustrophobia still, as the objects crowd the canvas. At the same time, their interlocking forms constitute a singular machine—a homespun machine that can have no function beyond facilitating the picture before us, it nonetheless *feels* practical.



Cement Chicken, 2007
oil on linen
24 x 42 inches

Pink Tree is the most luxuriant of his pictures—and it is the one in which the sun shines most brightly. All three cats are at play, harrasing a bluebird and a red squirrel, or punching the air. The cement chicken looks on. Belying the outdoorsy scene, however, are strange hints of an overbearing architectural interior. The schematic white clouds rhyme with the neat arches of the predominating, foreground tree in a way that recalls the ribbing of a cathedral ceiling (itself evocative of the heavens.)

The pink tree of the title, in the middle distance, is a tight structure that is more geometric than organic. It, too, finds morphologi-

cal echoes in other arching, ribbed forms, not to mention the spatchcock orange cat grasping at the bluebird. The moment the painting captures is a fast one, of fright and flight and frolic. The way it is put together, in contrast, is highly deliberated, with meticulous shapes and patterns, echoes (the bluebird on the tea cup, the lock on the chest picking up the red flowers in the pot) and painstaking impasto.

With its pink and yellow, its hot and cold, its movement and structure, its jumble and its architectonics, this painting is a busy machine, an orchestration of complex joy.

David Cohen

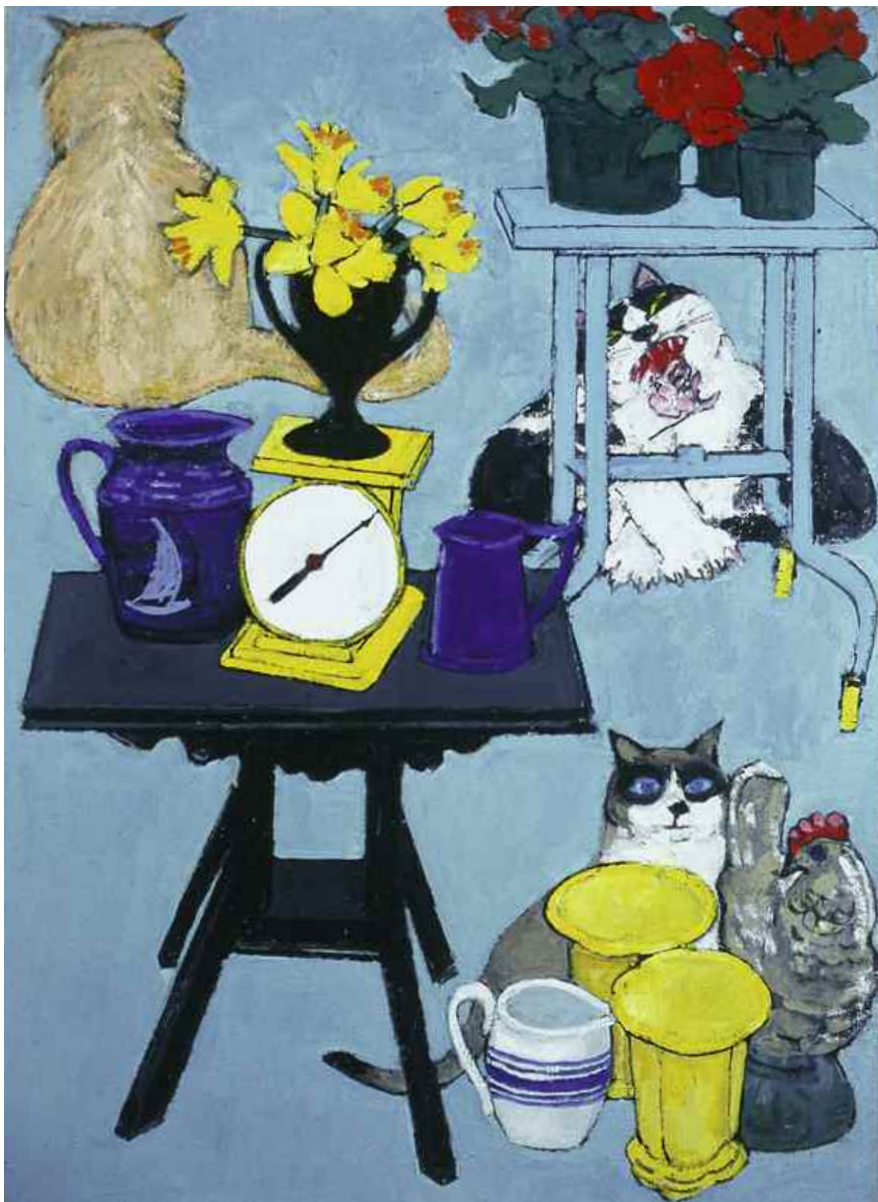


*Pink Tree &
The Bluebird
of Happiness,*
2008
oil on linen
60 x 48 inches



Cats In Flowers, 2007, oil on linen, 20 x 50 inches

Prophet Pirate Poet, 2007, oil on linen, 50 x 36 inches





Red Still Life, 2007, oil on linen, 28 x 30 inches



Studio Still Life, 2007, oil on linen, 38 x 52 inches

This catalog is a project of:

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Sleeve, back: *Head*, 2007, oil on linen, 30 x 30 inches



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