

Upcoming Events

All events are free and open to the public.

Related events:

90th Birthday Party & Artist -on-Artist Talk: Frank Piatek and Richard Loving
Sunday, January 26, 3-5 pm

Longtime colleague of Loving and Professor of Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute Frank Piatek will lead a public conversation with Loving and offer insights into his long and distinguished career. The event will also celebrate Loving's 90th birthday.

Story Foraging: Looking at the works of Eleanor Spiess-Ferris
Sunday, March 2, 3-5 pm

Gavin Van Horn, Director of Cultures of Conservation at the Center for Humans & Nature, leads a discussion with curator of the exhibition Aaron Ott and artist Eleanor Spiess-Ferris illuminating the multi-faceted narrative imbedded in the artist's work. By embracing the three divergent viewpoints of the panelists—philosopher, contemporary art curator, artists—this discussion will show how individual viewers activate and complete the work of Spiess-Ferris by telling our own stories.

Exhibition Reception and Publication Release Party
Sunday, April 13, 3-5 pm

Copies of the *Inside the Outside* publication will be available.

Cover: Left: Richard Loving, *Fire and Smoke*, 2008, oil on canvas, 62 x 50 inches; Right: Eleanor Spiess-Ferris, *The Chair*, 2011, gouache, 22 x 22 inches

Each year, the Art Center unveils nearly twenty exhibitions, dedicating at least one show to working with an emerging Chicago curator whose work transgresses or questions traditional curatorial conventions.

Aaron Ott is an independent curator and researcher based in Chicago. His career so far has focused on under-served and under-shown Midwestern artists. Over the past ten years, he has held curatorial and administrative positions in institutions such as the Elmhurst Art Museum, David Weinberg Gallery and FLATFILEgalleries. His thesis, *The Artistic Inheritance Project* (2013), presents interviews with eleven contemporary artists who come from a family of artists to explore how heredity affects creativity. Ott recently completed the MA program in Museum and Exhibition Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago and received a BFA from the University of Cincinnati.

Hyde Park **ART**CENTER

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Hyde Park Art Center is a unique resource that advances contemporary visual art in Chicago by connecting artists and communities in unexpected ways. The Art Center is funded in part by the: Alphawood Foundation; Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Arts; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; Field Foundation of Illinois; Harpo Foundation; Harper Court Arts Council; Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Joyce Foundation; Leo S. Guthman Fund; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; Polk Bros. Foundation; Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust; and the generosity of people like you.

Inside the Outside: Paintings by Richard Loving and Eleanor Spiess-Ferris

Gallery 4
January 26 – May 4, 2014



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Inside the Outside of Imagism: Richard Loving and Eleanor Spiess-Ferris

Richard Loving and Eleanor Spiess-Ferris have been actively painting in Chicago for decades, operating both inside and outside of Imagism. This exhibition presents a retrospective sampling of that arc, exploring the shifts in their respective styles and honoring their contributions to the intricate landscape of art in our city. When seen in their totality, even as the selection of work for this exhibition presents a small sampling of their prolific careers, one begins to see how a dedicated art-making practice transforms over time. Both artists display a devotion toward seeing the world as an opportunity for artistic conversation, and both show us how it is in that dialogue—not the determination of any distinct artistic doctrine—that we truly find our shared experiences.

In 2014, the Hyde Park Art Center celebrates its 75th anniversary. As an integral part of Chicago's artistic landscape, the Art Center has exhibited numerous groundbreaking exhibitions helping establish one of the major and defining genres of our time: Imagism. As the central incubator of Imagism, the Art Center produced innovative and trendsetting exhibitions from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s, such as *The Hairy Who*, *The Nonplussed Some*, *False Image*, and *Marriage Chicago Style*, inaugurating a canon of artists within the Imagist movement. Among those progenitors advancing the mannerisms of the Imagist style were Roger Brown, Vera Klement, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Ed Paschke, Christina Ramberg, Suellen Rocca, Karl Wirsum, Joseph Yoakum, and Ray Yoshida, to name but a few.

The presumption that naturally arose from the Art Center's exhibitions was that a signature style of production could be located: one that connected the participating artists; one that could be named; and one that had specific characteristics, techniques, and philosophical underpinnings. But just as historian Franz Schulze, the man who coined the term Imagism, had difficulty determining connective associations in the approaches and methods of the artists at the time, scholars and critics continue to have divergent opinions regarding the boundaries of the movement, which has come to define a so-called Chicago Style.

Imagism is at its core a boundary model, structured on and at the borders of Pop, Surrealism, and Abstraction, embracing as much as circumnavigating



Richard Loving, *Lunar Dance*, 2009, oil on canvas, 18 x 18 inches, courtesy of the artist



Eleanor Spiess-Ferris, *Rain*, 2002, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches, courtesy of the artist

the conventions and tendencies of those movements. Because the Imagist movement itself resists formal or stratified characterization, I argue that it should be acknowledged as a uniquely porous genre, one that allows artists to move in and out of identifiably Imagistic trends without being labeled as (merely or exclusively) Imagists.

There was never a manifesto for Imagism, never any dogma in which the artists became entrenched. They have all, time and again, asserted their independent mindsets and their self-reliant and very separate interests. Yet I find there is an undeniable visual relationship between self-proclaimed or even alleged Imagists. A converging interest in

clearly demarcated lines and usage of exuberant color; a concern with the human figure, often with an affinity towards illustrative or “comic” depiction; and a preoccupation with vernacular subjects, even as those subjects are pushed to surreal limits, are all devices used by Chicago Imagists. Yet no artist fits neatly within these designations. Confinement and restriction are antithetical to the Imagist movement and what lies beyond boundaries often seems the goal.

Therein lies the heart of this exhibition. Loving and Spiess-Ferris, each as idiosyncratic as any Imagist or any other artist producing in the Chicago area, create works that resonate on the boundaries of Imagism—the boundary of the boundary, as it were. Both artists are presented here as a foil to each other as they simultaneously tease the fringes of Imagist principles. Where Loving creates magical spaces of expansive but indeterminate presence, Spiess-Ferris conjures enchanted and symbolically loaded compositions with voluminous subject matter. Loving's airy atmospherics, which only recently have given way to more objectively recognizable representations (generally trees and birds), present lush combinations of color; ethereal abstract space; and intuitive, often linear designs. Spiess-Ferris's work, resolutely grounded in figuration, presents complex narrative content, purposefully open-ended and surreal. When seen through the lens of Imagism, both artists' careers can be seen as hovering at the edges of what makes Imagism identifiable, and in producing their work at these margins they help expand our understanding of this complicated genre.

Aaron Ott
Curator of *Inside the Outside*