

TIBOR DE NAGY

11 Rivington St New York NY 10002 212 262 5050 info@tibordenagy.com

October 14, 2019

Looking back: Richard Baker at Tibor de Nagy

3:15 pm by [Editorial Assistant](#)



Richard Baker, *Palette*, 1990, oil on linen, 13 x 11 inches

Contributed by Sharon Butler / Last month, seeing Richard Baker's paintings from the 80s and 90s at Tibor de Nagy took me back to my early days in New York. I had arrived in Soho in 1987 after finishing a two-year stint studying painting at MassArt in Boston, where I made modest surface-oriented abstractions. In New York, the conversation was about something much different. It was the tail end of Neo-expressionist picture-making era that forged celebrity painters like Julian Schnabel, Eric Fischl, and David Salle. But I was drawn to smaller-scale, more poetic approaches that Richard Baker's pensive and witty paintings epitomize.

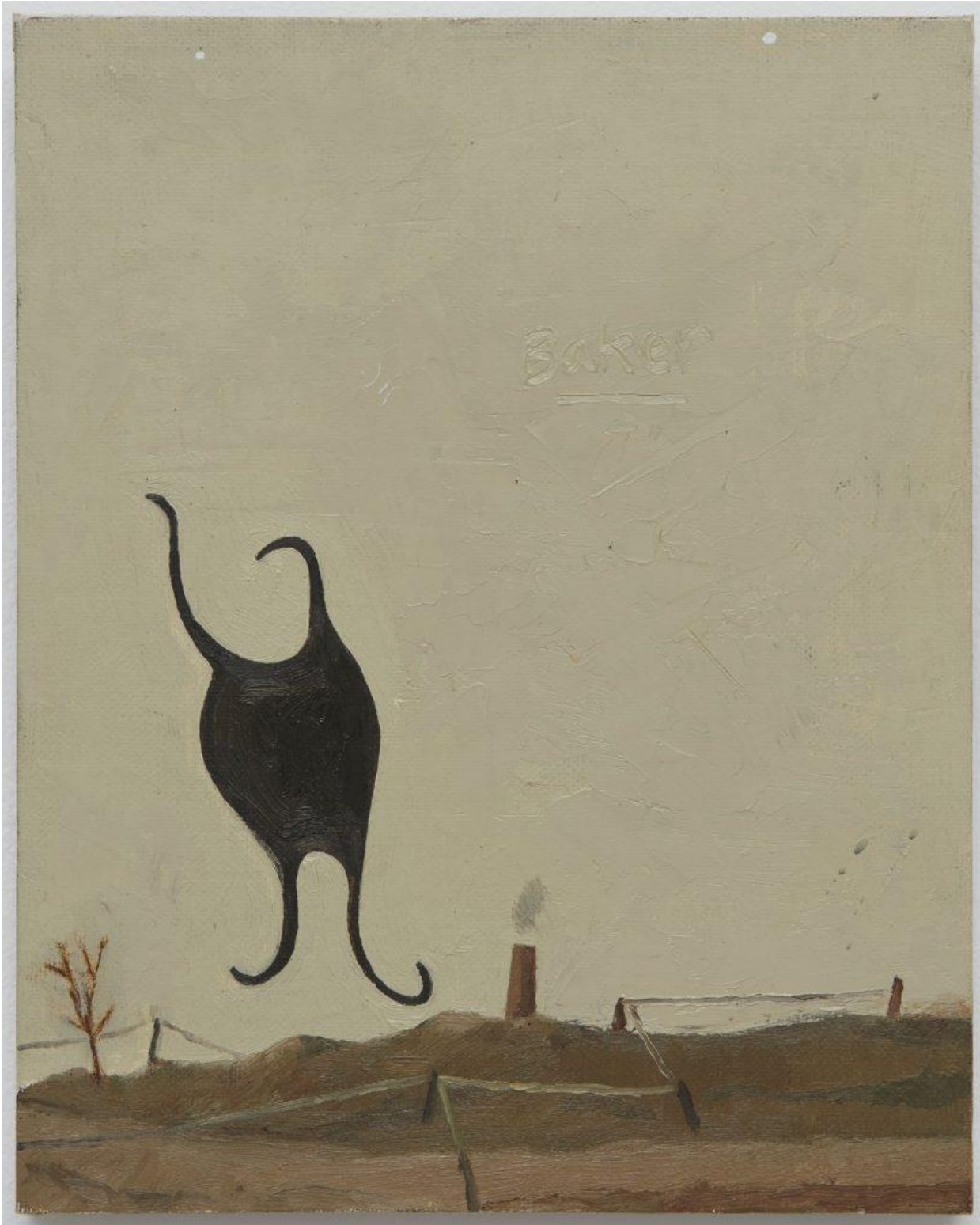


Richard Baker, *Passage*, 1992, oil on panel, 16 x 17 1/2 inches

I remember the day I discovered Baker's work in Joan Washburn's midtown gallery. Although she mostly represented estates, Baker was a living artist, who, not surprisingly given his aesthetic, lived in Boston and Provincetown. In contrast to the bombastic work on view in Soho, his canvases featured restrained emotion, symbolic content, and a dry sense of humor, all of which suited my transplanted New England temperament.



Richard Baker, Untitled (Pot of Brushes), 1989, oil on panel, 14 x 11 inches



Richard Baker, Toss, 1989, oil on canvas panel, 10 x 8 inches



Richard Baker, Rubber Fruit Hat Bounty – Bounty, 1993, oil on linen, 14 x 14 inches

What a pleasure it was to see some of these paintings again. After all these years, I'm still smitten with the rough surfaces and the gloomy color that perfectly evokes the New England shoreline in winter. In *Palette*, Baker creates a scene in which we are gazing into the distance while also looking down at the palette. Propped up, the palette depicted suggests that a white mound of pigment could be a tree in the foreground—a wry joke about how painters see the landscape and then translate it into paint. A tiny painting called *Toss* captures the joy of a painter with time in the studio. A seaweed pod floats in the air, larger than the barren tree, the sand dune fencing, and the tiny smokestack in the distance. If Baker is intent on charming fellow painters, he certainly succeeds, especially in *Untitled (Pot of Brushes)* where he swaps a traditional still-life bouquet for a teapot full of used brushes that, to my eye, are more beautiful than the brightest dahlias. Flowers aren't strictly necessary when you have the time and the tools to paint everything you want.

["Richard Baker Provincetown/New York Works from the 80s and 90s,"](#) Tibor De Nagy, 11 Rivington St., New York, NY. September 4 to October 6, 2019.