

## FIGURATIVE PAINTING THAT'S EMPHATICALLY HUMAN

by Patrick Neal  
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New York City galleries are raining down a smattering of group shows that showcase figurative painting. Some of the notables are *Me, My, Mine: Commanding Subjectivity in Painting*, which recently opened at DC Moore Gallery, and *Painting Forward*, which recently closed at Thomas Erben Gallery. Into this fray has come Kent Fine Art with *On Painting*, an exhibition of human and landscape subjects. All of the shows have something in common that can be gleaned from the

press release for *Painting Forward*, which states, "newly relevant positions [for painting] are found by abandoning artifice and irony, and depicting subjects in unadorned and direct ways."

How to make sense of a show of painterly, figurative art in 2016 is part of the fun when taking in *On Painting*. As background, I've found it helpful to peruse Fan Zhong's recent article on the subject, in which she does an excellent job of tracing the ups and downs of figuration over the past few decades. Zhong discusses the pivotal exhibition *Dear Painter, paint me...Painting the Figure since late Picasso*, which opened at the Centre Pompidou in 2002. That show, acknowledging the strain photography and mass media had placed on painting, posited artifice and irony as the only acceptable strategies for figurative painting to avoid being outmoded. Fast forward to our current decade, and the possibilities seem to have widened quite a bit. Many figurative painters are engaged in what the critic Roberta Smith has

