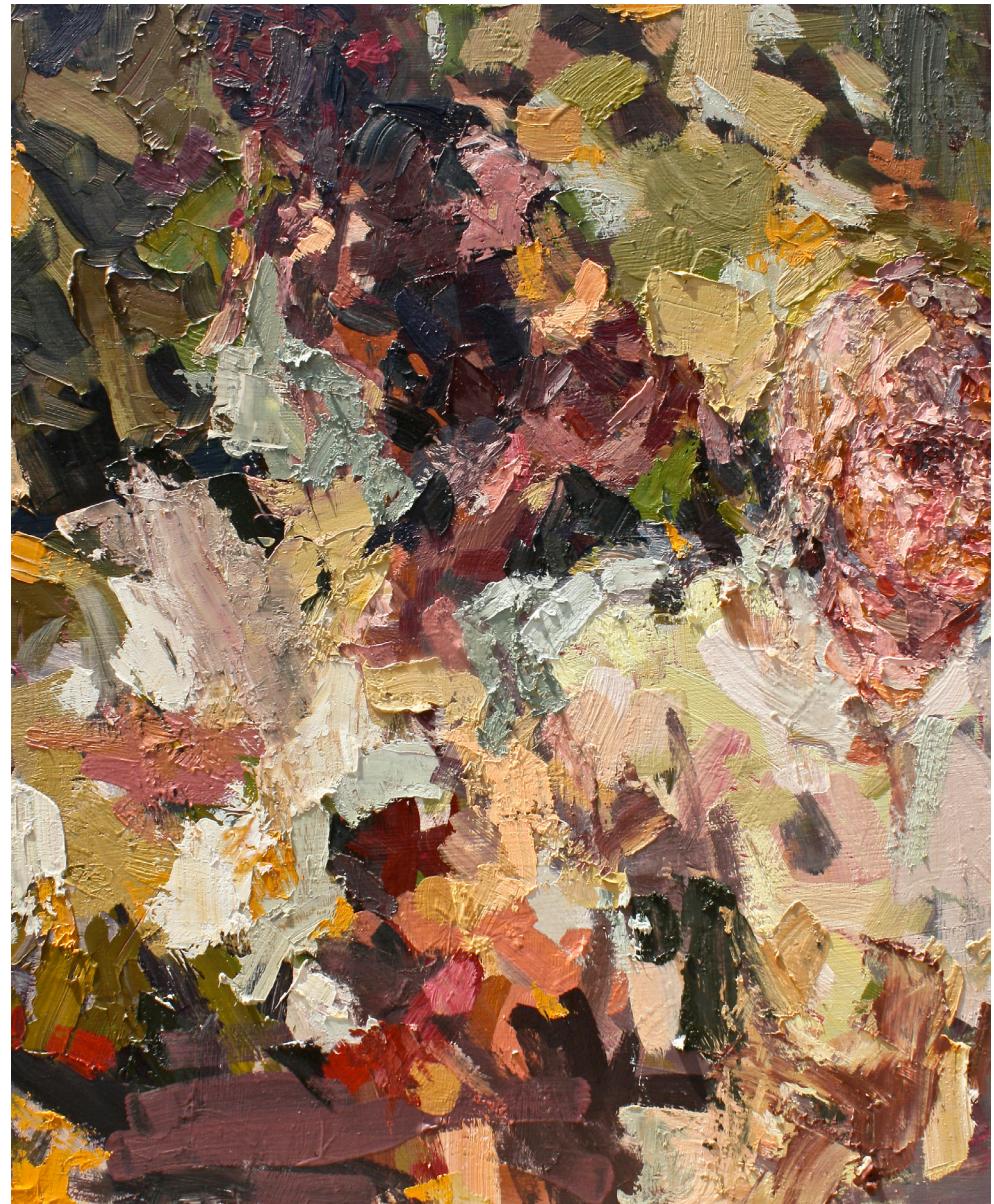


An abstract painting in the background, featuring a dense composition of vertical and horizontal brushstrokes in shades of blue, green, and earthy tones. A small, dark figure is visible on the left side, appearing to walk through the brushwork.

SALLY JACOBS

excavations



Mine, 2011, 24" x 20", oil on panel

(Cover image) *Giorgio en Bosco*, 2013, 72" x 60", oil on canvas

SALLY JACOBS

excavations

March 25 - April 19, 2014

Monday - Saturday 11:00 - 6:00 pm

Reception: Saturday March 29
3:00 - 6:00 pm

Prince Street Gallery

530 West 25th Street 4th floor New York, NY 10001 646-230-0246
www.princestreetgallery.com



Family Circle, 2013, 48" in diameter, oil on panel

Excavations

The task of the painter is to probe, experiment, rethink, scrape out, and try again—in short, to fashion meaning out of events on the canvas. Such events may depict elements of real life, but they can feel just as truthful when alluding to nothing at all. In de Kooning’s “Excavation” (1950), for example, it’s possible to discern dissolving and reforming hieroglyphics, or scarred quarry walls. Such interpretations, however, are ultimately beside the point; the layered and scraped gestures enact, rather than represent, an excavation, and the authenticity of this enactment relies on the internal actions of forms rather than references to the outer world.

In some respects, a figurative painter’s challenges are even more complex: to represent nature while honoring the truthfulness of forms. This challenge seems increasingly to absorb Sally Jacobs, a painter who has moved from the clear delineations and modelings of her early figural work to atmospheric tapestries with only hints of figures. Her subject matter, in short, now seems to arise from excavations of form. But unlike de Kooning’s canvases, which pursued the primal and the mythic, Jacobs’ recent paintings explore the temporal and the familiar. As the artist recounts—and the titles of her paintings attest—her work records real-life events involving her family and friends, most especially her five-year old son.

Not that this is apparent at first glance. A decade ago, Jacobs proved she was no slouch at realism, and her recent portrait “Second Side” (2013) in its thickly brushed and scraped earth-reds and pinks, conjures a face with surprising specificity. In most of the artist’s recent paintings, however, the identities of objects arise more slowly and ambivalently from pulsating swirls of color. These intimate scenes of family gatherings and outings have a double-life; they’re lucid in their broad geography of forms, but dream-like and elusive in their descriptions of human interactions. In the tondo painting “Family Circle” (2013), for instance, rows of pinkish-beige dots could be the heads of people milling about in the mid-distance; some blues might be shirts of adults and garments of children. A purple-clad figure may or may not stand in the foreground. The image has the muteness of reverie: social particulars slip away, even though we sense the physicality of a crowd in a deep, bright landscape. But the broad distribution of masses resonates plainly, with gray ground below, deep ochre beyond, and a pungent blue for a sky dotted by clouds. Casting aside illustrative detail, Jacobs succeeds where an academic artist falls short: in the tangible expression, through color, of a painting’s interior illumination and movements through space.

In “Birthday Party” (2013), another tondo, the form of a seated adult holding a child reads more distinctly. The adult watches what appears to be a group of romping children, summarized in strokes of muted yellows and red. But the most completely defined character

may be that of a tree, a lonely vertical, dividing the sky above. A third tondo, referencing the masters, reminds us that this kind of rhythmic self-identification—of character-emerging-from-form—is nothing new, and in fact belongs to all of painting. We can be pretty sure that the dense, scattered pinks in “Tiepolo’s Red” (2012), are cherubs tumbling through a sky. With a start, we may realize that in this Venetian master’s original paintings, too, the spatial movements are more specific in their personalities than the people carried along by them.

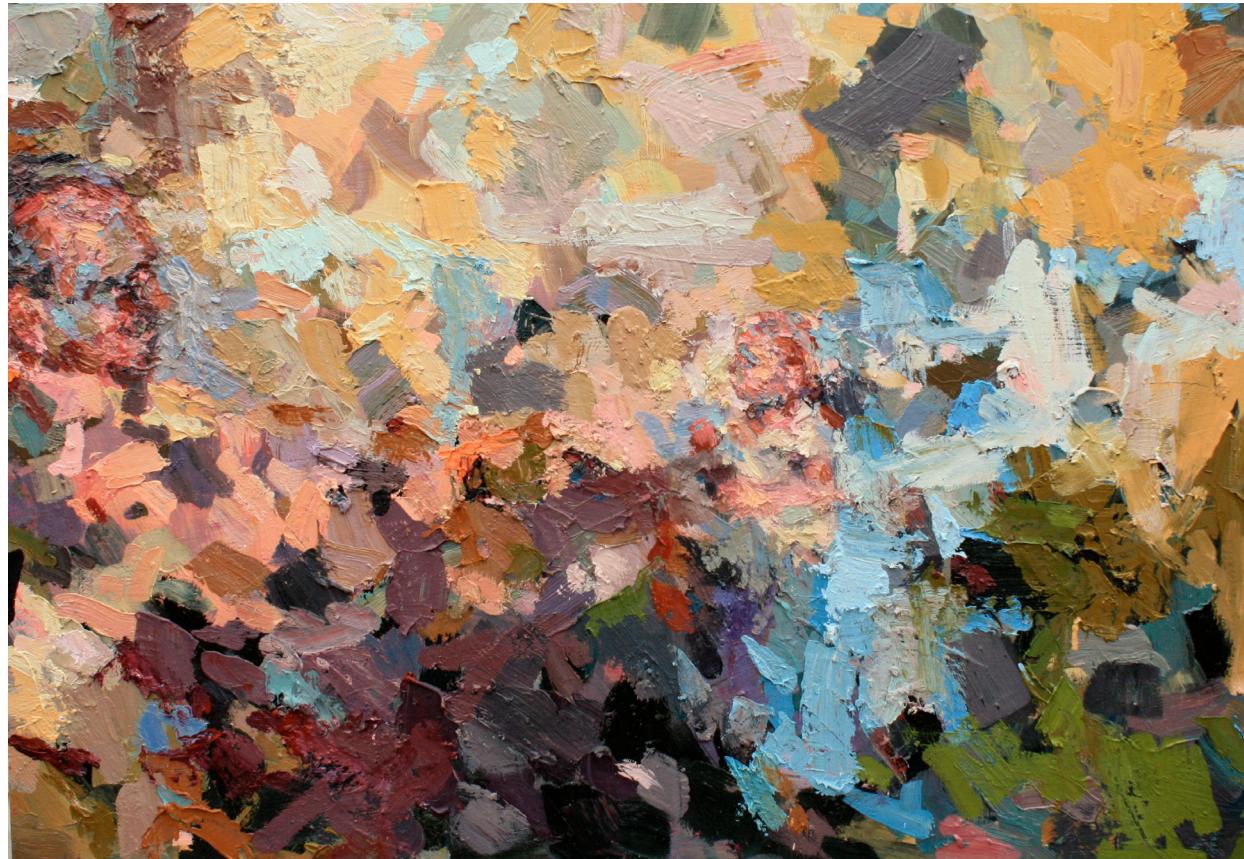
In a few of Jacobs’ paintings a sequence of colors, at first unrecognizable, will crystallize as a highly individualized person. From that point, there’s no going back; we’ll be forever aware of how the person populates a space. “In Between Here and There” (2011) seems at first a patchwork of intense, brushy colors, but once the onlooker recognizes a man and baby gazing at each other, the space between them becomes instantly charged. (Does a woman in a blue dress hold the baby on her knees? This is less clear, and the would-be figure fades from our social, if not the pictorial, understanding.) In “The Descent” (2013), a pattern of off-whites and pale colors instantly conveys the effect of a long slope, leading upwards to a sky of compacted blue. In a moment, some of the off-whites condense as the faint forms of a child, descending towards us with arms outspread. Once more, everything changes; a child’s vulnerability, curiosity and heedless energy—and a mother’s bonding to them—fill our comprehension of the scene.

Sally Jacobs’ paintings make us acutely aware of the two-way street of perception, through which the mind conditions the eye as much as the eye informs the mind. We’re reminded, too, of how truly complex an artist’s task is. It requires the understanding (through the mind, necessarily) of what the eye tells us, and the re-creating of this impression, in the language of paint, for another eye/mind. In this process, the highly personal becomes abstracted, universalized, and then—with a little luck and perseverance—personalized once more. It’s a challenge Jacobs tackles with gusto.

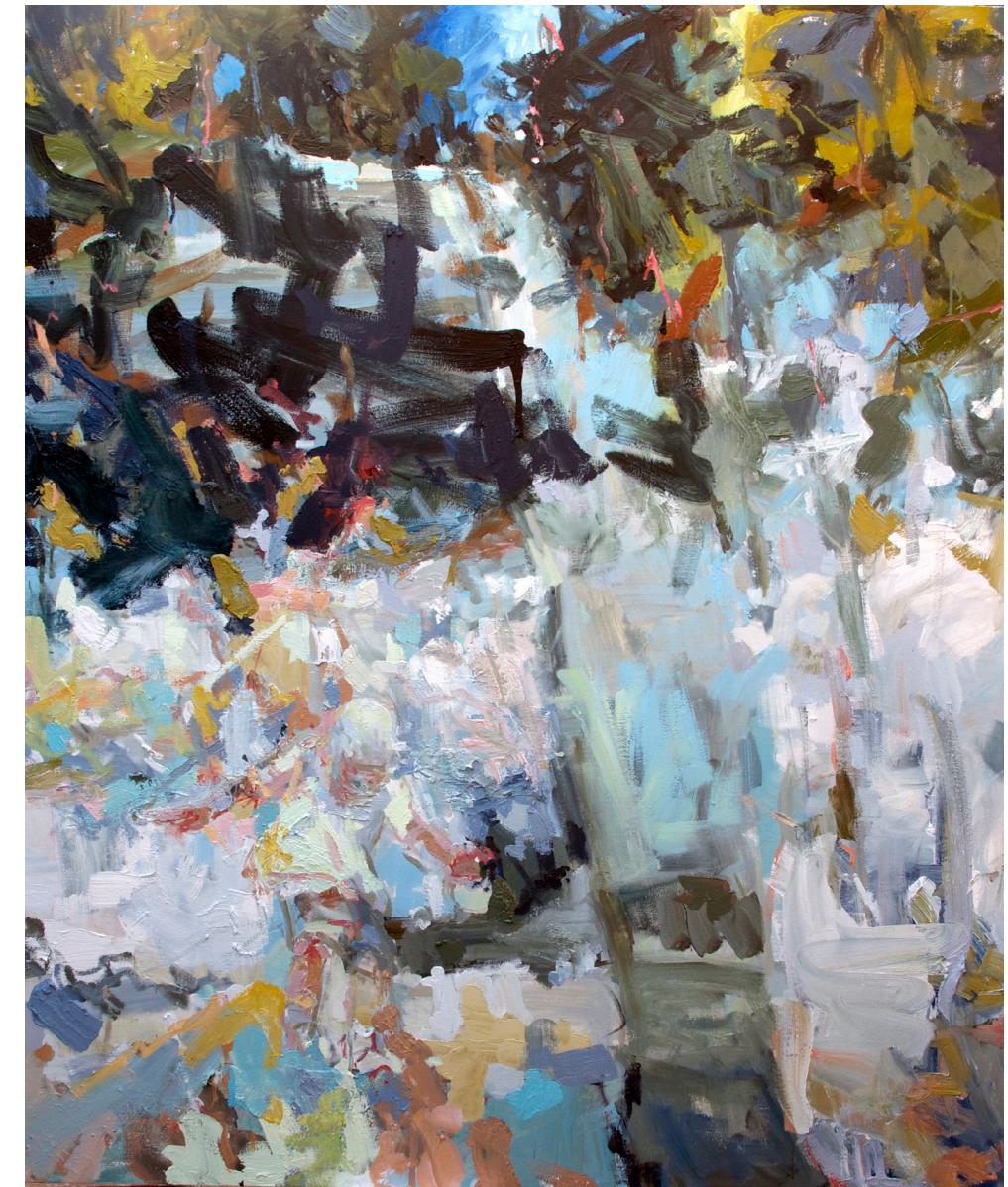
—John Goodrich, December 2013



Tiepolo’s Red, 2012, 48" in diameter, oil on panel



In Between Here and There, 2011, 24" x 35", oil on panel



The Descent, 2013, 72" x 60", oil on canvas



Second Side, 2013, 9" x 9", oil on panel

Sally Jacobs received her MFA in 2007 from Western Carolina University where she studied under Barbara Grossman, Judy Glantzman and Stephen Westfall. She received her BFA from the University of Cincinnati in 1991.

Sally Jacobs has been the recipient of the Premio Prize from Leo Fortham studios in Florence, Italy. She has had numerous exhibitions, including one person shows at Gruppo Donatello in Florence, Italy, the Paris New York Kent Gallery in Connecticut, Theater Arts Gallery in High Point, NC and numerous group shows at the Mobile Museum of Art in Mississippi, the City Gallery in Charleston, SC, the YMI Cultural Center in Asheville, NC, the Arlington Arts Center in Arlington, VA and the Greenhill Center in Greensboro, NC. Her work is currently represented by Prince Street Gallery in New York, NY. She lives in Kings Mountain, North Carolina with her husband, Scott and five year old son, George.

www.sallyjacobs.net

Special thanks to Dan and Eleanor Jacobs for keeping art alive.

(back cover) *Babbo and G*, 2013, 48" in diameter, oil on panel



The Birthday Party, 2013, 48" in diameter, oil on panel



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