

TWO COATS OF PAINT

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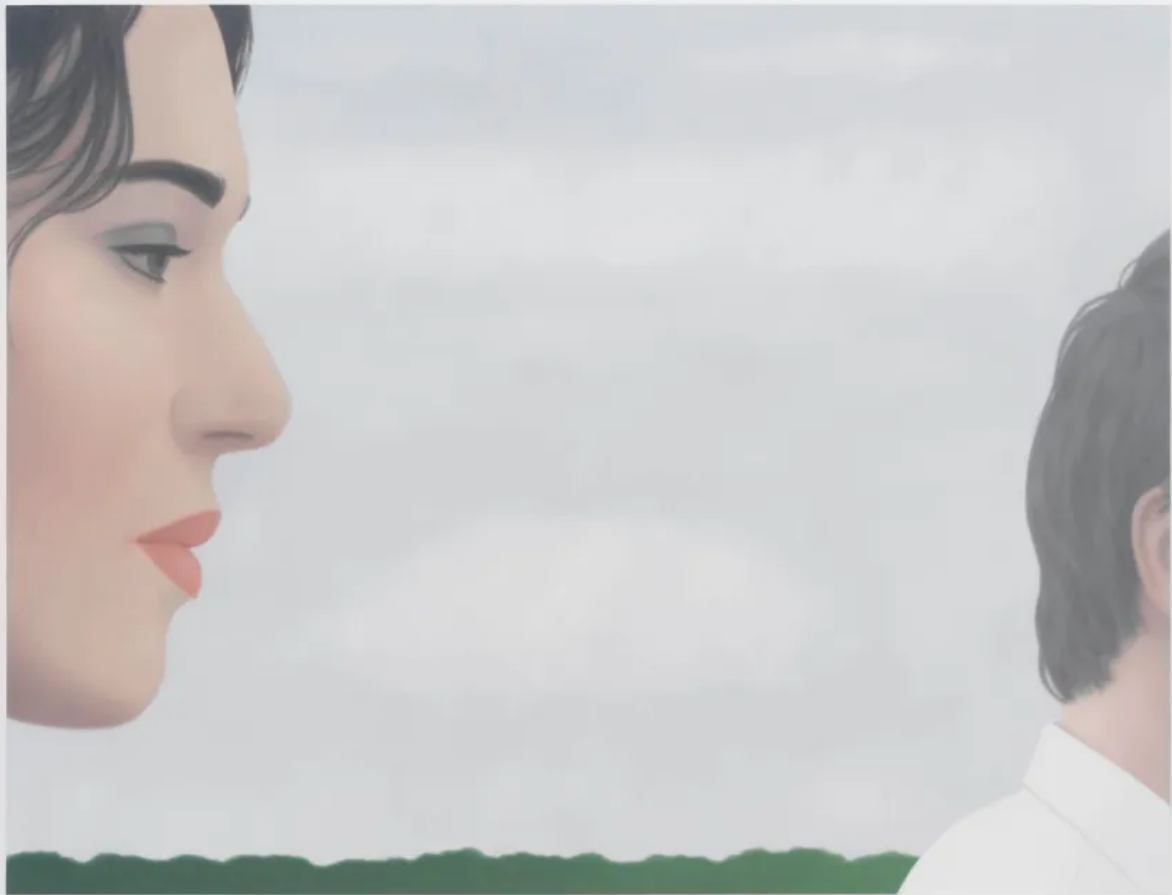
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SOLO SHOWS

Ridley Howard: Provocative incongruity

December 8, 2022 1:47 pm



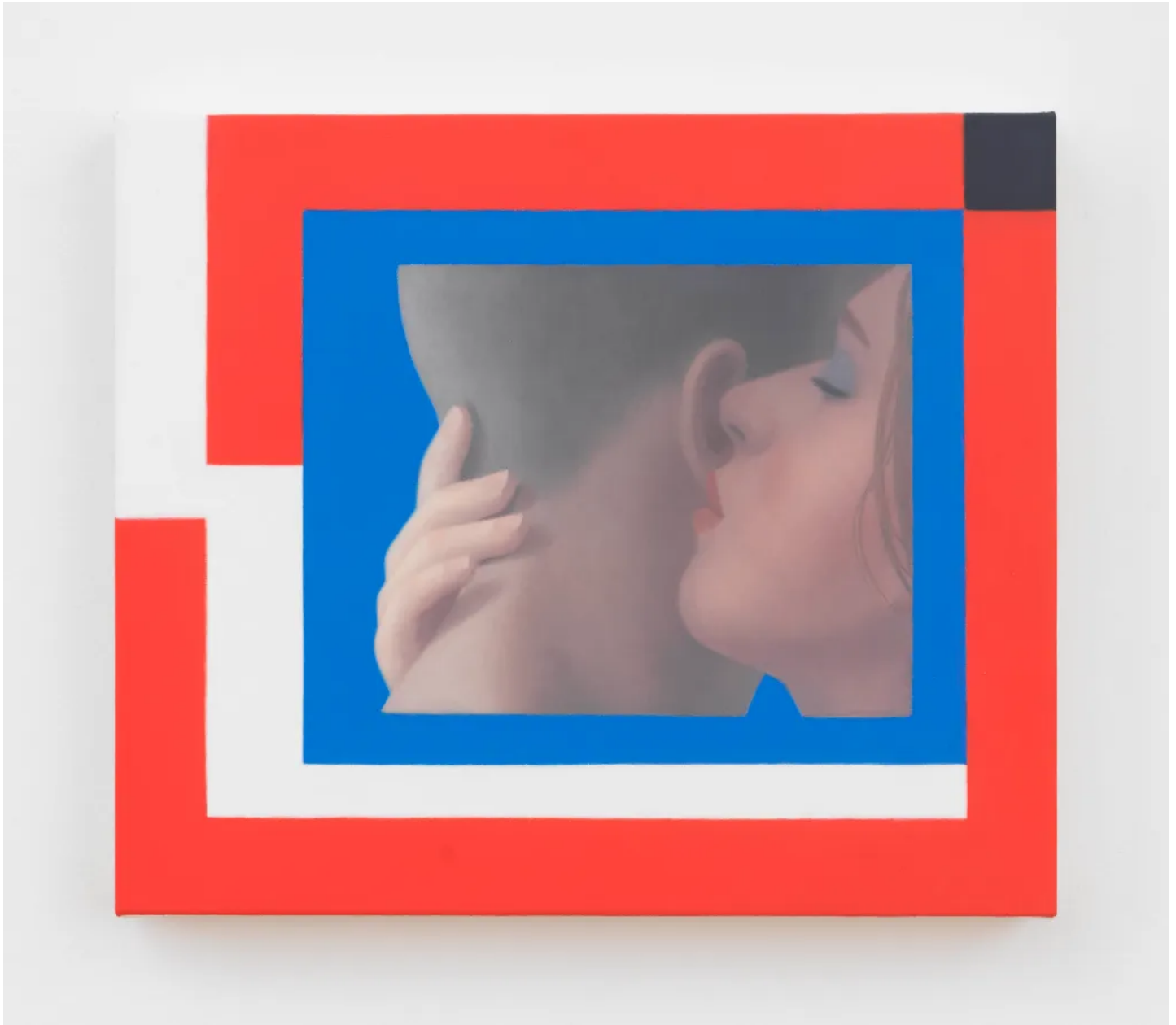
Ridley Howard, Walking, Clouds, 2022, oil on linen, 50 x 60 inches

Contributed by Riad Miah / Athens, Georgia-based painter Ridley Howard's new body of work, now on display at his third solo show at Marinaro, continues to explore relationships between figuration and abstraction with a refined pop sensibility, easing effortlessly between small and larger formats. The gallery's abundant new space on Broadway is ideal, allowing viewers to absorb shifts in scale and reflect on contrasting elements, which Howard now seems to have fully resolved and mastered. His work is also subtly and agreeably eclectic. The figures' cool austerity and emotional distance recall **Will Barnett's** work, while their tightly cropped and effectively abstract pictorial space brings to mind **Ellen Altfest's** paintings and **Sam Haskins'** photographs. The 'stock-like' representations of human encounters and play between pictorial and flat space conjure David Hockney, Alex Katz, and Tom Wesselmann.



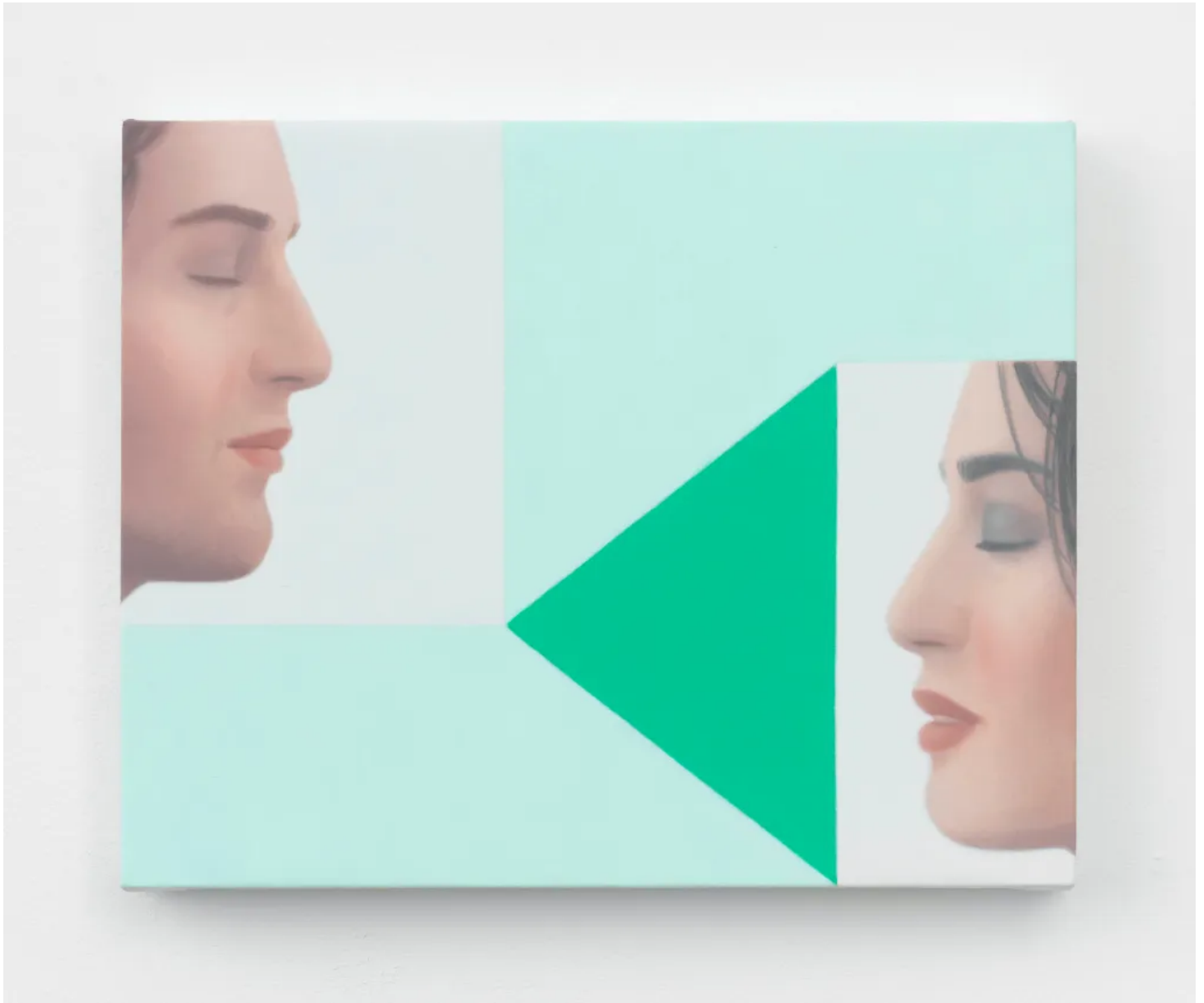
Ridley Howard, A.M., 2022, oil on linen, 50 x 60 inches

The exhibition consists of 11 paintings, each including at least one figure. Howard applies paint evenly and almost antiseptically, heightening the paintings' visual flatness, which is provocatively incongruous with their figurative dynamism. The clash is especially pronounced in *A.M.*, in which two ostensibly vapid figures with tightly cropped faces gingerly confront each other. A similar convergence is seen in *Sea and Sky*, which zones in on crotches and shorts. The jarring juxtaposition of figures and flat space also has cinematic resonance, evoking, say, David Lynch's tempering of sex and violence with discordant humor, as, for instance, in his neo-noir film *Blue Velvet*.

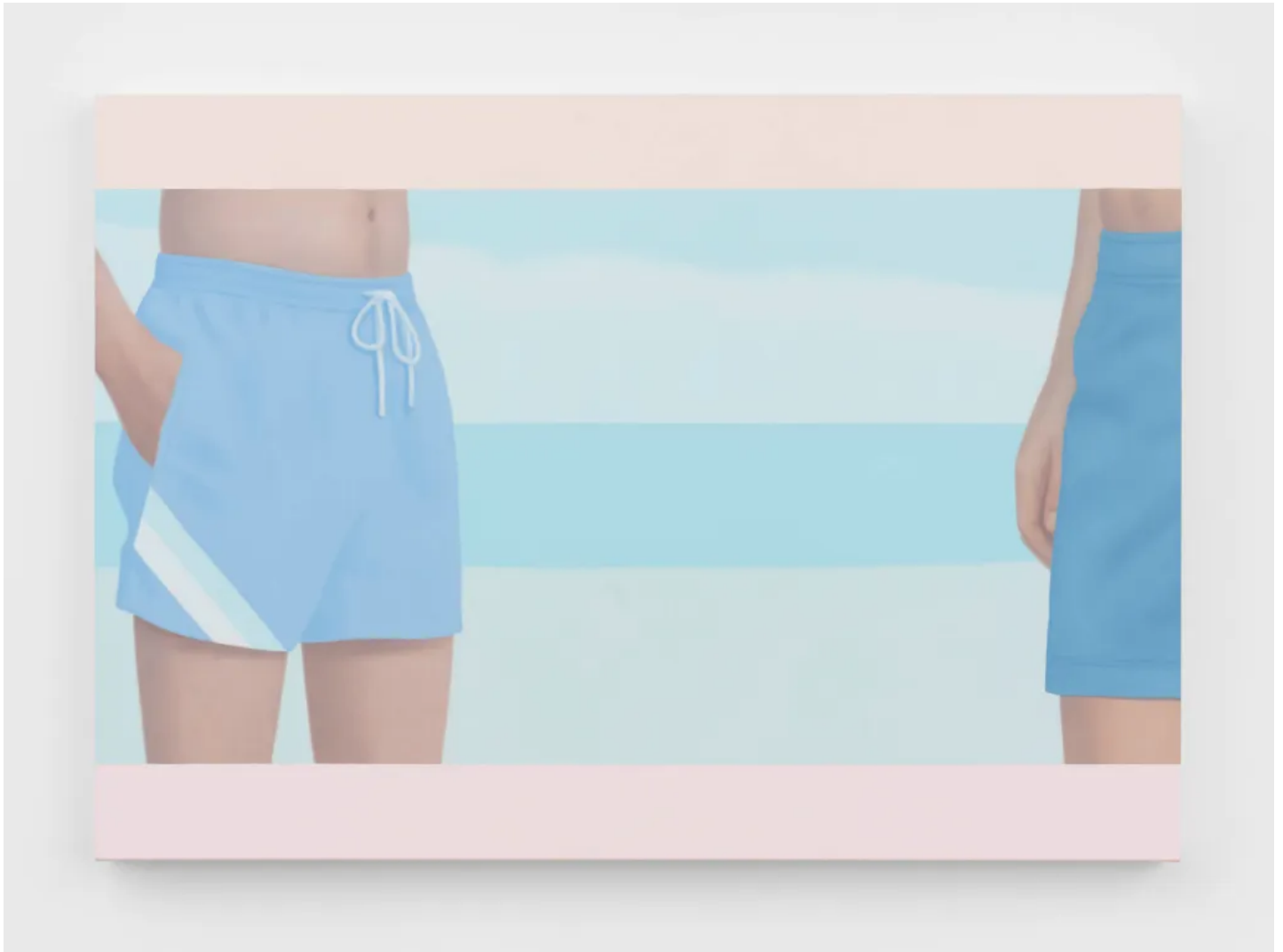


Ridley Howard, After Munari, Kiss, 2022, oil on linen, 8 x 10 inches

Howard's *After Munari, Kiss* references the geometry of the Italian Futurist artist, designer, and inventor **Bruno Munari** in borrowing the red, blue, white, and black geometric composition of his prints to – rather improbably – frame figures engaged in a tender moment. The piece prompts the question of whether such formal elements really contradict the idea of intimacy. They might instead simply function as symbolic substitutes for the painting features customarily employed to impart it, such as touch and surface. Howard's use of symbolic elements informs and broadens our understanding of what constitutes painterly expression.



Ridley Howard, Dreaming, Light Green, 2022, oil on linen, 8 x 10 inches



Ridley Howard, Sea and Sky, 2022, oil on linen, 24 x 34 inches



Marinara Gallery: Ridley Howard, Forever, Installation View, 2022

Over the years, Howard has insisted on integrating the abstract with the figurative and made paintings that not only are carefully and thoughtfully constructed but also have evolved. These are remarkable and satisfying accomplishments, especially in the current context of figurative predominance. Each element of his work is highly considered – the direction of a figure’s gaze, for example, is painstakingly arrived at with formal as well as strictly visual concerns in mind. Howard refreshingly addresses social and psychological issues not with a tired set of known symbols but rather with a precise and original visual language of his own.

“**Ridley Howard: Forever,**” Marinara, 678 Broadway, Floor 3, New York, NY. Through December 10, 2022.

About the Author: Artist and educator **Riad Miah** was born in Trinidad and Tobago and now lives and works in New York City. He has exhibited with Lesley Heller Workspace, Rooster Gallery, and Sperone Westwater Gallery, among others.

NOTE: Two Coats of Paint 2022 Fundraising Campaign is underway. If you enjoy *Two Coats of Paint*’s art coverage, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution. Help keep the painting conversation going in 2023. Thank you! [Click here to contribute.](#)