

NEW YORK OBSERVER

Art Review: 'Poets and Painters' at Tibor de Nagy

By Will Heinrich
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After losing a villa in Budapest, being imprisoned by both Germans and Russians, and immigrating to New York, Tibor de Nagy, with John Bernard Myers, founded a marionette company. It failed as a marionette company but reemerged, in 1950, as the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. In honor of its 60th anniversary this year, the gallery, which was also a center for the New York School of poets, has mounted a copious but deftly balanced show called "Painters and Poets."

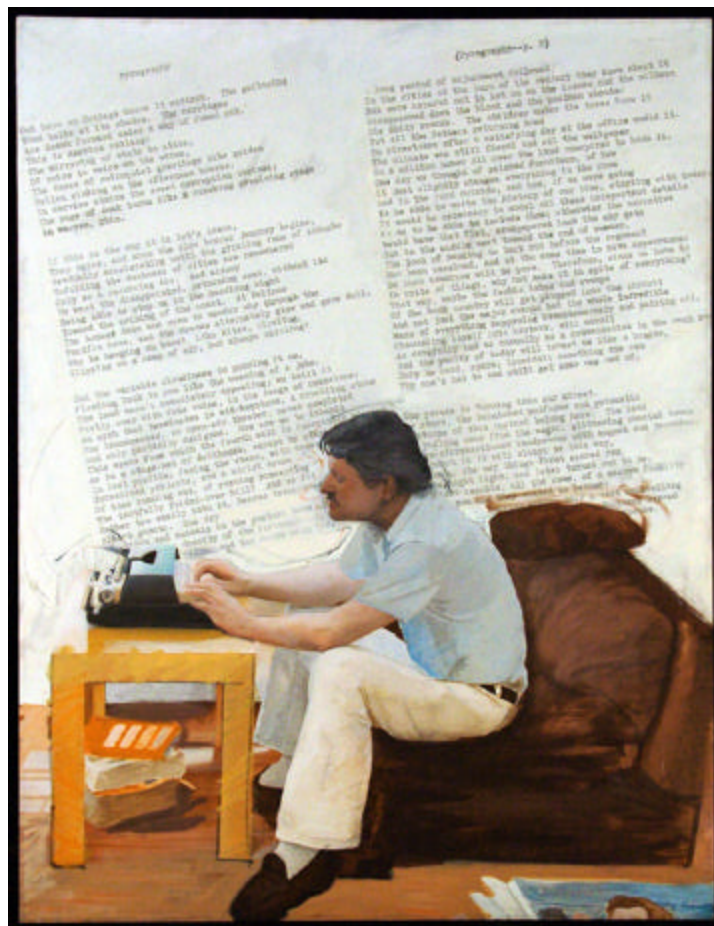
You are greeted at the door by the poets James Schuyler and John Ashbery, in Fairfield Porter's painting *Jimmy and John*. They sit in the same room but not quite together, gazing off with concentration as if posing for a portrait is one thing on their minds, but by no means the only thing. This is appropriate because Mr. Porter's cool, tan portraits, several more of which punctuate the walls, are less about the final effect achieved than the act of looking thoughtfully, and the show altogether is like passing through the middle of a large and urbane but suspended conversation

There are, of course, simple collaborations, like two American flags with poetry over them by Joe Brainard and Ted Berrigan, a large collage by Larry Rivers and Kenneth Koch, two paintings by Frank O'Hara and Grace Hartigan, and *Stones*, a set of 13 lithographs by Mr. Rivers and Mr. O'Hara. Joan Mitchell contributes two light, simple color-field drawings for poetry of Mr. Schuyler's. (A squarish yellow sun accompanies "Daylight": "And when I thought, / Our love might end" / the sun / went right on shining.") There are complex collaborations, like the charming, three-panel painting *Triptych: Madonnas and Poets*, by Red Grooms and Ann Waldman of Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams and Jack Kerouac with their poetry, or Rudy Burckhardt's photo of Messrs. Rivers and Koch with their poem-painting *New York, New York*. And there is the network of acquaintance among the pieces themselves: Jane Freilicher's lovely, deceptively simple portrait of a painter's table, with brushes, turpentine and tubes, and her equally sweet study of the smokestacks, purple sky and yellow windows of New York at night, hang across the room from Nell Blaine's vivid portrait of Ms. Freilicher herself reading. Mr. Koch, in Mr. Porter's portrait, is also reading, and both of them, you must suppose, are reading one of their colleagues' books published by Tibor de Nagy Gallery and displayed here under glass.

TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1950

The single most often recurring note in this conversation among friends is the poet Frank O'Hara. He appears in a good-natured ink drawing by Ms. Blaine, a plaster bust by Mr. Rivers, a short film directed by Richard O'Moore, a straightforward silver print by Fred W. McDarrah, striding purposefully out of the Museum of Modern Art, and, I felt almost sure, standing next to me in the elevator on the way out of the building, on his way to get a cup of coffee at a diner downstairs.



724 Fifth Avenue New York NY 10019

212 262 5050 212 262 1841 fax info@tibordeny.com tibordeny.com