

TIBOR ~~DE~~ NAGY

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David Ambrose

Rust Never Weeps

January 31 to March 7, 2026



David Ambrose
Trunk, 1987-88 oil on canvas

Tibor de Nagy Gallery is pleased to present *Rust Never Weeps*, an exhibition of paintings by **David Ambrose**. This is the gallery's first exhibition with the artist.

Focusing on a group of eight paintings made between 1987 and 1989, the exhibition is devoted to what the artist refers to as his Black Trunk Paintings. These works are meticulous depictions of a century-old trunk, a family heirloom, which was brought by the artist's grandparents on their voyage from Sicily to New Jersey, where they made their home. The trunk's nicks, creases, and rusted signs of age are carefully articulated in oil paint. This project is not primarily about a touchstone of an immigration story, it is also a way to mark the artistic legacy of his grandmother and mother, Ambrose's first artistic mentors. Ambrose's grandmother, an accomplished

dressmaker, had her sewing room and workshop, in the home. Ambrose considers this space where so much creativity happened, and where he spent many hours as a child, to be the first artist's studio he knew.

Later, as a young art history student at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania, he spent a semester in Perugia, Italy. He recently recollected its impact on him:

Some eight years after that fateful trip, I began a series of Black Trunk Paintings based on a rusted steamer trunk nestled in a corner of my studio above a shoe store in Bound Brook, New Jersey. How that trunk had followed me there escapes me, but its presence haunted my sketch books for over a year. What I had failed to realize was that black metal trunk was the very same trunk my grandparents had immigrated from Sicily with over a hundred years ago; an unintended homage to my grandparents through a connection to “their other vessel”; a container of their worldly possessions and above all, hope. (link to the full artist statement [here](#))

Also incorporated into the exhibition will be a selection of lace paintings from the late 1990s, made by applying oil paint over stretched lace, blending into the fabric. These works are inspired by and titled after European cathedrals and called *Skins* for their coloring. Many of the geometric patterns in lace mirror the rose-stained glass windows and other details of Gothic architecture and lace would have been one of the contents of the trunk. The two bodies of work, the trunk paintings and lace paintings, separated by nearly 10 years, both have a connection to Europe and the Old World, and a family legacy of creativity, as well as to the future of a young person and his journey to become an artist.

David Ambrose, born 1960, lives and works in Bound Brook, New Jersey. He received an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1988 and a BA in Fine Arts from Muhlenberg College, Allentown, in 1982. Additionally, Ambrose studied at the Università Italiana per Stranieri, Perugia, in 1980. Recent solo exhibitions include *Interior* at Gold/Scopophilia Gallery, Montclair, NJ in 2021, *Conversations with Yesterday*, at Martin Gallery, Baker Center for the Arts, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA (catalog published) in 2017 and *Repairing Beauty, A Mid-Career Retrospective*, New Jersey Museum, Trenton, NJ (catalog published). Recent group exhibitions include *Make Art Not War*, Pierogi, Brooklyn, NY and *Escape into Reality*, Kentler International Drawing Space, Brooklyn, NY in 2022.