

# *LOVE'S PROGRESS*



**PATRICK WEBB**



# LOVE'S PROGRESS

*paintings 1990-2013*

## Patrick Webb

September 3-28, 2013

*reception: Thursday, September 5, 6-8*



**THE PAINTING CENTER**

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212-343-1060 • [www.thepaintingcenter.org](http://www.thepaintingcenter.org)

Front cover: *Punchinello and the Law: Downtown Romance*, 60 by 30", o/c, 1999

Frontispiece: *Parade II: Punchinello In Love*, 48 by 20", o/c, 2002

Title Page: *Parade I: Dance*, 24 by 24", t/o/g/l/p, 1990

## *Love's Progress*

When the Painting Center membership suggested that I show again this fall since my 2012 exhibit was a shortened to 10 days by Sandy, I considered rehang-  
ing *On the Beach at Night*. But since some of the work is no longer available, I decided to take the opportunity and use this exhibition as a place to explore the context and development of my work over the last 20 plus years in relation to a single theme: *Love's Progress*. That the fall of DOMA occurred this June is kismet.

I have always admired Fragonard's cycle at the Frick Museum, *The Progress of Love*. It is one of the few cycles of paintings in the United States in a situation that corresponds to the artist's installation. When I view the paintings I often struggle to find a narrative sequence to the panels, since the title implies such an idea. Each time I find a thread, it is broken, restarted or undermined. Research reveals that four of the paintings were painted for Madame du Barry as a commission for a chamber in her summer home, that included a curved wall. When the commission was finished she rejected the paintings, although there is some evidence that she paid for them nonetheless. It seems her refusal had more to do with changes in fashion to neo-classicism, as exemplified by the Vein paintings that replaced Fragonard's, rather than any particular disappointment in the commission. Fragonard then installed the paintings in his cousin Maubert's house but because of the new location and configuration of the room added 10 both large and small panels. As this is the version of the installation at the Frick, hence the narrative confusion. Much has been written by art historians trying to discern the order of the original cycle of four panels; their final installation has not been as fully explored.

I like this story since it corresponds in many ways to how I work on themes and series. The paintings start with an idea that gets modified by circumstance and interest. The narrative at times emerges and clearly propels decisions. At other times an obfuscation occurs necessitated by practical and expressive considerations. Eighteenth-century art has always interested me with its frank representations of both thwarted and fulfilled desire, coupled with a gentle sense of irony and even delight in the humorous and tragic. In my opinion there are few artistic accomplishments equal to these Fragonard paintings, GD Tiepolo's cycle of Pulcinella Drawings and the Mozart/Da Ponte Operas. Inspired by these artists, the theme I have chosen to follow in selecting and installing this show is that of love. This exhibition also aims to contextualize some of my ideas about pictures, form, meaning and painting.



*Lamenting Punch/By His Bed*, 18 by 36", t/o/gl/p, 1993

My representation of *Love's Progress* differs significantly from that of Fragonard's. While courtship remains central to the experience in both his and my paintings, PUNCHINELLO's courtship occurs within the context of modern society, and is essentially non-normative. The strictures and structures of eighteenth-century culture are absent. My exploration of contemporary experience frankly foregrounds sexual attraction and desire, often in relation to the law, across a broad societal context.

The paintings I have selected begin with PUNCH's death and then follow his resurrection. It is certainly a story I did not expect to tell since at the time I began this series, PUNCHINELLO's death not only represented that of CHRIS my boyfriend of 14 years but also presaged my own. The latter did not happen. There are parades, street scenes, dinners, gyms, lockers, showers and beaches—themes that keep appearing and reappearing in my work. I have selected mostly a single representative from each series. Like the Fragonard cycle these paintings have a specific narrative genesis within each painting as well as the entire installation but they are narratives that have evolved both by intention and by chance. This story is part mine, part others' and part the movement of larger cultural and societal forces. What I hope comes through is my love for and fascination with painting as a form, and how it can represent and explore the world I know.



*Punchinello Works Out:*

*Locker Look*

48 by 24", o/c

1999

opposite:

*Punchinello Works Out:*

*Shower I*

40 by 20", o/c

1998





*Punchinello Works Out: Succor III*, 32 by 25", o/c, 1998





*Gym II: Carry*, 52 by 36", o/c, 2001



*Punchinello's City: Hunt*  
48 by 16", o/c  
2002



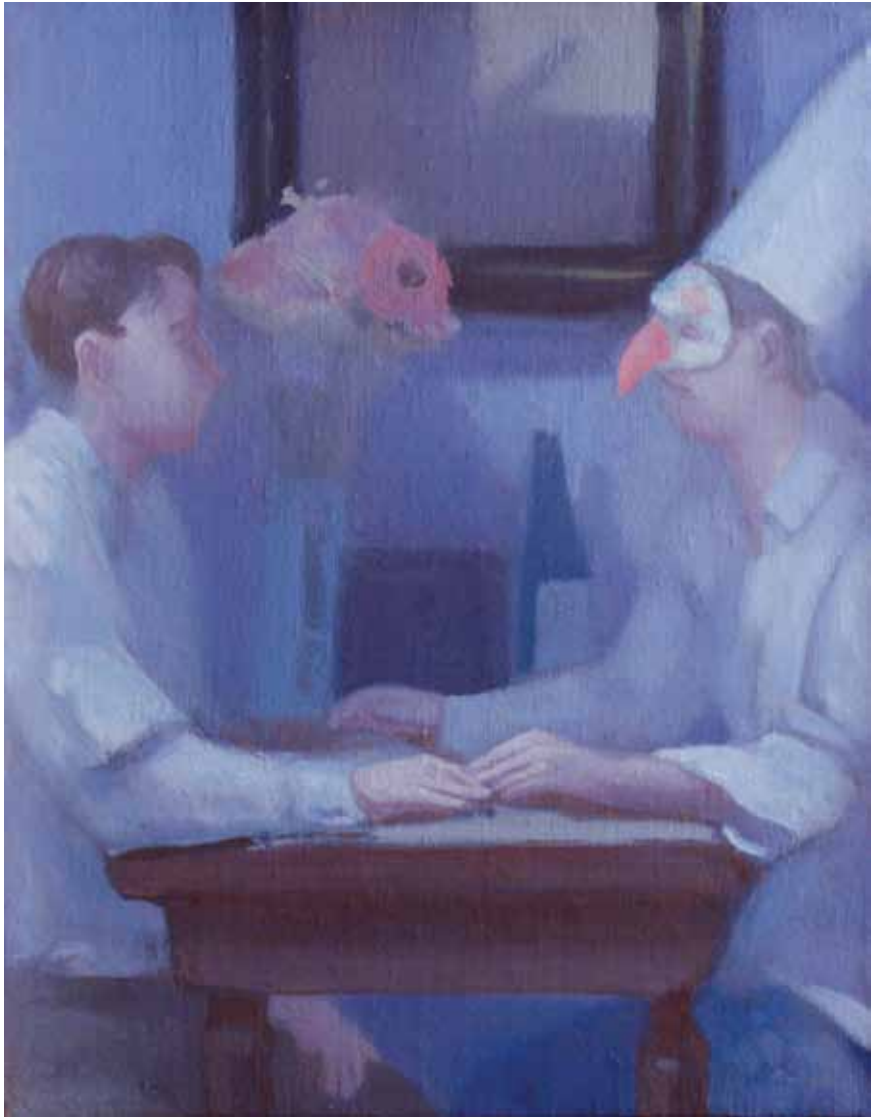
*Cheat: Cheating Val, 32 by 24," o/c, 2006*



*Home II: Toast, 36 X 32", o/c, 2005*



*Married Life: Roast Beef*, 34 by 32", o/c, 2011



*Home II: The Sword of Damocles, 14 by 11", o/c, 2008,*



*Gym III: Love*, 60 by 48", o/c, 2010







*On the Beach At Night: Couples, 60", o/c, 2013*

opposite: *Punchinello's Burdens II: Surfing, 48 by 24", o/c, 2007*

## *Who is Punchinello?*

One of the long standing questions regarding my paintings is my insistence on the inclusion in my work of the strange clownish figure of Punchinello. Here I will try and explore some of what he means and why I choose to include him. My Punchinello is a cousin of that found in the Italian commedia dell'arte, yet with a difference. As Nancy Grimes writes in her essay for my first Punchinello show in 1993, "Webb's Punchinello is slimmer, without hump, driven by his sexual appetite and desire to participate." I first met Pulcinella in GD Tiepolo's frescos in the Ca' Rezzonico in Venice in 1989 and then later in his great series of drawings of Pulcinella. In these paintings and drawings Tiepolo explores the life of his figure. In the process, all the familiar trappings of the ordinary are explored, culminating in his death and resurrection—shifting that life from the ordinary to the extraordinary. What I share with Tiepolo is the belief that we are the heroes of our lives.

I found a mask in a Venetian shop that year, 1989, with a red nose like Tiepolo's Pulcinella but also the diamond pattern I associated with Harlequin. I was immediately attracted to both the Tiepolo Pulcinella and this carnivalesque mask. I later came to understand that this mask was not the contemporary Pulcinella who has a black bulbous nose and buffoon character, but rather my mask is similar to the mask of Il Capitano, a figure of power and even brutishness in the commedia dell'arte improvisational stories. I like this fusing of the outsidership of the traditional Pulcinella character with the force of Il Capitano. Thus my Punchinello is a distant cousin to the Italian Pulcinella reformed for my own expressive needs. He offers me a surrogate—both I and not I, both other and Other—whose experiences double mine, both real and imagined. By giving me a malleable but repeatable figure these stories unconceal the movement into being. There is an uncanniness that emerges with his presence in these scenes that corresponds to my own sense of the strangeness of psychic life.

For me the question of meaning in painting remains a central and fascinating exploration. My continued use of the Punchinello figure underscores my conviction that the meaning of a painting is the intersection of the form of painting, with its balance between void/space, volume/form and shape/surface, and how such pictorial dynamics impact and represent subject matter. The subject must be a reason, not an excuse for making the painting. Braque said the rule corrects the emotion; for me the emotion corrects the rule. The artwork is made in the now that is immediately in history while it also modifies the past and points to a future. The liberation of the post-modern period is that I can choose my own references to explore the experience of identity and the drives within the context of those choices. The danger for the post-modern painter is a failure to synthesize and incorporate these elements into a world that can be experienced, believed in and moved by.

Patrick Webb, July, 2013



*Punchinello's Burdens I: Kiss, 24X12, o/c, 2004*



*Triumph of Punchinello : Union, 48 by 32", o/c, 2005*

## PATRICK WEBB patrick-webb.com

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *LOVE'S PROGRESS: 1990-2013*, The Painting Center , NYC , NY  
2012 *ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT*, The Painting Center , NYC , NY  
2012 *PAINTINGS*, Rice Polack Gallery, Provincetown, MA  
2011 *NIGHT & DAY*, Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA  
2010 *PUNCHINELLO AS OTHER*, The Painting Center, NYC, NY  
2008 *25 YEARS OF WORK*, Provincetown Art Museum,  
2007 *PROVINCETOWN-NEW YORK*, Julie Heller Gallery  
2005 *CHEAT*, Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA  
2003 *HOME*, Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, MA  
2002 *PUNCHINELLO'S CITY*, CJG Projects, NYC, NY  
2001 *PUNCHINELLO YOUNG* , Julie Heller Gallery,  
1999 *IN NEW YORK WITH PUNCHINELLO*, Erector Square Gallery,  
New Haven, CT  
1999 *PUNCHINELLO UNDRESSED*, Julie Heller Gallery,  
1998 *PUNCHINELLO WORKS OUT (PWO)*. Cortland Jessup Gallery, NYC  
1996 *PUNCHINELLO GOES WEST*, Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown,  
1995 *PUNCHINELLO IN AMERICA*, 55 Mercer Gallery , NYC, NY  
1993 *PUNCHINELLO PAINTINGS*, Amos Eno Gallery, NYC, NY  
1990 Forum Gallery, Minneapolis, MN  
1988 Capricorn Galleries, Bethesda, MD  
1987&5 Alpha gallery, Boston, MA

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 *RECENT ACQUISITIONS*, Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, NYC  
2013 *AMERICAN NOIR; INTO A DARK PAST*, curator Robert Atkins,  
Visual AIDS, Web Gallery  
2012 *NO WASTED WORDS; NO ILLUSIONS*, curator Ann Northrop, Visual AIDS  
2011 *THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES*, curator Patrick Webb, The Painting Center  
2008 *CARBONE. GRIMES & WEBB*, The Painting Center, NYC, NY  
2005 *MALE DESIRE*, curator Jonathan Weinberg, Mary Ryan Gallery, NYC, NY  
2005 *CROSSING DISCIPLINES*, curator Donna Moran, Schaffler Gal., PRATT Inst.  
2005 *THE BODY AND ITS DANGERS*, curator Patrick Webb, The Painting Ctr  
2004 *NEO QUEER*, CoCA, Seattle, WA  
2001 *RITUAL*, DAM, Detroit , MI  
2001 *SELF INTEREST: AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND MYTH IN RECENT FIGURATIVE  
ART*, curator Nancy Grimes, RC FINE ARTS, Maplewood, NJ  
1998 *THE 173rd ANNUAL EXHIBITION*, National Academy Of Design, NYC, NY  
1998 *EMBODIED FICTIONS*, Saint Mary's College, Park Hall, MD  
1997 *PROVINCETOWN IN HUDSON*, Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, NY  
1995 *THE COMMON MYTH: ICON AND SYMBOL IN ART TODAY*,  
curator Ludwig Datone', Park Avenue Atrium, NYC, NY  
1993 *MEMENTO MORI: REMEMBERING IN THE AGE OF AIDS*, Open Space  
Gallery, Allentown, PA  
1991 *FIGURING IT OUT*, curator Nancy Grimes, Daniel Quinn Gal, LIC, NY  
1990 *SELECTIONS*, curator Connie Butler, 55 Mercer St., NYC, NY  
1990 *POSITIVE ACTIONS: VISUAL AIDS*, Clocktower Gallery, Longwood Gallery,  
D.C. 37 Gallery, New York, NY  
1988-90 *ART AND THE LAW*; West Co., multiple venues,  
1987 "...the Subject is AIDS", Nexus Art Center, Atlanta, GA(cat)  
1987 "CURATOR'S CHOICE", curator Bill Arning, BWAC, Bklyn, NY

## SELECTED PUBLIC & CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

FRED ALGER & CO., New York, NY  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, Boston, MA  
GLICKENHAUS & CO., New York, NY  
HORTON & CALAMIFDE, New York, NY  
INTERNEURON INC., Boston, MA  
JANE VOORHEES ZIMMERLI ART MUSEUM, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, New Brunswick  
OTIS ELEVATOR, New York, NY  
PIER-FINE ASSOCIATES, New York, NY  
PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION & MUSEUM, Provincetown, MA  
QUEENSBORO COLLEGE MUSEUM, CUNY, Queens, NY  
ROSE ART MUSEUM , Brandeis University, Waltham, MA  
MICHELLE ROSENFELD, INC., FINE ARTS, Ramsey, NJ  
SHARF MARKETING GROUP, New York & Boston  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-OSHKOSH, Oshkosh, WI

## PARTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

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New York One interview “Sword of Damocles”, 11/29/11  
“ Punchinello Hits the Gym”, David Cohen, NY Sun, 9/24/10  
“Patrick Webb: Punchinello as Other and Caren Canier“, John Goodrich, City Arts, 9/14/10  
“ Stripped” & “Completely Stripped”, Bruno Gmunder Publication, 7/ 09  
“David Carbone, Nancy Grimes & Patrick Webb”, Alex Taylor, Art News , 1/09  
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“ The Body and Its Dangers”, Robert Ayers, Art News, summer 2005  
“ Male Desire: The Homoerotic in American Art”, Jonathan Weinberg, Abrams 2005  
“Webb Takes an Outsider’s Look”, Deborah Minsky, Provincetown Banner, 7/17/03  
Cover, reproductions and introduction, The Georgia Review, summer 2002  
“Punchinello Works Out”, Jonathan Weinberg, catalog essay, 5/98  
Listings, New Yorker Magazine, April 6, 1998  
“Provincetown On Hudson”, Ned Depew, Provincetown Arts, 1997-8  
“A Punchinello Page” (illustration) ; College Art Association) Journal , winter 1996-7  
“Patrick Webb’s Adventures With Punchinello”, Stephen Greco, POZ, Dec 96/January 97  
“Portrait of an Artist”, Lynn Stanley, Provincetown Magazine, 8/22/96  
“Punchinello Goes West”, Mark Doty, catalog essay, 8/96  
“A Life Reinvented: The Paintings of Patrick Webb”, Laurie Fitzpatrick, A & U/196  
“Punchinello In America”, Laurie Fitzpatrick, Art & Understanding, 10/95  
“Eros and Angst”, Phillip Gambone, Bay Windows, 7/29/93  
“Punchinello Paintings, by Patrick Webb”, Nancy Grimes, catalog essay, 12/92  
“Stonewalling”, Thomas J. Jackson, New York Native, 2/93, 6/95  
“Finding Those Who Fall Before”, Gambone , Bay Windows, 8/20/92  
“Real Implications”, Mary Verrill, New North Artscape, 2/90  
“Coat of Many Colors”, Mary Abbe, Star Tribune, Minneapolis., MN, 1/25/90  
“...the subject is AIDS”, Art South, 5/89  
“Alone and Embattled”, Walter Wadas, Bay Windows, Boston , MA 12/86  
“Painterly Realists”, St. Louis Courier, St. Louis, MO, 86  
“Rhythms of New York and Promising Young Talent”, C. Temin, Boston Globe, 6/23/83



*Night Moves II*, 24", o/c, 2013  
Back Cover: *June 26, 2013, #14*, 36 by 24", o/p, 2013

