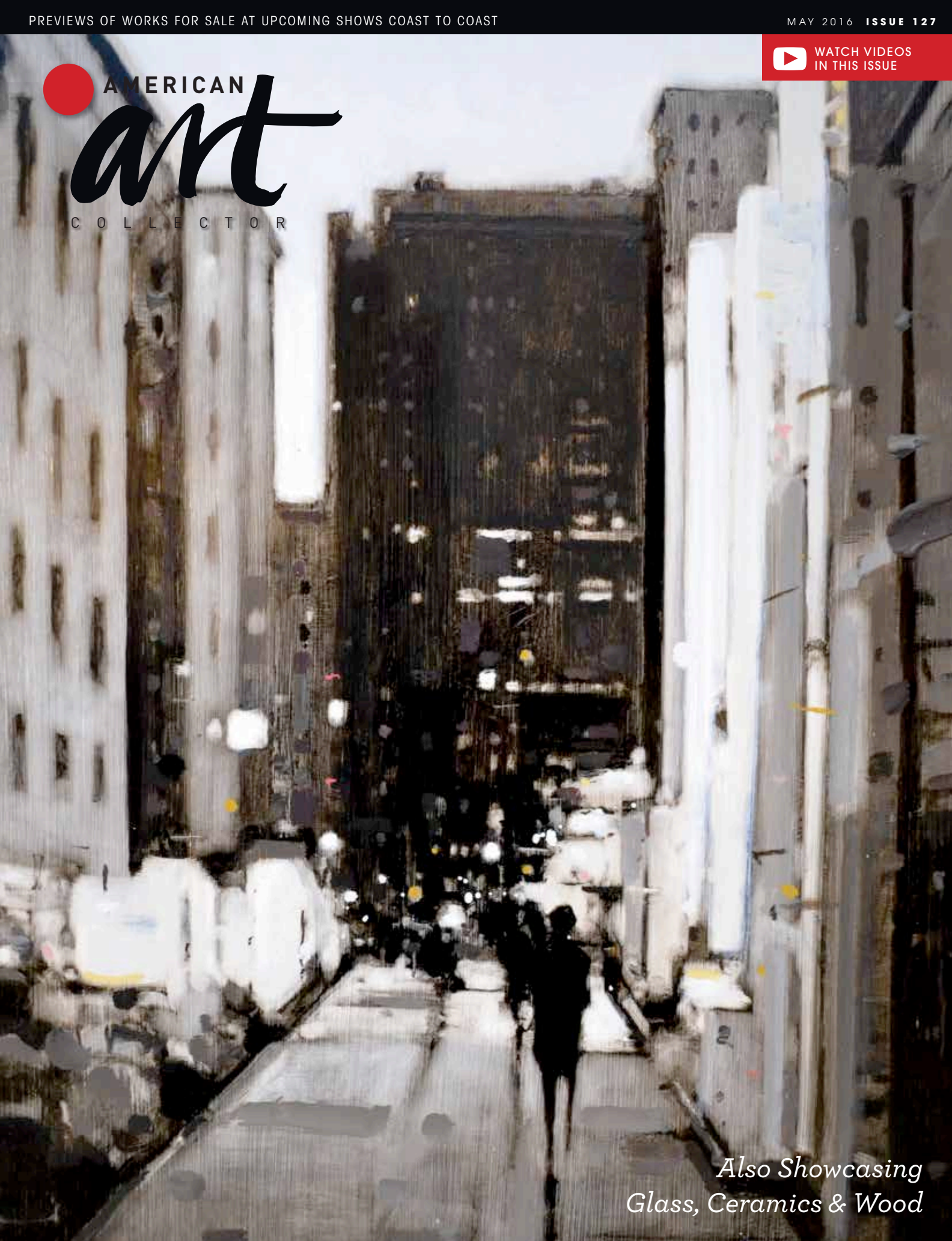


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GEOFFREY JOHNSON

# Architecture's boundaries

**G**eoffrey Johnson's high-contrast city scenes evoke a feeling of smallness within the immensity of a sprawling metropolis. His buildings tower over the

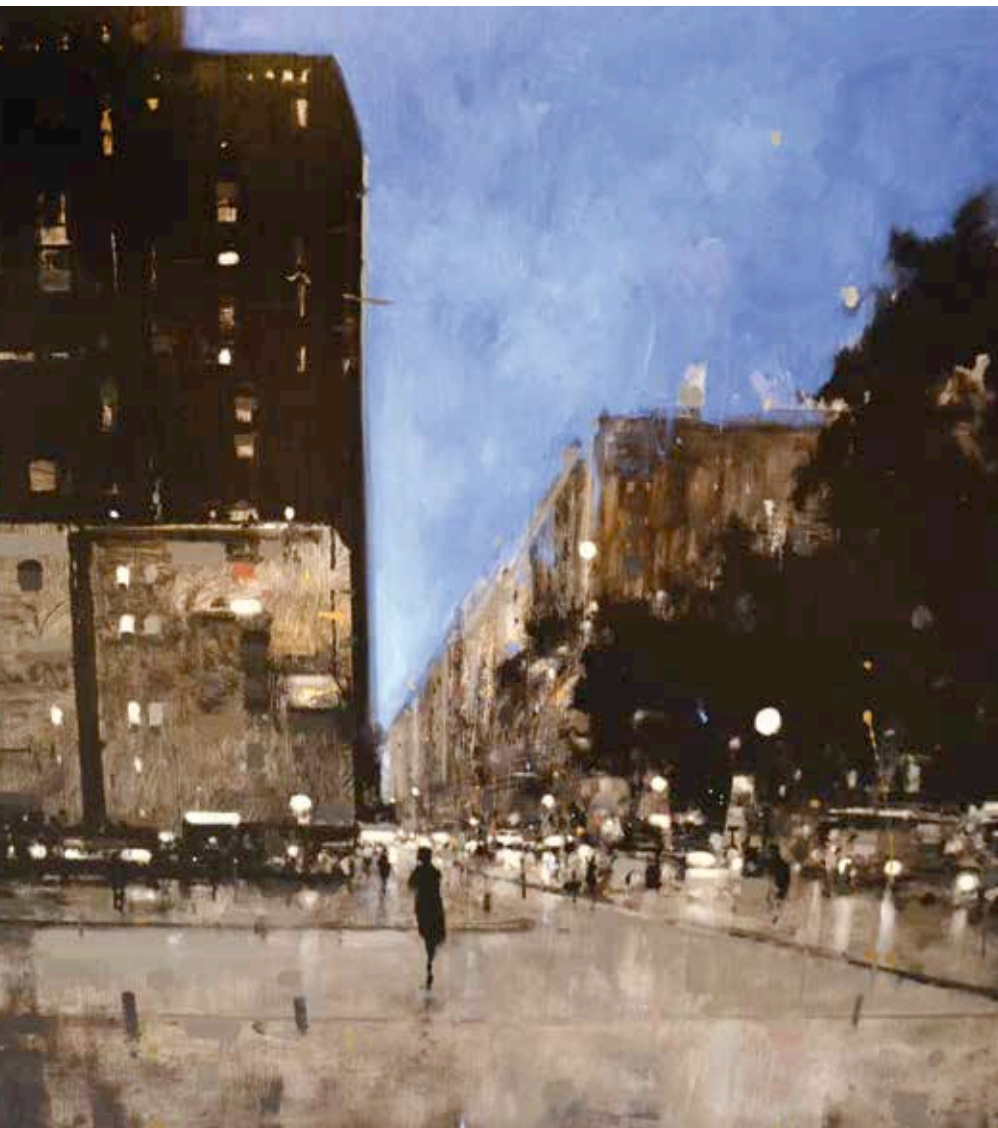
figures, their minimalist silhouettes dwarfed by the scale of the concrete-steel behemoths striding above them. New York City, depicted here in Johnson's new works, has

never felt so big and small at the same time.

"My own relationship with New York City began as a child. My uncle lived there most of my life, and I started visiting at an early age. The city immediately made a profound impression on me; I found it magical. It is a unique place in itself. Having been to major cities all over the world, there is only one New York," Johnson says. "I studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia, my first experience living in a large city. I spent many weekends in NYC taking the train from Philly. I've always loved architecture. There are so many aspects that make painting a city attractive to me. Clear lines and boundaries that architecture creates, the sight of people interacting in city spaces, and the way light varies from shadows to streams."

Johnson's new cityscapes will be in a show opening May 20 at Principle Gallery in Alexandria, Virginia. Gallery director Clint Mansell says the show will highlight the artist's use of color and space within the city environment. "Geoffrey Johnson's aesthetic and subject matter are perfectly married; ethereal figures seemingly float through his impressionistic cities," Mansell says. "Whether in stark black and white or with splashes of color, Johnson's high-contrast compositions captivate the masses."

Works in the show include *Park in Mid-winter*, its gray tones sandwiched between the white sky in the background and a black cluster of vegetation in the immediate foreground, and *Study Fifth Avenue Evening*, its dense blackness cascading down from the sky onto the window-dotted buildings in Midtown Manhattan as a lone figure and various streetlights mark the city's floor. These pieces, as well as *Study Park Avenue*, are almost entirely without color. "My use of color in the past few years has been solely a matter of preference, nothing more. I incorporate a color that I like in the work, or [when I] pass a red building that I am



1  
*Study for Blue Sky*,  
oil on panel, 32 x 30"

2  
*Park in Mid-winter*,  
oil on panel, 36 x 24"

3  
*Study Park Avenue*,  
oil on panel, 27 x 18"

4  
*Study Fifth Avenue Evening*,  
oil on panel, 27 x 18"



2



3

drawn to and try and paint it," he says. "As far as city scenes, the limited palette is really just how I see the city. I don't see it in color for the most part. Color can be secondary."

Johnson works on his pieces from his home studio above a garage that was designed by his wife, an architect. "It is, without question, the most pleasant space I ever worked in. There is much natural light,



4

and it is a good size. I once thought I needed a ton of space but came to realize, before we started construction, that I didn't," he says. "The studio space is the circumstance that allows me to be most creative. Because most of my work comes from my head, my memory, not looking at a particular subject like landscape painting or painting plein air. It is a sanctuary where I can gather my

thoughts on places I've visited and things that are inspiring at the time."

He adds, "I would say painting is more of a compulsion for me than enjoyment. Not that I don't enjoy it, I just feel compelled. I can't imagine not painting. Painting is a wonderful gift, and I'm thankful that I can do it and have been able to make a living doing it." ●