

## BEN ARONSON THE FIGURE IN CONTEXT

November 6 – December 6, 2008

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### Gallery hours:

Tues-Fri: 10-6

Sat: 10-5



*Café Le Moderne* 2008, oil on panel, 24 x 24 inches



*The Recollection* 2008, oil on panel, 41 x 35 inches

Jenkins Johnson Gallery is pleased to announce Ben Aronson's "The Figure in Context", a new series of oil paintings and works on paper. The exhibition opens with a reception for the artist on Thursday, November 6, 5:30 - 7:30pm through December 6, 2008.

Ben Aronson, known for transcending our visual experience of the painted urban landscape, has shifted his focus from the urban scene at large to the figures that inhabit it in this new series. Aronson says that his depictions of the human form, after mainly focusing on cityscapes and the still-life, is like "adding new lyrics to his work." It's a new element in Aronson's long dialogue of portraying the world around us; beautifully documenting and analyzing the world in which we live and the people who live in it.

The dichotomy of Aronson's approach is both abstract and representational. His painterly style is derived from several schools of painting; he harmoniously blends the striking compositions of Bay Area Figurative school, the bold, gestured mark making of abstract expressionism and a dramatic chiaroscuro of the Spanish Baroque. His works are often compared to the masters of these different schools of painting, as Lea Feinstein, writer for *ARTnews* commented in her 2007 review of Aronson's solo exhibition at Jenkins Johnson Gallery, "Aronson's...drawings are warmly personal, tightly cropped compositions in black, white, and gray, worthy cousins to Diebenkorn's splendid figure drawings."

A principal piece in the exhibition, "The Recollection", is painted with bravura strokes of thick paint that create an extremely accurate portrayal of a female subject. She sits in a café, sipping a cup of coffee, illuminated by the sun breaking through the window. An airy and ephemeral depiction of a passing moment in our everyday lives. "The Recollection" clearly exemplifies how Aronson's use of light is consistently a main theme in his work and what seems to draw him to his subjects; whether it's the figure, a cityscape, or still life his use of light commands the viewer's attention. As art critic and former Director of the Arnot Art Museum, John O'hern wrote, "Ben Aronson paints the extraordinary effects of light." His rendering of the lights and shadows gives his work a poetic force.

Ben Aronson surprises and titillates in this new series whilst staying true to his expressive, sensual method of painting and depictions of his subjects. His poetic way of seeing the world and wonderful power of suggesting a glimmer of light in figures and landscapes, tells a simple and intimate story of otherwise seen as banal, everyday moments. Thrusting the figure into the forefront of his work, he demonstrates an authoritative prowess and a straightforward and uncompromising vision.

Aronson is a member of the highly acclaimed National Academy, along side Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning and his mentor, Philip Guston. Awards include the National Academy of Arts and Letters in 2006, as well as the Pleissner Memorial Award for Painting at the National Academy of Design in 1992. Jenkins Johnson Gallery has represented him since 2001, and his work has been included in the permanent collections of many major corporations and museums, such as: Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH, De Young Museum, San Francisco, the Denver Museum of Contemporary Art, Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, MI, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The National Academy Museum, NY, New Orleans Museum of Art, and the Suzhou Museum in Jiansu Province, China. Aronson's work has been reviewed by *ARTnews*, *The ARTNEWSLETTER*, *the Boston Globe*, *The New York Observer* and *The New York Sun*. He holds a MFA and BFA in painting from Boston University. Ben Aronson lives and works in Massachusetts.