

COVER

The Underground National

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NORM MAGNUSSON

BRIDGEWATER LUSTBERG GALLERY

"In nature we find ourselves."

Thoreau, *Bestiary*

Beyond a vision inspired by nature, Magnusson leaves Thoreau in the dust of acute observation and turns his sight towards the fertile imaginings of Aesop, Rousseau, and folk narratives.

Magnusson's paintings have plots that range from hilarious to sublime. *Trick Hare* jumps through flaming hoops. *Leek Eel* provides its own seasoning with a metaphorical twist. Biblical paraphrases are in *Creation Story* in which the snakes form a double helix being borne from the belly of the earth, and humorous twists on both word and image.

Beauty is a self-proclaimed critical element in this work and every button is pushed to play on the softer emotional chords eschewed by much contemporary art. Coupling this aesthetic approach with a fervent desire for the narrative, puts Magnusson well outside

the parameters of contemporary mainstream art.

His technique, however, is far from naive. His well-informed

approach to painting is evident in his use of light as a polarized yet static element that bestows an inner glow. Traces appear to be self-lit in these landscapes.

The stylized renderings bring to mind American regionalists Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton, but the decorative element goes further, incorporating even the frames as an extension of the imagery. Birch bark, barn planks, materials natural to the environment become framing devices for the narrative.

Kay Kenny



Norm Magnusson