

Adriano Farinella, Easton Irregular Art Profile, October 2013

Long before human beings gazed at luminous computer and TV screens, we marveled over dramatically illuminated sunsets, limpid distances, and rainbows anchored in fog. Lehigh Valley artist Adriano Farinella makes cloud and landscape paintings that resemble work by the Romantic 19th century English painters Joseph M. W. Turner, John Constable, William Blake and their American counterparts, the Hudson River School painters Thomas Cole, Frederick Church and Albert Bierstadt; though, Adriano may be closest in spirit to the German Caspar David Friedrich, who edited and rearranged observed landscape forms to conform to an internal, personal vision.

Adriano is a modern-day Luminist, the subset category of the Hudson River School that favors a bird's-eye perspective, smoothly painted surface and natural but extreme and sometimes strange light effects. Working also as a reductivist, he presents the land as a thin, nearly bare slice of texture augmenting the impact of the sky. Where the Luminists expressed emotional attachment to untouched nature, patriotism and religion, Farinella is seeking to express non-attachment, invite meditation, openness and an "emptied out" sense of exaltation. Adriano's paintings approach Mark Rothko's spiritual, abstract alchemy of space, color and air; yet to his own benefit, Farinella keeps one foot in image-making. We sense we're in a "real" space, one that doesn't exist except in his mind; but, it's his vision that connects us to the ineffable and a viewer necessarily must choose to trust it.

Adriano's work seats his audience high in the air above vague, limitless depths. He associates this borderless space with the "in between" dreamy feeling that accompanies waking up in the morning or falling to sleep at night; it's relaxing even if the presence of clouds suggest turbulence or imminent storm. Studying clouds and observing light effects on a daily basis, Adriano paints from memory while also allowing the vicissitudes of oil paint to guide him. The work synthesizes his response to the obscure, vast, calming and frightening aspects of nature with his appreciation for the beauty of oil paint and what it can accomplish. His cloud renderings are detailed studies of how to use color to create volume without drawing as much as they are portraits of specific but invented atmospheric effects. Currently, Farinella works out of a studio in the Karl Stirner Arts Building in Easton and teaches drawing, figure drawing and painting at the Baum School in Allentown. He'll be participating in the *Cocktails and Collecting* Fundraiser at the Allentown Museum in November and he recently participated in *Art-in-Place* in Bethlehem.

As I look at the work, I keep returning to how expressive the clouds seem to be: "Grace XXXVIII" seems to be hiding behind paw-like hands;

"Bardo II" contains two fists about to punch; a central figure levitates in "Guardian BC HR," and "Guardian III" dissolves into decentralized gestures. His paintings mimic the way that clouds gather into shapes: the color rises, billows and drifts into comic or tragic positions, and head and arm-like shapes remain suggestive, though always just one click shy of declaring the human form. Title's of Farinella's recent solo shows: *The Way Home* at the Rodale Gallery at the Baum School and *Bardo* at the Reed Art Gallery at the University of Maine at Presque Isle connect searching and the transitory. Adriano was the Featured Artist at the Banana Factory in 2009 and exhibited at the NCCC Fowler Center in 2010, both in Bethlehem. He received his BFA from Kutztown University in 1998 in Painting, Drawing and Art History and studied Plein-Air painting in Italy with Matthew Daub in 1997 and 1998.

Adriano's intentionally ambiguous paintings challenge the need to "see things clearly" and "plan ahead." Permanent decisions about what is real and what is an illusion are not possible in such a clearly wrought void.