

Jackie Lima, Easton Irregular, April 2013

Jackie Lima is a prominent Easton painter. She teaches and curates exhibits at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey, and usually in February and August she invites international and New York-based artists to show in her gallery here in town. When I visit her studio, I am immediately drawn to her sphere paintings for two reasons: (1) because I paint on flat surfaces and it boggles my mind to even contemplate working on a ball; and (2) because Jackie seems intuitively to understand geometry, math, and theories of higher dimensions--ideas that I grasp only superficially. Why does she paint on spheres? She describes her experience of being in the world as being a "bubble" she carries everywhere she goes. "I paint on a sphere," she explains, "because it is accurate, there are no distortions--all measurable space fits in an interconnected web. When you view this work you enter my body/eyes and see what I see. The viewer is having a 4th dimension experience; height, width and depth plus time. Einstein said the 4th dimension is time, which [in this case] is the time needed to move around the work . . . The sphere is an encapsulation of the 3-D space that I see while turning 360 degrees in one spot. I am taking all that information that is 360 degrees around me and turning it inside out and making it into an object." She is unique among painters in her ability to take in sculptural information and render so many details in the round.

"Tinker Street, Woodstock" is a sunny day jam packed with information: Jackie's friends, passersby, pets, kids, storefronts, the town bridge, the creek, even another artist recording the scene with a video camera--all are carefully puzzled together. Jackie sets up outside like any other plein air painter with her plastic sphere and paints. Having divided off sections of the sphere with longitudinal and latitudinal lines, Jackie tweaks the latitudinal view so that the equator line falls at the level of her heart, not at the level of her eyes. She records exactly what she sees, distorting the figures, buildings and the pattern of overlapping trees so that the perspective is unified and conforms with the curve of the sphere--not an easy task. Space compresses radically at the north and south poles of her sphere, and Jackie must knit these zones together, losing information, even though she works in a Modern Realist style. Compare her to another Modern Realist, Philip Pearlstein and his foreshortened lounging nudes: he copies every fold of a blanket or every spoke of a rocking chair while relishing the distorted perspective; Jackie, on the other hand, would need to edit out

spokes, folds, or even whole figures in order to retain structure and clarity. I consider her a Fabulist, because, more than most, she needs to lie to tell the truth *in four dimensions*.

Occasionally, she works on flat surfaces, and must transform her bubble-shaped vision. She explains this process to be like flattening out a quartered orange peel and calls it "tesselating," which is related to tessera, the little blocks of stone or glass used to make mosaics. This reminds me that her work has its root in the Renaissance, specifically Paolo Uccello, who was obsessed with perspective, foreshortening, and a mathematical form called torus (a doughnut shape). Today, artists Clive Head and Rackstraw Downes work with warped realistic perspective, and Dick Termes works on spheres but doesn't render the world as distinctly as Lima does. For example, "High Tea," which will be included in Santa Bannon's show at the Banana Factory opening the first week in April, celebrates Jackie and her friends having tea in her dining room. You might recognize Jackie along with Kathy Parker, Maureen Melick and Joan Stephenson. A diptych, the painting presents two views of the party broken by longitudinal lines in a cubist fashion, and because Lima tirelessly reproduces every section, she's rewarded with unexpected rhythms throughout the floor and ceiling areas. Its bright, playful colors, its squares and rectangles colliding so energetically, I can't imagine Jackie Lima ever running out of interesting ways to dismantle and reconstruct her brimming, bubble world.