



DAVID LIGARE

[FORMS OF INFLUENCE]

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Study for Landscape with a Specific View, 1987, Oil on Canvas, 11 x 16 in

I have spent the past forty-three years trying to look beyond or work outside the conventions of Contemporary art. This is not as a naïve criticism of the very real discoveries and innovations of Modernism but is an attempt to understand and then reintroduce the perspective of history back into the culture of today. I have made a particular study of Greco-Roman Classicism in its original forms and then how it has appeared and reappeared for over two and one-half millennia. My attempt uses this eternal phenomena which marries the Socratic and Aristotlian desire for knowledge with the transcendent pleasure of nature bathed in beautiful light. Rather than being inflexibly attached to the present day, I have tried to allow myself to flow freely back through history and choose useful elements and symbols as inspiration and as emblems of a renewed and even radical new "side culture." This exhibition presents a look at some of the forms of influence that have informed my work.

In 1988 I made a large painting of a rock arch entitled, *Landscape with a Specific View*, (*Veritas, Utilitas, Venustas*), (Truth, Usefulness and Beauty). This painting was influenced

by rock arches in the backgrounds of many Renaissance paintings and represents the idea of whole systems that are described by three basic criteria such as the above. Since that time, I have painted numerous rock arch images, all symbolizing the idea of wholeness and that historic concepts possess valuable insights into modern problems such as the need for more humanistic thought.

The central painting in this exhibition, *Magna Fide*, (The Great Belief), evolved from other historical sources centered on my experiences in Italy, especially Florence, over the past fifty years. In this work, like most of my large paintings, numerous studies have helped me to develop the final composition.

While staying on the Tuscan Coast in 2014 I made a small drawing of an invented rock formation containing a shrine set in a quiet sea and sheltered by an Italian pine. My shrine consisted of a plinth with a fire and a stone sphere. The idea was to honor the Florentine architect, artist and writer, Leon Battista Alberti, (1404-1472). In 1997 I had painted a large still life with a white sphere and the inscription,

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Our eyes strengthened and refreshed by our contemplation of the Greeks, let us look at the highest spheres of the world around us...

Friedrich Nietzsche, 1871

Verum Philosophium, or, True Philosophy. In his book, *De Re Aedificatoria*, Alberti wrote that, "Nature herself enjoys the round form above all others as is proven by her own creations such as the globe..." In addition, there is nothing that you can add to or take away from a sphere that would make it more perfect. The resultant painting, *Magna Fide*, was further influenced by Arnold Bocklin's *Isle of the Dead*, the ultimate 19th century enigmatic work painted in Florence in 1880.

The enigma suggests that there are things we cannot know, the nonsense of dreams and irrational behavior. For me the enigma can also heighten an idea or an image of rational meaning with a golden atmosphere of tenuous beauty. I have long used the balance between opposing elements in my paintings, what Nietzsche called the "primal unity." In this

case it is the irrationality of the enigma paired with the rationality of humanistic thought. And speaking to this duality, in describing Bocklin's influence on the metaphysical painter, Giorgio DeChirico, historian, Paolo Baldacci wrote that rather than seeing him as an outdated academic as many did in the early 20th century, "DeChirico saw Bocklin as the prophet of a new vision capable of reconciling myth and contemporaneity by way of a transcendent annulment of time and history."

Continuing with the idea of the significance of the sphere, in 2023 I painted an homage to the brilliant Greek mathematician, physicist, engineer, and inventor, Archimedes of Syracuse, Sicily, (c. 287 – c. 212 BC) whose tomb reportedly consisted of a sphere, a cylinder and a square.



The Tomb of Archimedes, 2022, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 40 in



Arch with Setting Sun, 2022, Oil on Canvas, 60 x 80 in

I, therefore, propose in my paintings; inspired by the Florence of deep humanistic thought and embrace of the wisdom of the past, that there are new insights to be found in the example of the ancients and in the bravely active and hugely inventive minds of the past. I hope and believe that people everywhere can follow the examples of Archimedes, Alberti, Bocklin, DeChirico and so many others to build and invent the future as a place of substance, rationality, and poetry, all wrapped in the golden beauty of a powerful and embracing light.

(cover) *Magna Fide (The Great Belief)*, 2014
Oil on Canvas, 60 x 80 in
Collection of the Monterey Museum of Art


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