

Anthony Dubovsky
Curated by Christopher Brown

December 8, 2005 – January 28, 2006
(Opening Reception: Thursday, December 8, 6-8pm)

“these paintings make the ordinary seem like an eyeful...
There is a beauty of unexpected particularity: of enormous
scales and small size, of temperatures and times, and the
gestures that surpass detail...”
—Christopher Brown

Anthony Dubovsky’s paintings elegantly and intelligently cross the boundaries between figurative, landscape, and abstract painting. His luminous, dreamlike imagery and use of subtle tonality pays homage to the tradition in painting which embraces imaginative or poetic principles, as a means of conveying the narrative richness of personal expression. Rendered on highly tactile surfaces, many of Dubovsky’s images appear in soft focus, compelling the viewer to get as close up to the painting as possible, in order to truly appreciate the complex brushwork and treatment of surface. His work, referenced by titles replete with a wide variety of artistic, cultural, literary, historical annotations, and languages, reveal the character of the artist and the times and places in which he has lived.

The exhibition at CUE represents a ten-year survey of Dubovsky’s oeuvre. Intimate in scale and critically acclaimed for their allusive use of color, all but one of the works on view will be exhibited for the first time, including a suite of the artist’s latest paintings inspired by the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu (c. 300 BC), a salon-style array of 80 small-scale paintings on cardboard, and a series of oil-on-wood panels completed by the artist between 1995 and the present.

1995 marked a period of tremendous rebirth for the artist. It was prompted by the move into a new studio, whose vaulted ceilings and great expanse of light provided the ideal vantage point from which to contemplate and record the many places, foreign and familiar, visited by the artist. Poetry ranging from W.H. Auden and Ezra Pound, and paintings including those of Augustus John and Robert Henri are among the many subjects and sources featured in this suite of oil paintings. In *After Kertesz*, 1997, Dubovsky reinterprets a story told by Andre Kertesz about encountering a woman in a

small Hungarian town who he has asked to photograph, and who surprisingly undresses before him without hesitation. By placing the arm of his nude in both a seductive and modest fashion, Dubovsky’s seemingly simple gesture recaptures the human tenderness of the moment, while embracing all of its implications.

Dubovsky is part both tireless observer, inveterate draftsman, and a creature of contradiction. While playing the role of witness to the displacement that characterizes modern times; the overall mood and tone of his work also conveys a strong sense of identity and a 19th century romantic fascination with the land. Capturing the quiet beatitude of certain places before they are irrevocably altered by destructive elements is a recurring theme in his work, and comes out of the artist’s own travels.

Son of a Russian émigré father, who at the age of 13, fought with the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War, Dubovsky was raised in the sedate confines of San Diego by a father, who readily embraced his new American identity.
(Contd.)

After Kertesz, 1997
Oil on panel, 13 5/8" x 11 13/16"



The downplaying of his Russian-Jewish cultural heritage at home prompted Dubovsky to seek out pilgrimages, in order to better understand his father's legacy and to forge his own. He first left home for Buenos Aires as a foreign exchange student at 16, and in the ensuing years, fellowships brought him to Russia and Poland in the late 60's. He lived in Amsterdam in the early 70's, painted and lived among the Mea Sh'arim Hasidim in Israel in 1991, and visited China two years ago while in the process of publishing a book about his Jerusalem experience.

Though small in scale, Dubovsky's approximately 80 oil on cardboard paintings on view register an abundance of emotion and narrative vastness, thus providing the viewer with an all-encompassing foray into the incredible array of literary, musical, and visual trappings from the artist's journeys, both real and imaginary, taken from 1995 to 2005.

Doheny, 2002
Oil on cardboard, 8" x 10"



In *Buenos Aires (Café 36 Billares)*, 2002, Dubovsky revisits Buenos Aires in a painting, rendered from a newspaper photo taken in 2001, depicting an almost empty café save for two men sitting in the corner playing cards. Rather than referencing the vitality of sounds and sights of the café life experienced during his youth, he chooses instead to

capture this once-great city on the edge of collapse from the vantage point of an unnoticed recorder. By placing this work alongside *Doheny*, 2002, a local surf spot frequented by the artist during his teens, in which he depicts a lone surfer set against a vast expanse of ocean, the artist evokes contradictory feelings of distance, displacement, longing, and attachment. Here, as in many paintings throughout the series, his perspective is that of an intermediary who shuffles between past and future in terms of subject and place, in order to define his creative existence.

Dubovsky's experience living with his brother during the few last months of his life served as an important catalyst for this series. Initially working from pieces of cardboard boxes gathered from a close friend's garage, the material's fragile surfaces and impermanent nature serve as physical manifestations for the feelings he was experiencing at the time. The smaller scale also allowed the paint to become more of the subject, thus enabling him to exert more control over his painting at a point when his own sense of loss was all encompassing.

In his latest series of work, cultural, literary, musical, and historical nuances continue to inform his very peripatetic imagination. Having always loved Chinese poetry, the seven meditative paintings on view, selected from an ongoing series of paintings, are largely based on the writings of Taoist master, Chuang Tzu, whose philosophy blended immediate and practical concerns with a need to celebrate the impossibilities in life. Charged with conflicting notions of escapism and commitment in reaction to the 2004 Presidential election, Dubovsky, like Chung Tzu during his time, began to explore his inner life more fully. References to an observable world are largely absent in these rich, impastoed surfaces, though clues to his mysterious and enveloping imagery arrive in the form of subtitles derived from Taoist sources and from the titles to ancient ch'in (Chinese zither) compositions. The simplification of form and gesture emerging from his recent work is derived from a completely untrammelled perspective, because the act of making a painting, according to Dubovsky, "brings everything into the present."

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Buenos Aires (Café 36 Billares), 2002
Oil on cardboard, 9" x 8"



The Far Otur, 2005
Oil on cardboard, 8" x 10"

RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS AT CUE:

Thursday, January 12, 2006, 6 to 8pm

An Evening of Songs and Stories with Anthony Dubovsky

The artist's narrative journey through the paintings on view will be accompanied by guitar and concertina. Admission is Free, please RSVP by either calling (212) 206-3583 or emailing info@cueartfoundation.org.

ARTIST'S BIO:

Anthony Dubovsky was born in San Diego, California, in 1945. He studied with Willard Midgett at Reed College. Select solo exhibitions include the Galerie Foksal, Poland (1969), Light Gallery, NY, (1978), the Hayden Gallery at MIT (1979), and the Yeshiva University Museum, NY (1994). Dubovsky is also a recipient of a Humanities Research Fellowship from UC Berkeley, the First Annual Adler Award from the Jewish Museum, San Francisco, and a Stanford University-University of Warsaw Graduate Exchange Program Fellowship in the fine arts. He chairs the Visual Studies Program at the University of California, Berkeley, and is represented in San Francisco by George Krevsky Gallery.

ABOUT CUE:

CUE Art Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, provides educational and professional development programs in the visual arts. These include student internships, stipends, exhibitions, public lectures, and an in-gallery studio program, all of which draw from the talents and experience of the diverse community of artists, art critics, and teachers that the Foundation brings together.

CUE's exhibition season gives unknown or under-recognized artists public and professional exposure comparable to that offered by neighboring commercial galleries, without the usual financial restraints. The Advisory Council, an honorary group of artists and leading figures from the arts education, applied arts, art history, and literary communities, has the responsibility of selecting exhibition curators. The curators, in turn, nominate artists to exhibit at CUE, and continue to play a role throughout the exhibition process. Both the Advisory Council and the exhibition curators actively participate in the public lectures and educational programs.

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For additional exhibition information, please contact Beatrice Wolert-Weese, Gallery Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, 212 206-3583, or email beatrice.wolert@cueartfoundation.org.