

George Towne is a New York artist who has been painting rich and seductive oil portraits of men. The men are friends, or former partners. Others are sexy friends who have offered to pose. Some of the works can be erotic, some are depicted painted nude, sometimes with bodies which reveal intimate details like tattoos. Other paintings are introspective portraiture, with the men casting discomfiting glances or engaged in confrontational attitudes.

The sexual appeal of Towne's painting often comes in the imperfections of his models: tissue that has mellowed with age, a moody scowl, a ragged shirt. Then there is the erotic detail of his settings: the ruched fabric on an arm chair, eyeglasses, a pair of shoelaces rendered as lovingly as a pair of beautiful eyes. Towne has adopted what he calls a "Painterly Realistic" style which, unlike Photo-Realistic work, still shows the brushstroke. We are aware that we are looking at a painting, and at the same time we can feel the emotion that the painter feels about the subject.

"The men I paint are usually friends of mine, it's pretty obvious that I find them sexy in some masculine way. So the work at its root is about my obsession with gay male 'Beauty' or my 'Desire'. But I also usually choose friends who have given me something somehow; maybe they've taught me something... or they were there for me at a difficult time in my life." Towne explains.

"Portraiture also fascinates me because it has that element of stopping time. People I love have come and gone in my life, and loss has not always been easy for me to deal with. But if I have been able to paint them, it's like capturing them and holding them with me forever."

Interspersed with these portraits are Towne's paintings of the sexual playing fields on Fire Island. Some are quiet, almost elegiac, others have a Fauvist, psychedelic feel, as if taking a stroll through the Meat Rack on LSD.

- "Artist Spotlight: George Towne" by Christopher Harrity / The Advocate (3/14)