Eric Wert: Still Life

Richard Speer
Shawn Vandor
Eric Wert, Illustrator
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Artists lean toward the eccentric, it's true—each artist in their own way. When asked about his early decision to exclusively paint still lifes of flowers and fruit, Eric Wert had this to say: "Because I'm not very social, and really have no desire to learn how to be social, I chose a discipline that almost no one else was interested in. The result is that the only people I'm really in dialogue with, day in and day out, are artists … whom have been dead for hundreds of years."

Which qualifies Wert as a true Renaissance man.

But his hyperrealistic, voluptuous use of color and wry willingness to include slugs, ants, and other humble critters of the field in his compositions is utterly unique—and incomparable, even to the best work of fifteenth and sixteenth century European masters.

In his quest to paint still lifes at the highest level, Wert taught himself to "see" very slowly, but constantly, until the perceived becomes almost unrecognizable and, thus, new. "It is a 'seeing' whose aesthetic signification shines beyond nature, beyond technique, beyond even imagination, while at the same time incorporating all three," explains Shawn Vandor, one of the essayists (along with art critic and curator Richard Speer) chosen to detail Wert's evolution as a still life artist and place his work within an academic and cultural context in *Eric Wert: Still Life*—along with reproductions of one hundred of Wert's stunning oil paintings and the artist's own descriptions of his meticulous technique.

MATT SUTHERLAND (September/October 2018)

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