

## Contemporary Realism

Contemporary Realism is the straightforward realistic style of painting, which continues to be widely practiced in this post-abstract era. It is different from Photorealism, which is somewhat ironic and Conceptual in its nature.

Contemporary Realists form a disparate group, but what they have in common is that they are literate in the concepts of Modern Art, but choose to work in a more traditional form. Many actually began as abstract painters, having come through an educational system dominated by an establishment dismissive of representational painting. Among the best-known artists associated with this movement are Neil Welliver, William Bailey, and Philip Pearlstein. There is an identifiable "group" of Contemporary Realists, but we have used a fairly loose definition to allow inclusion of a larger number of 20th-century realists.

### About the Art

For more than 20 years, Anthony Green has continued to paint stories from his personal life. His memories, dreams, and actual events are all included in his work. He said,

"My concerns are universal, sometimes tasteless, frequently artless, but never dulling. I wanted to paint adolescence, bicycles, carpets, dog, Eric, failure, Greens, hair, irritation, Joscelyne [his step-father], kisses, Mary [his wife], nasturtiums, optimism, .... quiet, roses, sexuality, tenderness, undies, vice, walls, x-shapes, Yvonne [his aunt], and much, much more."

He passionately believes in figurative or realistic art, because he wants to have his art being understandable to both the art expert and the everyday person. His favorite kinds of art are styles from history, such as the very realistic paintings of 13th-century Flemish painters. In the 1960s and early 70s, this set him quite apart from most contemporary artists who were primarily abstract or pop artists. Anthony Green's approach is labor-intensive--it takes him one or two months, painting every day, to complete a picture. He calls himself a "compulsive painter."

One interesting aspect of Anthony Green's own style is his technique of showing interior space. In his paintings it seems as if the viewer is looking through the roof of a room and at the same time seeing all four walls, the floor and ceiling. The effects of this are even more emphasized by the unusual shapes of his canvases. This strange "fish eye" view resembles the experiments in showing space and distance utilized by Medieval and Early Renaissance painters, such as Jan Van Eyck, before perspective drawing systems were invented. At the same time, Green's technique also seems to provide a skewed point of view such as we experience in dreams or nightmares, which ties his work to some Surrealist painter techniques.

It is easy to describe what is seen in this painting, *The Beautiful Dream*. It shows an elaborately decorated pink bathroom in which a woman in a bathtub is being watched by a man in a white tuxedo jacket. However, understanding why this strange scene is taking place and what it may mean is more difficult. We know that the woman is Anthony Green's mother, Marie-Madeleine. Green also tells us that after his mother's second marriage to Stanley Joscelyne, she moved into her "dream house" in North London. In describing this painting, Green says, "A few years ago, Mum redecorated and chose a new bathroom suite."

Even knowing all this leaves many questions unanswered. The reference to a "beautiful dream" probably refers to a dream had by Green himself that he is reinterpreting in a painted image--the same source of subject matter used by many Surrealist artists earlier in the 20th century. However, it also seems that his mother in the bathtub is lost in a dream of her own.

The subtitle for this work is given as "Madeleine Joscelyne Alone, Bathing." However, she clearly is not alone. So we wonder who is the person sitting on the chair? Is it Green himself or is it his stepfather, Joscelyne? Is it a real person, or maybe a symbol referring to a fantasy or dream?

Anthony Green describes himself as a "private person" who has chosen as an artist to display in public art works chronicling his personal, inner life. He says that this has "exorcised some of his demons. [Now] there are only a few secrets left..."