

Fred Folsom: Women Smoking and Last Call

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ALPER INITIATIVE FOR WASHINGTON ART

Folsom



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February, 8 - May 18, 2025

American University Museum
at the Katzen Arts Center

Washington, DC

ALPER INITIATIVE FOR WASHINGTON ART



Last Call at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar, 1983-1987. Oil on linen, 78 x 234 in. Artist collection.

FOREWORD

As the Color School lost its grip on Washington in the 70s, figurative art was on the ascendency. In a city of great museums, artists were drawn to the masterpieces on view there for free.

Some were allowed to set up easels and learn directly in front of the masters. Paul Richard's 1997 article in *The Washington Post*, "The Museum is their Muse," explained why he thought so many superb figurative artists lived here. He called them "National Gallery School" painters, a designation that included Manon Cleary, Rebecca Davenport, Joe Shannon, and Fred Folsom. Folsom spent his apprenticeship in front of the Rembrandts and Vermeers.

Folsom learned from the best. The nudes in his body of work called *Women Smoking* are rendered in transparent layers, gently glazed in the style of the Dutch masters to fit seamlessly into their interiors. The paintings are somber, intimate, introspective Rorschach tests appropriate to their tragic inspiration: "Cigarettes killed my mom at 58 and my sister Susan at 30."

Folsom's best-known works are from his *Last Call* series of large honky-tonk scenes in a local strip joint. Originally considering himself a Surrealist, in 1983 he chanced upon the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar in suburban Maryland: "The situation inside that nightclub was way weirder than any of my surreal artwork." He photographed the interior and began a 7' x 20' triptych, *Last Call at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar*, which he describes as "... a 140 square foot prayer."

It is with great pleasure that we present *Fred Folsom: Women Smoking and Last Call*. These two stunning bodies of work represent highwater marks for painting in the mid-Atlantic. We are also fortunate to be able to present them accompanied by Folsom's own words, which he wrote and refined over the past twenty years in a book titled *Artiste: Memoirs and Meditations*.¹

This exhibition and catalog would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of Folsom's wife, Rose and the generosity of the collectors willing to lend their pieces. I also must thank the friends and members of the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center for their financial support, and its staff who, like Folsom himself, make such an ambitious undertaking look like magic.

Jack Rasmussen
C. Nicholas Keating and Carleen B. Keating Director
American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center
Washington, DC

¹ Fred Folsom, *Artiste: Memoirs and Meditations*, © 2004–2012 and 2022



ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I was home. Mommy was home. Daddy was at work. Mommy smelled like cigarettes and martinis. I go sniffing around the house and there was her purse — it smelled like face powder, cigarette crumbs, and leather.

My older sister Sue started smoking in junior high.

Everyone smoked. You could smoke at the Tastee Diner with your meal. People smoked at White House receptions and on airplanes. Everyone smoked all the time.

Cigarettes killed my mother at 58 and my sister at 30.

It was 1965 in the elevator at Willoughby Walk Dormitory at Pratt Institute. Some fine art students were in the back behind me, and someone said that Mondrian was trying to make a perfect balance. Almost no one's big on Mondrian. There's not a lot there other than his perfect balance. And I hadn't seen it, but I liked the idea. And I started doing nudes in interiors. Largely the interiors were boxes, geometric boxes with objects like telephones, a cigarette pack, a salt shaker tipped over, just geometry.

And it had a human figure in there. And the human figure was just totally out of place in the geometry. It's so smooth. And the shapes — Martha Erlebacher, my Pratt design teacher, said, "Your job is the sublimation of forms, trying to get a face and all the intricacies of the face and the nose punching out to match with the neck in space and the shoulder and the pectoral and the breast and the ribs and the abdomen and the arms and all of the thousands of little things that are going on with hands all there in with geometry."

And here's this person there, a female person in the midst of props and geometry. There's a telephone, an old-fashioned telephone back when telephones had dials. That's a lot to try and paint — the little numbers, the holes in the dial ring.

But it's the human form always, almost always classical and geometry, recognizable, familiar geometry.

And as for the perfect composition for the perfect balance that Mondrian was going for, I want to balance it and get it as perfect as I can in harmony with the figure. And then when I get the underpainting done, I can see what the structures and all of the pieces are and then I can figure what can I take out—can I tip the walls?

Because if I can tip it slightly, it takes the deliberateness of perfect out of it and keeps it moving. Perfect balance is static. Boring, like the sound of wet clay hitting a table, thonk, an arrow slapping the bullseye. Perfect balance is just a dead focal point. It's not dangerous.



Fred Folsom in his framing studio, 2024.

“The body, and it alone,
is capable of making visible
what is invisible:
the spiritual and the divine.”

— John Paul II



Arrivals and Departures (detail),
2016. Oil on panel, 24 x 21 in.

WOMEN SMOKING

Pratt Institute accepted me as an Advertising Design student. Mrs. Martha Erlebacher was my first-year design teacher. We were frightened of Mrs. Erlebacher. She was so dedicated and wonderfully intense. Our class was supposed to be studying basic two-dimensional design, but Martha loved the classical nude and used paintings by Michelangelo to illustrate the juncture where the *serratus magnus* muscles knitted into the rib cage. Our class didn't really care about design or anatomy, but she made an offhand remark about the difference between naked and nude. "Naked is exposed, vulnerable, and subject to the viewer. The nude is autonomous and carries authority... The nude is everything!... **EVERYTHING!**" I'd just learned everything I needed to know in art college. Her insights into classical restraint have kept me walking the edge in dynamic stasis.

My paintings are realistic. Ever since I was a kid, I got a real kick out of making stuff look like stuff. Still do. It took me so long to learn the basics of oil painting: underpaint, paint back to front, oil out dark to light, apply it lean to fat and key your colors, then glaze. Life is short — you should get the proper training. It will save you a lot of time. What should have taken two years to learn, took me twenty. Dyslexic academia-phobes don't take to books and school. I learned to paint studying at the National Gallery of Art, National Museum of American Art, National Portrait Gallery, Corcoran Gallery, Hirshhorn, Baltimore Museum, Walters, Met, Frick, Guggenheim, Philadelphia Museum, Chicago Art Institute, Richmond Museum, Boston Museum, Memling, Louvre, Pompidou, Rijksmuseum, and the British National Gallery.

An artist dabs paint on a canvas, a writer rattles away at a keyboard, a ballerina stands en pointe, a conductor flourishes his baton. We all confront our artwork with the same thing in mind:

my dance, my song, my play will change the whole world forever. I cast aside all doubts. My painting will bring about lasting peace and end famine and plague. You have to believe it.

Of course, I am aware that so far my artwork has only caused the lame to see and the blind to walk. But just the same, *this time* — MY PAINTING will be *everything, forever!* You give it all you've got and fling this day's work at the fates and demand immortality. Determination is fuel. I once asked a middle-aged jazz singer how she could perform so brilliantly, night after night, in front of all those people. Her sweet face dimmed and took on the hard edge of a seasoned warrior, "I get all bitched up and I go after it." Her fears and the beauty of her voice were one and the same. Between fox and fieldmouse, she was the fox.

Today the nude still remains the mark to meet. Painting the human form is a terrific challenge. A painting begins with an unformed idea, or some impression. I mull it over for months, sometimes years, before canvas is stretched. They used to be meticulously diagrammed. Now they mostly organize themselves, but all still require continual revision.



Danse Macabre, 2003. Oil on linen, 50 x 60 in.

I spend a couple of pleasant weeks gridding and drawing the figure. After a month's revision, the scene is under-painted with burnt sienna acrylic paint. When the underpainting (cartoon) is complete it will look something like a sepia photograph of the final picture. Looking at the finished artwork, you won't notice the underpainting, but you will feel it. It has weight. When the layout looks good, I cancel everything and get out the oils.

The night before painting a figure I'm up fretting. *How on earth am I going to blend together a vital likeness from a few puddles of paint?* 5:00 a.m., the alarm goes off. It's dark. I turn on the TV. The farm report weather is calling for rain. It's going to be overcast all day. *Perfect.* While the coffee brews, I say a fox-hole prayer, "OH GOD!" and get out the oils and prepare my palette. I squeeze out ten different color paint-turds — then mix up five flesh tones. At the center of my rainbow flesh tones there is a glob of drab green paint (*terra verte*). The green seems out of place. The green glob looks up and says, "Anything is possible."

Painting a nude figure goes from sunup to sundown. It's Beat the Clock with thirty brushes, fourteen hours of level sunlight, forget lunch. When the paint's going good, it's symphonic. I apply paint, blend, and smooth — then re-apply (wet on wet into green), then blend it again, one passage at a time, before it turns sticky. Noon. More coffee. Siege-mind takes over.

It's 1:00 in the afternoon, bee boo, bee boo, the phone rings, bee boo, *don't kick the phone... remember last time...* bee boo... *The darks are too hard... go to grey...* bee boo... *warm grey.* It's raining. *There's cadmium orange on my sandwich.* Bee boo, bee boo, bee... the phone goes in the fridge. *Even out*

those earth colors before they set up. Paint-dabbed Q-tips and Coke cans are scattered across the floor. DANG! It's almost 2:30, and that foot still looks funny. More coffee.

I admit, I love watching Bob Ross painting his twenty-minute landscapes. Someone watching an artist's dabbling would naturally think it's a pleasant pastime. For many painters I'm sure it is. But for an artist following the ancient practice of "oiling out," painting feels like mortal combat. Working at a dead run — the world comes to a full stop, then flies away. *That shadow on the neck is too brown, too hard — go ochre, no — needs warm blue — keep the pace — breathless charging headlong — go pale blue-grey.... My green glob whispers, "Gimme a go."*

CRAP! *the torso's lost its shape — I got a potato here — got an acre of mush that won't tighten up. No muscles, no bones. External obliques echo the pelvic crest — that's good. Yes. COFFEE! Turn off the overhead fluorescents — LOOK! LOOK! I check it backwards in the mirror... I'm on blue-screen. Think —Think! Look! It's three in the afternoon, and I haven't started the left arm. Too late, the torso's setting up! Add oil of clove — two drops slows the drying. Pick up the pace — we're losing the light. Turn the overheads back on, need some mental horsepower — this thing's falling apart —*



Coffee and Correspondence, 2008.
Oil on linen, 30 x 25 in.

3:12 p.m. — Where's my coffee? — the wrist and forearm are still too bright — look at the forearm, look. Where's the ulna? THINK damnit — boot up DUMMY!!! LOOK... jaune brilliant? A prayerful question: Dear God: Where-the-hell's-the forearm??? Terra verte comes to mind; I take a touch of the green glob and mix it up. DUMMY! The darks are too chocolaty and the lights look like peanut butter and Cheez Whiz... Again. Yes!! — the green tones it down; jaune brilliant will brighten it up! Scrub down to the cartoon and bring it back spinach-green! Again — terra verte! YES! Blend it smooth — good. Now blend with fan-brushes, wipe clean — blend again.

It's 4:00 p.m. — don't take your eyes off that wrist — you'll lose the feel — remember where we started this morning? Keep that tone and the spirit. Breathless pursuit — keep that pounding pace — closing in — hammering away — blend — blend — go to green — the forearm's still too choppy — blend, blend. Next week I'll glaze it silken smooth. It's really raining. Don't move — keep your eyes on it — find the feel — don't breathe — LOOK! Go to the hands. ALL THOSE FINGERS! 50 freakin' bones! Gulp cold coffee. Pick up the pace... the cup bounces on the floor. Knuckles, knuckles — fingers and fingernails. Again, my green glob says, "Gimmie a go." A bright flash lights the studio, I slow count to five and thunder rumbles across the valley. One mile off. The humidity is making the paint dry too fast.

There are nine brushes splayed in my left hand. This keeps the flesh tones in sequence. Three brushes are wet; one light; one medium; and one dark. Each has its pair of dry blender brushes. Q-tips and Kleenex are between my thumb and forefinger. Pulling brush after brush, the right hand

just paints and blends. A quick dip in the turpentine, touch the paint rag, load up the brush from the palette. My right hand rides the mahl stick as soft sable brushes finesse the canvas. Whispery fan brushes caress and blend as rain rumbles the roof. *Man, it's really coming down.*

7:32, I step back for a squint. *The face and the figure go together nicely. The expression carries through to the pose, but now that damned foot looks like a dinner roll, and I'm losing the light.* "Crap!" Mid-gulp, cold ginger ale spills down my front. *Missed my mouth — drop the can — kick it under the table. Where's the structure, the bones and tendons? Add a touch of that gray-green, yes sir, that's it.* Three strokes — three tendons. *Blend, soften, then warm up those toes to happy pink.* After adding toenail highlights, I look and squint from the back of the room.... *Now that's a foot. A crisp white dot — that's it; her eye is round and moist. Yes Sir!*

The storm has passed, and I am scrubbing in the surrounding background tones to set the figure into the space.... *Done.... Stop! Put the brushes down before you use up all your possibilities.* After a half century, you kinda know when to stop. *But do I have company?* I step back to put the brushes into the jar. After holding the brushes in order all day, my left hand doesn't want to let them go. *Stop!... at ease... just let go...* I pull up the rocker. The world is allowed back in.

The figure is ready for a couple of months of refinement: highlighting, shading, and noodling: glazing, stippling, and scumbling. You can whittle back into a layered painting, giving it tooth, presenting a complex "live" surface. The picture is resolved, the paint isn't.



Black Cat, 2017. Oil on panel, 29 x 24 in.

The oily paint rags are hung outside to safely dry and stiffen. I cover the palette with plastic wrap, smoothing it over each mound of paint and put it in the freezer. Easing into the rocker, it's time to gloat. *Ya-know, a painting starts with an idea, a mood, or some feeling, then, as it assembles itself, the painting's intention changes from day to day, for months. When you're oiling out, everything changes minute to minute, doing wherever it wants. You can't force it. You follow, you listen and do what you are told as the story unfolds.* It's 8:55.

The fading sunset warms and softens the figure. *Rough as it is, it's a keeper. It won't be happy dance time for a month or so, but she claims her space.* Twilight mutes the painting. I put my brushes in the freezer for the night and switch on the studio lights. Alternating between incandescent and fluorescent lights brings a whole different feel to the painting. *Yes sir, I've definitely got company.* Martha was right about painting the human figure.

“Artwork should be quick,
cheap, and easy.”

—Andy Warhol

LAST CALL

My reputation as an artist is based on painting classical nudes. Many of my figures were set in surreal situations. Driving into Silver Spring it occurred to me: That strip joint was a congruous social gathering that involved a nude woman. I turned around, drove back, and went into the Shepherd Park. I hadn't been there since I stopped drinking seven years before. The room was darker than I remembered; the dancer was brighter, and the music was much louder. I sat in my old spot beside the bar. The “Park” is far weirder and more complicated than any of my surreal artwork. This is a room full of intoxicated men, worshiping a naked woman dancing on an altar. I have to paint it.

I ordered a ginger ale and started taking notes. *Painting the “Park,” I would have to steer clear of rowdy genre, sexual exposé, and preachy polemics. Restraint, restraint, restraint. The Shepherd Park go-go bar and its worshipful patrons needed to be treated with sincere reverence. After all, the essence of classicism is studied reserve. It is easy for an artist to extort a response from a viewer by stranding a vulnerable nude figure in an unsettling situation. I sipped my ginger ale, sketching and scribbling notes. The dancer needed to be classically neutral — more PG than R, allowing the patrons to tell their stories. Look at the room. Look at the room.*

The straw snuffled at the bottom of the glass. I ordered another ginger ale and continued soaking into the scene. There was something there, something just beyond my grasp. Squinting my eyes at once focused and softened the scene as the bar became a timeless tribal gathering, outside of time. *This was a fertility rite, or perhaps a war dance. The priestess dances, her neck is ringed by a rattling claw necklace. She is covered in blue paint, thrashing wild through the raging fire — screaming and leaping to pounding drums and loud singing. Blazing sparks whirl through the smoke, spiraling high, disappearing into the night, lost among the stars. Whooping warriors psych themselves to battle an invading tribe. My second ginger ale arrived. I handed the waitress a five and waved away the change, keeping my eyes riveted on my writing. This is a barren fertility rite, in the land of indefinite promise....*

I wouldn't be taking the Shepherd Park go-go bar at face value. There was something there that was not apparent and that was what I was after. My bar paintings are quietly religious. Not obviously, but in my solemn intent. Like many artists, I pray before my day's work. Figure by figure, the scene is underpainted in brick-red acrylic paint. With acrylic you can revise over and over, until it's just right. When the underpainting is complete, it looks like an old sepia photograph. I pray when the oil paint goes on layer by layer. Most of the people in my bar paintings are old friends. They are



Sunday in the Park, 1984. Oil on linen, 48 x 96 in. Collection of Prof. and Mrs. John Brough.

Painted for who they are, and not as character types. The Shepherd Park paintings started with just a few figures. The paintings kept getting bigger. *Sunday in the Park* was 4 by 8 feet, with 43 portraits.

I decided to paint the whole bar, lights up, at closing time. It would be titled, *Last Call at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar*. It would be painted from my familiar perspective, from when I drank there. I usually sat near the

bar, beside the emergency exit, with my back against the north wall. Outside, my truck was backed in next to the emergency exit door. My dog was inside the truck and the driver-door was unlocked. The scene would be painted as though the north wall was removed. The project was carefully planned over the course of a year.

The painting began with sketching the dancer onto the center canvas. The room was tipped forward, accelerating the perspective and spilling the scene toward the viewer.

The intensely lit classical figure seemed to separate and float in the middle of the room. She was just right. A softer, lighter palette made sense with the lights on at closing time. All my planning came to nothing when I started arranging the patrons. My cast of characters just wouldn't follow the drawings. They sprawled, they bunched and crowded, and refused to fit my layout. I was no longer the host of this party, and my guests simply seated themselves.

After a year, the center panel still wasn't finished. I hoped the other two would go faster. I was going for broke with *Last Call*. After 15 months, the centerpiece was done, and I was broke. My new financial arrangements were provided by the Mastercard Endowment for the Arts.

Another nagging concern was that go-go bars exploit women. No getting around it. Concerned, I spoke with a number of the dancers about various "PC" problems. The dancers didn't like the cramped dressing room. There were personal spats, boyfriend issues, and some dancers weren't

happy with the schedule. That was it. When I asked specifically about sexual exploitation, there were puzzled looks and hearty chuckles. One woman said, “Exploitation?” and burst out laughing. *Spiders and flies*. In spite of the obvious and not so obvious problems, the dancers seemed to genuinely love their work. These divas weren’t victims, they were eager volunteers. Want ads for go-go dancers were listed in the paper under “G” for “goddess.”

Just the same, my suspicions linger in the paintings; there is nothing easy about easy money. Believe me, this honky-tonk was not all fun and games. My painting, *Happy Hour at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar*, commemorates the night when an angry customer firebombed the Park. After the fire that brought death and destruction, Eric Washington and Jim Horsecamp got the “regulars” together and rebuilt the Park, pitching in nights and weekends.

In 1987, a friend mentioned my big go-go bar painting to Lenore Miller, director of George Washington University’s Dimock Gallery. Lenore had been planning a show called “Tough Realism.” She came out to see the two completed canvases and wanted to include *Last Call* in the show. Great! Now I had a venue and could easily finish the final canvas. Opening the morning mail, I found my nice new Visa card. The next was a letter of congratulations on my \$15,000 National Endowment for the Arts Work-In-Progress grant, followed a month later by \$3,000 from the Maryland State Arts Council.

The *Last Call* triptych has 97 portraits. If you count the wall posters, ads, and reflections — 126 portraits. Each portrait is drawn, underpainted, then oiled out and fully articulated in oil paint. Finally, all the portraits are shaded and highlighted to fit with the developing scene. After three and a half years, I was sick of painting

Budweiser labels, glasses, denim seams, leather, buttons, and cigarette packs. I had yet to see the whole 20-foot painting assembled. I took the painting to have it photographed. The transparency went to the printer so I could send out my own invitations to *my* customers in addition to the Dimock Gallery mailing list. Both sets were hand addressed and mailed out a week before the press packets. As I addressed and wrote notes on 400 invitations, the pre-show jitters were getting to me. I was worried about everything. How would this politically incorrect strip joint play in DC? DC is the PC-gripe capital of the world. I got a call from Mary Battiata, a writer from the *Washington Post*. An interview! — A WOMAN!



Happy Hour at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar, 1990. Oil on linen, 75 x 120 in.

Bright and early the next morning, Mary Battiata came over. The interview began with a couple hours of art talk at my studio. Then, over lunch at a Chinese restaurant, we discussed my career and Judeo-Christian theology. She asked very direct questions.

Q. “I understand this painting is religious — specifically — Christian.... How so?”

A. “If Jesus got off the Greyhound bus at the Fenton Street station, He probably wouldn’t go to St. Marks, or Temple Shalom. I suspect He’d walk over to the Shepherd Park for a glass of wine with His people. Jesus walked a lot.”

We returned to the studio and chatted for another hour or so about go-go bars and sexual politics. *Last Call* was difficult to explain. No matter how thoroughly you prepare for an interview, a reporter can still get everything wrong. Halfway through, I knew I was in trouble when Mary asked, “How did you become so familiar with the rowdy people in your painting?”

FRED: “Uh, old drinking buddies... I guess.”

MARY: “You quit drinking?”

FRED: “Uh, yes.”

MARY: “Why?”

FRED: “I — er, began to suspect I was developing a regular pattern of drinking, so I, like, stopped.”

MARY: “What do you mean by regular pattern?”

FRED: “Er... 4,000 days in a row.” (Mary did long division on her note pad.)

MARY: “What did you do during that 13-year period?”

FRED: “Er... I — uh... turned a lot of cold yellow liquid into warm yellow liquid... uh... and watched TV.”

So now she probably thinks I’m some kind of an alcoholic or something. The interview was pleasant but very long. After six hours I had run dry. Nearly got out my first-grade popsicle stick cabin. I could see the headline: “Male Chauvinist Pig Paints Large Obscene Picture.”

It was opening day. Rose woke me up with the *Washington Post*. Margin to margin, across the front page of the *Style* section, was a photo of me in front of *Last Call*. The headline read, “Fred Folsom and His Epic Work of Redemption.” **Thank God!**

WOMEN SMOKING



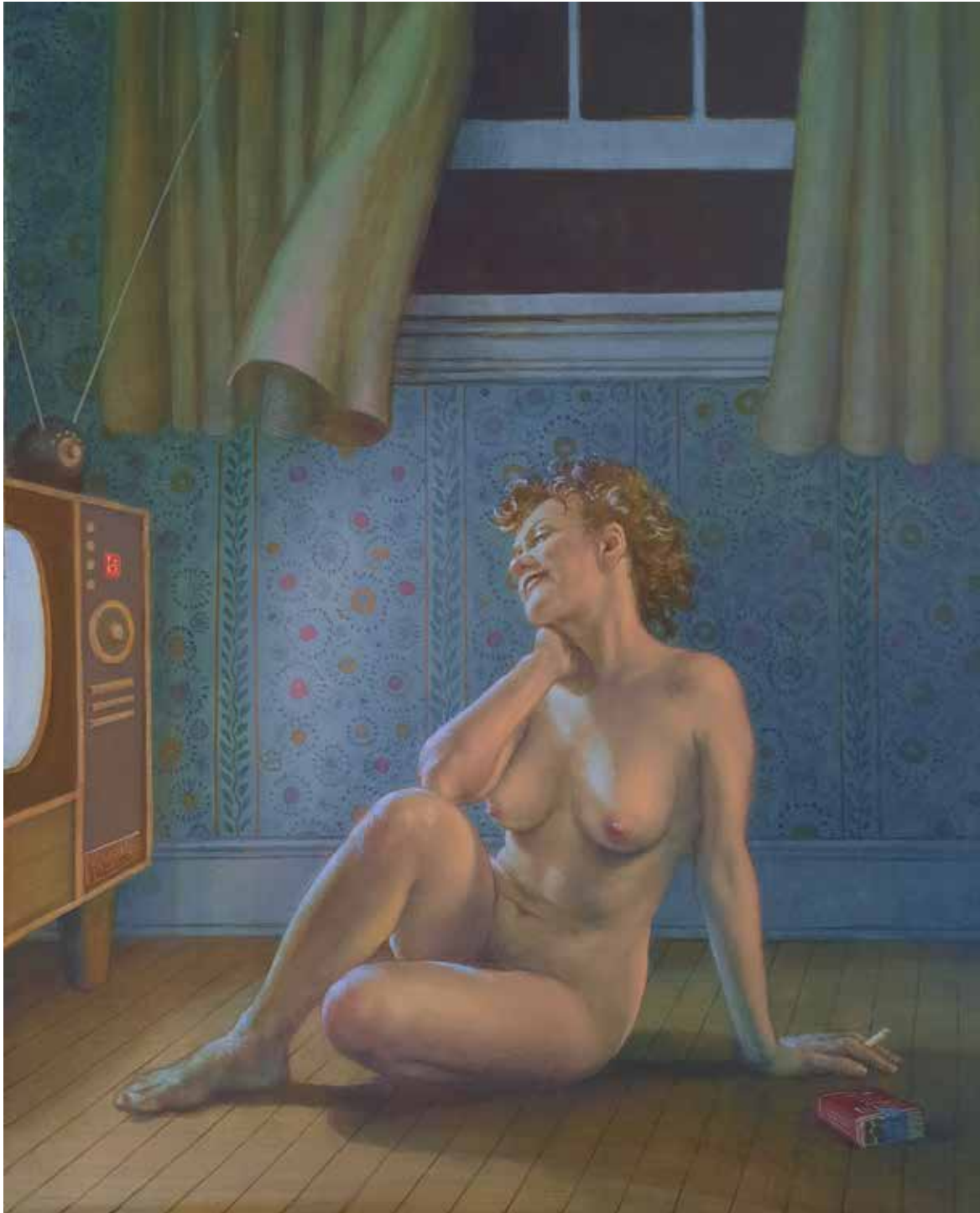
Clerestory Window, 2012. Oil on panel, 24 x 18 in. Collection of Richard Magee.



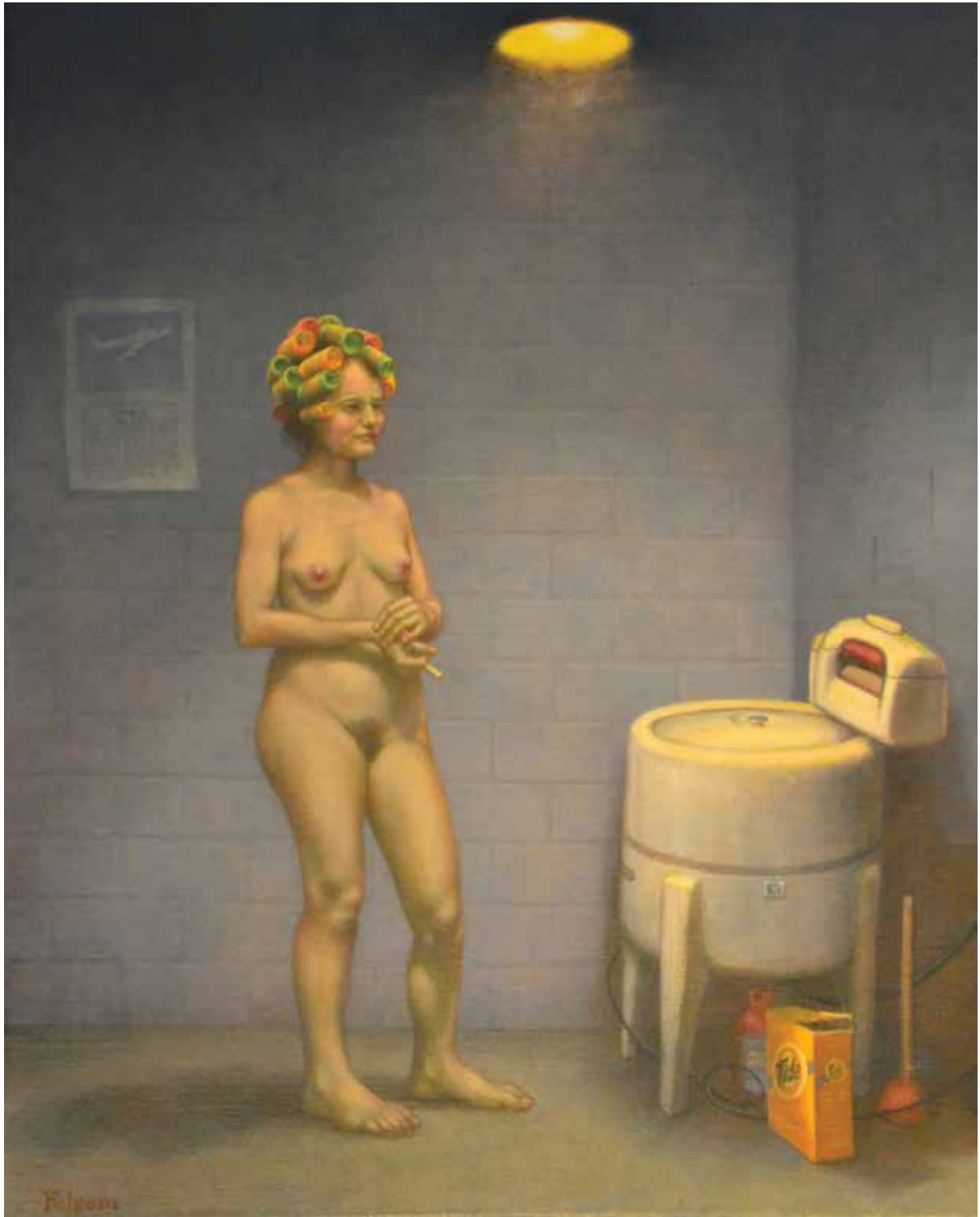
Bedhead and Winstons, 1979. Oil on linen, 20 x 24 in. Artist collection.



Candle and Potion, 2018. Oil on linen, 25 x 21 in. Artist collection.



The Late Show, 2020. Oil on panel, 22 x 18 in. Artist collection.



Laundry Dream, 2006. Oil on linen, 24 x 30 in. Artist collection.



Kitchen Dream, 2011. Oil on linen, 29 x 20 in. Artist collection.



Arrivals and Departures, 2016. Oil on panel, 24 x 21 in. Artist collection.



Cold Tea, 2008. Oil on linen, 30 x 24 in. Artist collection.



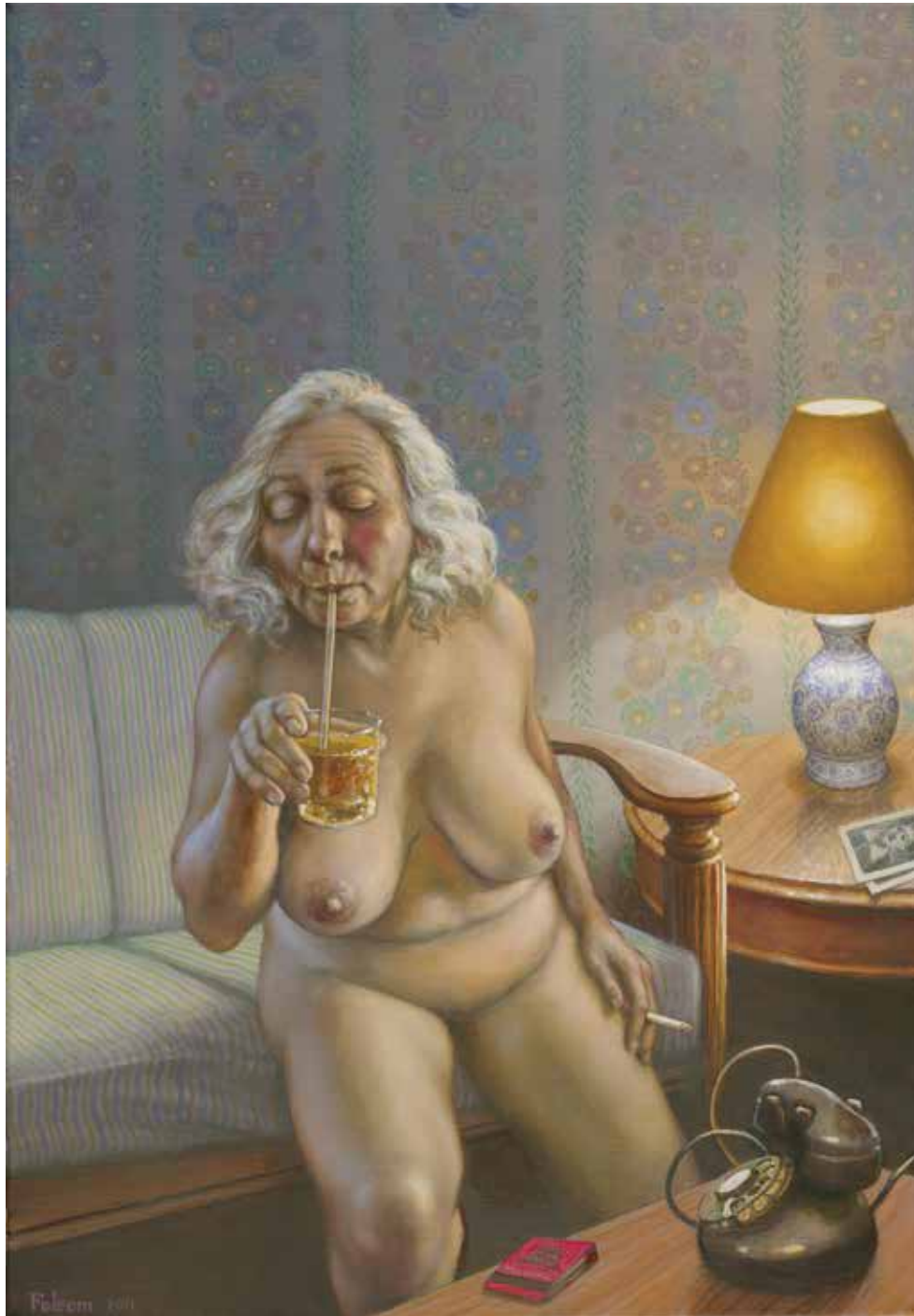
Dear Diary, 2012. Oil on panel, 24 x 18 in. Artist collection.





Mrs. Gardner's Study, 2019. Oil on linen, 36 x 48 in. Artist collection.

Opposite: *Black Cat*, 2017. Oil on panel, 29 x 24 in. Artist collection.



Midnight Sip, 2011. Oil on panel, 30 x 20 in. Artist collection.

Opposite: *Happy Birthday*, 2009. Oil on linen, 22 x 18 in. Artist collection.

Fred Folsom: Women Smoking and Last Call





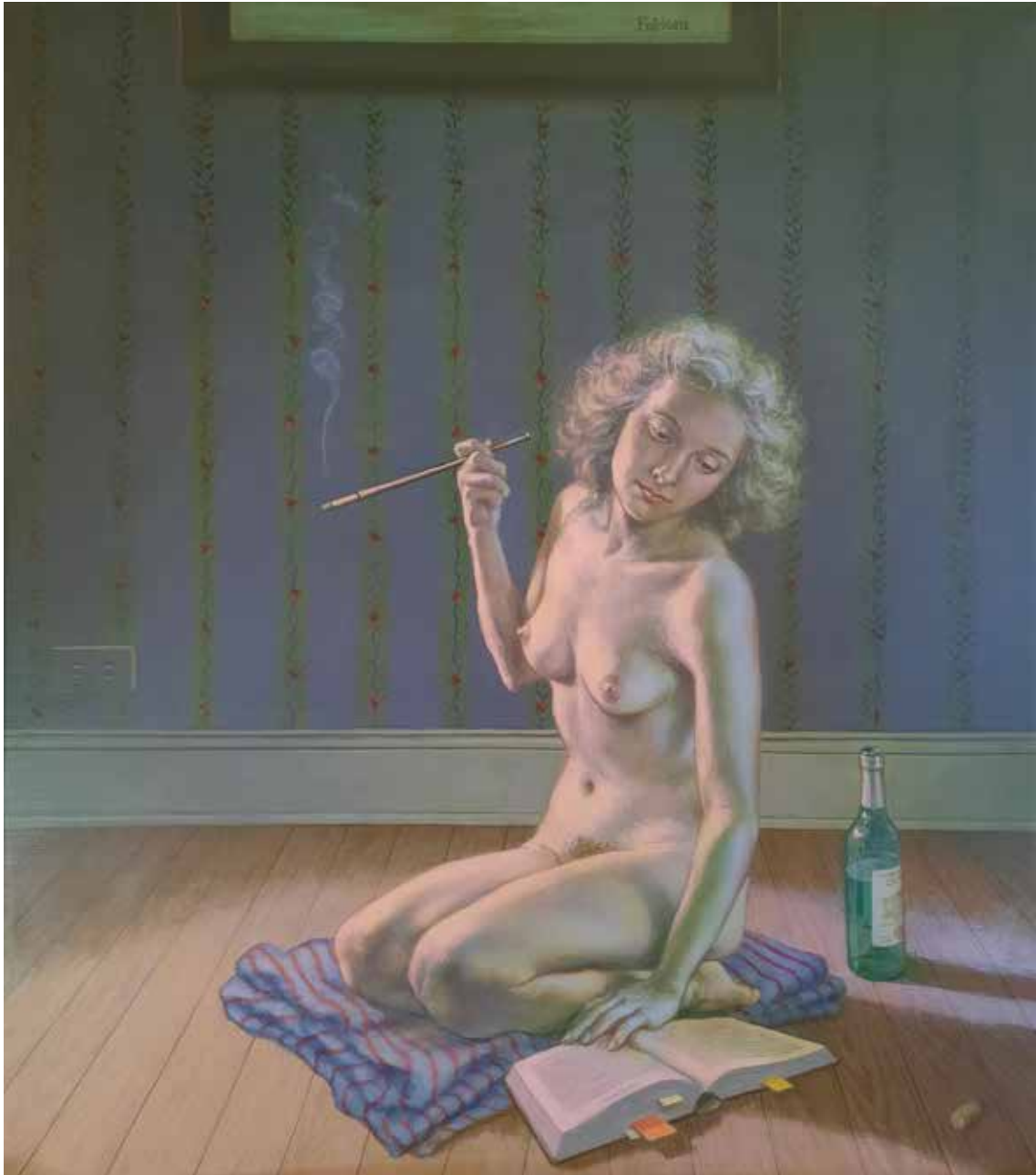
4:05 AM, 2007. Oil on linen, 30 x 24 in. Artist collection.



Vigil, 2004. Oil on panel, 32 x 24 in. Artist collection.



Afternoon Fugue, 2011. Oil on linen, 36 x 21 in. Artist collection.



Winter Poems, 2013. Oil on linen, 28 x 24 in. Artist collection.



Grace Takes on the Fates, 2012. Oil on linen, 36 x 30 in. Artist collection.



Solitaire, 2017. Oil on panel, 18 x 22 in. Private collection.



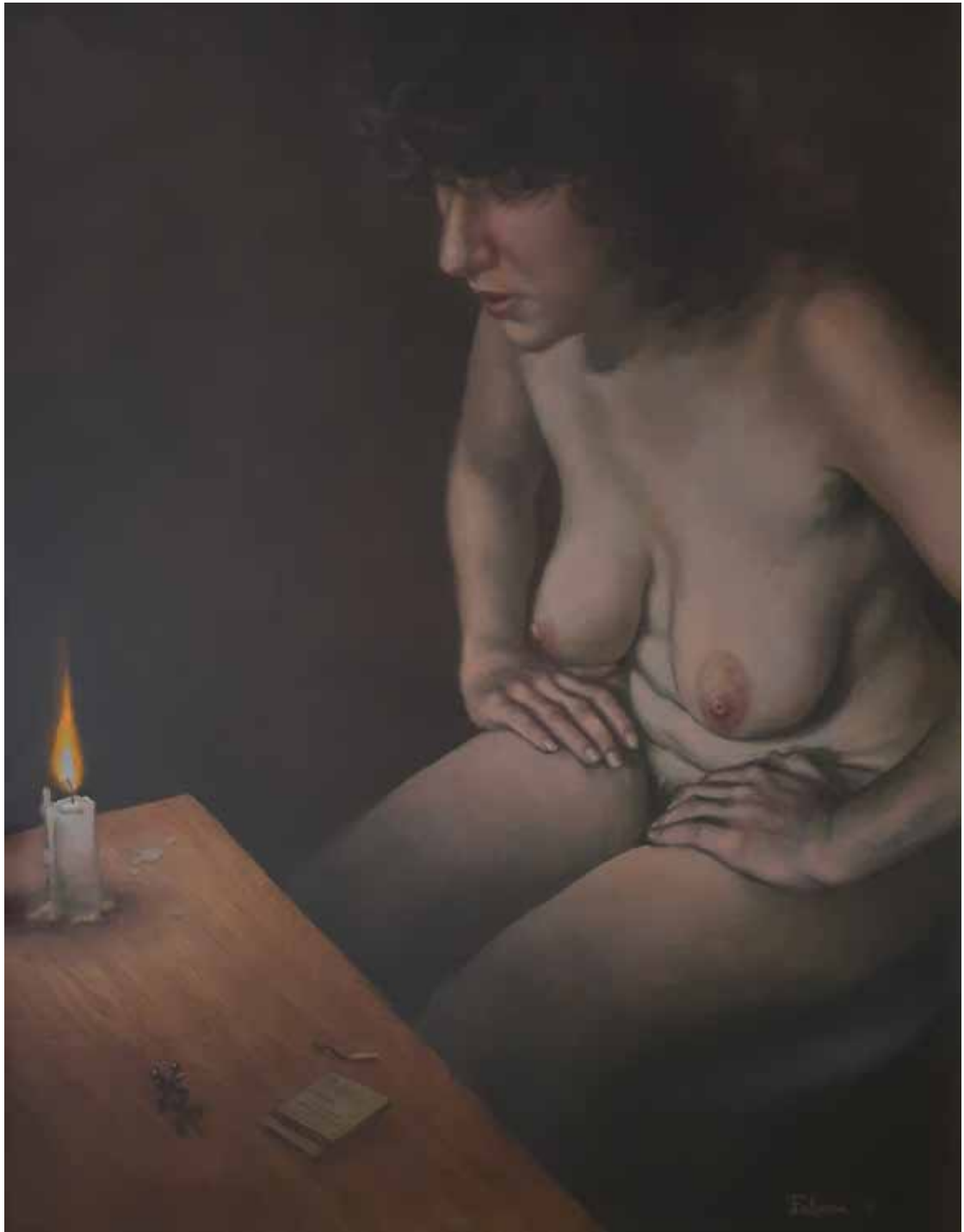
Smoke, 2019. Oil on linen, 29 x 30 in. Artist collection.



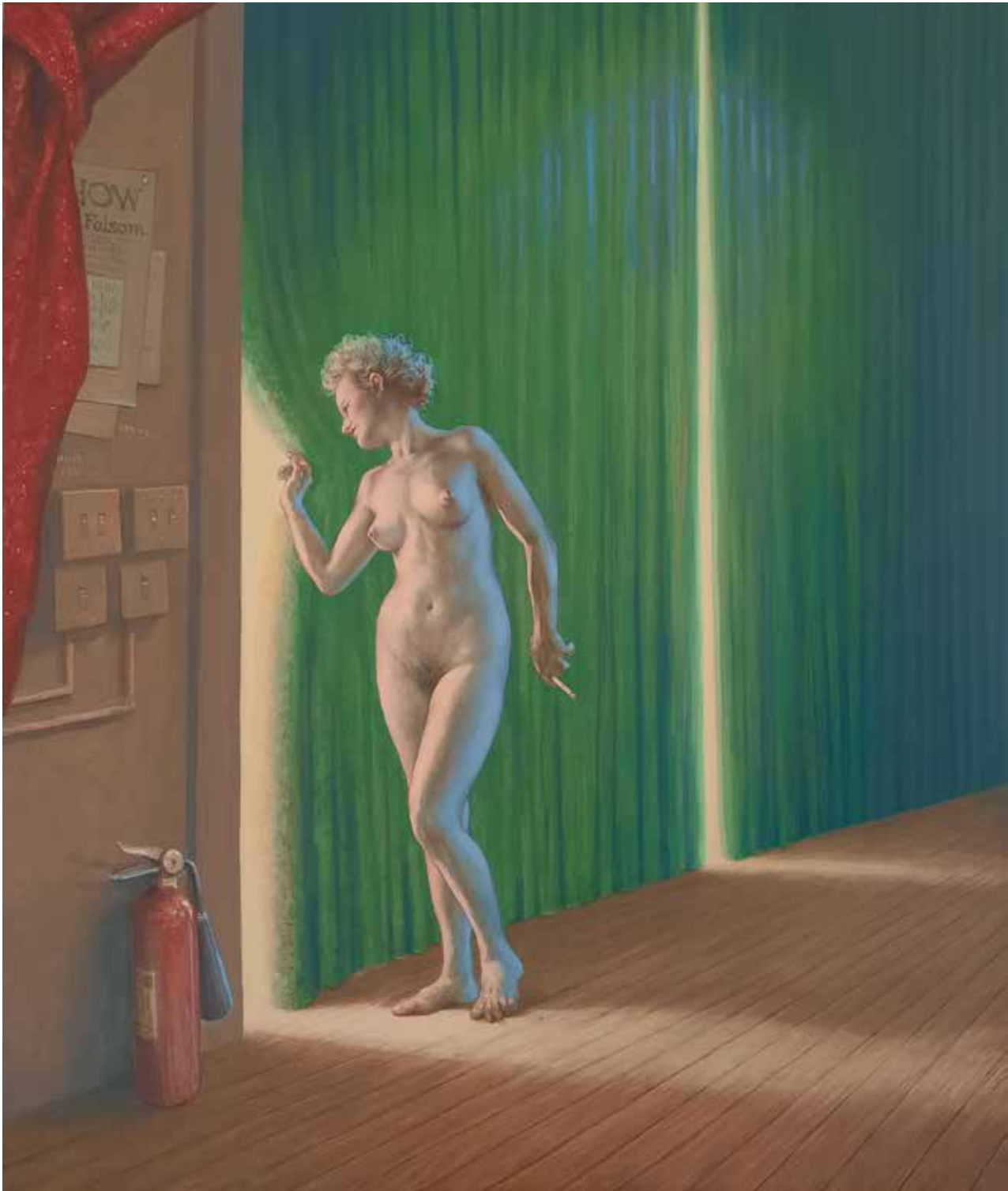
Coffee and Correspondence, 2008. Oil on linen, 30 x 25 in. Artist collection.



Morning Mail, 2013. Oil on linen, 24 x 26 in. Artist collection.



Candle Light, 2007. Oil on linen, 28 x 20 in. Artist collection.



Stage Left, 2019. Oil on linen, 36 x 24 in. Artist collection.



Danse Macabre, 2003. Oil on linen, 50 x 60 in. Artist collection.

LAST CALL



Last Call at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar, 1983-1987. Oil on linen, 78 x 234 in. Artist collection.





Happy Hour at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar, 1990. Oil on linen, 75 x 120 in. Artist collection.





Fight at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar, 1993–1994. Oil on linen, 80 x 120 in. Artist collection.





FRED FOLSOM

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BORN

1945, Washington, DC

EDUCATION

1964–1967, Pratt Institute, NY

1967 School of Visual Arts, NY

1969 Corcoran School of Art, DC

1973 Maryland College of Art & Design, MD

AUTHOR

2022 *Artiste, Memoirs and Meditations*, Fred Folsom, Kindle and paperback

2020 “Fred Folsom in His Studio” video;
“A Visit with Mr. Mao” video

2018 “Going Dutch” *Washingtonian* magazine.
<https://www.washingtonian.com/2018/03/20/ive-been-visiting-two-paintings-at-the-national-gallery-of-art-for-decades/>

2016 “Meditation in the Arts,” Slo-Opus Productions, (revised) video

2007 “ARTSO, The Emerging Years,”
Lid Magazine #4

2000 “The Man Who Made New York The Empire State,” *Financial History* magazine. Establishes that the New York Stock Exchange was founded as a part of Henry Post Jr.’s 1817 Erie Canal Plan.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2023 *A Drawing Like No Other*, American University Museum, DC

2014 *Franz and Virginia Bader Fund*, American University Museum, DC

2013 *Washington Art Matters, 1940–1990*, American University Museum, DC

2012 *The Constant Artist*, American University Museum, DC

2011 *Biennial Maryland Exhibition*, UMUC Gallery, University of Maryland, MD

2010 *Catalyst: 35 years of the Washington Project for the Arts*, American University Museum, DC

2008 *Conscience of a Nation*, George Mason University Gallery, Fairfax, VA

2007 *American Icons*, Light Street Gallery, Baltimore, MD

2006 *True Colors*, Meridian International Center, DC, (traveled 2002–2006) New York, Atlanta, Istanbul, Cairo, Alexandria, Casablanca, Belfast, Berlin, Vienna, Palm Beach, Dallas

2004 *Coach Folsom Sculpture Dedication*, Colorado University, Boulder, CO (solo show)

2002 *Landscapes by Fred Folsom*, Strathmore Hall Arts Center, Bethesda, MD (solo show)
Go-Go Bar Paintings by Fred Folsom, The Arts Club of Washington, DC (solo show)

1999 *4th Biennial Show*, Corcoran Gallery, DC

1999 *Edna Flying*, Montgomery College, Takoma Park, MD (solo show)

1997 *Deceptive Presence*, Gallery Stendhal, Fred Folsom, *Following the Muse*, Artists’ Museum, DC (solo show)

1996 *The Allegorical Table*, Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Newport News, VA

1995 *Black Art*, Rockville Arts Place, Rockville, MD

1994 *Portraits*, Georgetown University Gallery, DC

1993 *Fred Folsom: The Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar Paintings*, MAP, Baltimore, MD (solo show)

1992 *WPA in the Hemicycle*, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, DC; *Artiste Ensemble*, J. Rosenthal Gallery, Chicago, IL

1992 *James M. Goode Collection of American Self Portraits*, Hickory Museum of Art, NC

1992 *The Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar Paintings*, Washington Project for the Arts, DC (solo show)

1991 *Art Expo Show*, J. Rosenthal Gallery, Chicago, IL

1991 *Lithograph Review*, Machida City Museum, Tokyo, Japan

1991 *Mayor of Silver Spring Statue Dedication*, Silver Spring, MD (solo show)

1990 *Group Show*, J. Rosenthal Gallery, Chicago, IL

- 1990** *Washington / Moscow Art Exchange*, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, USSR
- 1989** *Fred Folsom's Last Call*, Kaiser Gallery, Governors Academy, Byfield, MA (solo show)
- 1988** *Fred Folsom at Gallery K*, Gallery K, DC (solo show)
- 1987** *Tough Realism*, Dimock Gallery, George Washington University, DC
- 1985** *The Washington Show*, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, DC
- 1985** *Maryland Biennial 1985: Painting and Sculpture*, Baltimore Museum of Art, MD
- 1984** *Fred Folsom: Paintings & Drawings*, Gallery K, DC (solo show)
- 1984** *In the Tradition*, University of Richmond, VA
- 1983** *Maryland Artists Exhibition*, Towson State University, MD
- 1982** *Drawings and Paintings of Fred Folsom*, Gallery K, DC (solo show)
- 1981** *Crimes of Compassion*, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA
- 1979** *Fred Folsom: Paintings and Drawings*, Gallery K, DC (solo show)
- 1979** *American Nude Drawings*, Middendorf / Lane Gallery, DC
- 1977** *Works by Fred Folsom*, Potters House Gallery, DC (solo show)
- 1974** *Maryland Biennial Exhibition*, The Baltimore Museum of Art, MD
- 1967** *FIPE Exhibition*, Foresthills Country Club, NY
- 1966** *Opus 7*, actor in Robert Wilson's first play, Pratt Institute, NY

GRANTS - AWARDS

National Endowment for the Arts, 1985
 Maryland State Arts Council; 2000, 1996, 1989, 1987, 1982, 1981
 Franz and Virginia Bader Fund, 2005
 Montgomery County, Maryland Community Service Award, 1981
 Maryland Governor's Citations: Hughes, 1982
 Glendening, 1996; Glendening, 2001

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

CATALOGUES

The Franz and Virginia Bader Fund: Second Act, American University Museum, DC, 2014
Washington Art Matters, 1940s-1980s, American University Museum, DC, 2013
The Constant Artist, American University Museum, DC, 2012
1st Maryland Biennial, UMUC-University of Maryland, MD, 2011
Catalyst: 35 years of Washington Project for the Arts, American University Museum, DC, 2010
2006, A Helping Hand, Five Talents Memorial Fund, DC, 2006
True Colors, Meridian International Center, DC, (traveled 2000-2006)
 57 Fine Arts DC, 2000
Black Art, Rockville Art Place, MD, 1995
Washington Project for the Arts, DC, 1993
Art Exchange, Washington-Moscow, US-USSR, 1991
Self Portraits, Jane Haslem Gallery, DC, 1991
Lithograph Review, Tokyo-DC, 1991
Approaching the Figure, Georgetown University, DC, 1989
 Brody Gallery, DC, 1987
Tough Realism, Dimock Gallery, George Washington University, DC, 1987
Maryland Drawing Exhibition, Maryland Art Place, MD, 1985
The Washington Show, Corcoran Gallery, DC, 1985
Maryland Biennial, Baltimore Museum, MD, 1985
Genre, Jane Haslem Gallery, DC, 1985
National Exhibition of Works on Paper, VA, 1983
Brandeis Show, Brandeis University, DC, 1983
Crimes of Compassion, Chrysler Museum, VA, 1981
 Arlington Arts Center, VA, 1980
Maryland Biennial, Baltimore Museum, MD, 1974

NEWSPAPER REVIEWS

Washington Post: 9/29/12, 6/26/12, 11/18/10, 4/12/07, 2/19/04, 9/29/02, 9/20/02, 9/12/02, 3/29/01, 8/4/00, 9/23/99, 2/28/99, 1/7/99, 11/9/97, 8/9/97, 6/9/96, 6/1/96, 2/19/96, 4/14/95, 4/17/95, 1/21/95, 3/11/94, 8/13/93, 12/11/92, 12/4/92, 12/21/91, 10/12/91, 10/10/91, 4/18/91, 3/31/90, 3/23/90, 5/20/89, 9/24/88, 11/3/87, 10/23/87, 10/17/87, 5/2/86, 12/21/85, 6/19/85, 5/18/85, 5/11/85, 5/5/84, 3/8/84, 3/20/82, 12/20/80, 9/13/80, 4/8/79, 3/31/79

Washington Times: 9/21/02, 10/16/99, 8/31/97, 1/23/95, 8/4/94, 1/24/94, 9/29/88, 5/2/86

Insight, cover: 1/13/86, 6/20/85, 3/1/84, 10/1/82

Evening Star: 9/14/80, 12/9/79

Baltimore City Paper: 7/19/02, 2/26/93

Gazette: 8/6/08, 8/30/06, 10/9/02

El Pais, Madrid: 7/14/95

El Tiempo: 5/5/95

Pravda: 6/94

Baltimore Sun: 2/4/93, 12/7/85, 12/19/82

Richmond Times: 2/1/84

MAGAZINES

Lid, #4, 2007

Washingtonian, March 2018, Jan. 2000, Sept. 1981, 1978, 1974

Mag-NY, cover: Gallery Stendhal, July, 1997

KOAN: Readers vote FF “best artist” 1996

American Artist, Portraits, Sept. 1997, Nudes, April, 1990

People, May, 15, 1995

IMAGE, Summer, 1992, cover, feature article

Baltimore, March, 1993

Art In America, July 1993, Feb. 1981, 1980

Art International, Dec. 1983, feature article, 1981

Washington Review, 2001, 1996

Feature article, Cover illustration, 1979

REFERENCES IN BOOKS

Noise, W.M. Rivera, 2015

Buried in the Mind's Backyard, W.M. Rivera, 2011

Beauty Will Save the World, Gregory Wolfe, 2011

100 DC ARTISTS, Lennox Campello, 2011

Rire pourquoi faire? Derlaing and Labaune, Flammarion, 2010

Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts, Brand and Chaplin, Piquant, 1999, 2nd edit, 2001

TV, RADIO, VIDEO, DOCUMENTARIES

“GO-GO Girls Don’t Cry,” Jeff Krulik, screened, WPA, 9/97, DC, AFI, 10/26/03

Phil Donahue Show, 1995

Don Juan Painting Interview, Russian (news) service, Julie Brosky, aired 4/18/95

Around Town WETA-WDCA: 2/25/93, 12/3/92

“Sculpture Dedication,” Ch 9 News, VOA, aired 10/16/91

“Go-Go Bar Interview,” Liz Roberts, NPR, aired 1/5/89

“Still Small Voice,” Fr. Owen Jones, PBS, 1989

“Last Call,” CNN, aired 11/14/87

“WPA Go-Go Bar,” Studio 9, Ch 9, WUSA, Gordon Peterson, 12/92, 3/7/93

“Last Call,” Ch 9, WUSA, Gordon Peterson, aired 2/7/92, 11/12/87

Ch 4 News, Arch Campbell, 8/11/75

PATENTS

#4,840,169, Two artist safety devices, 1989

BUSINESS

Owner-operator, Art Restoration Center, 1973–2012

ALPER INITIATIVE

February, 8–May 18, 2025
Alper Initiative for Washington Art
American University Museum
at the Katzen Arts Center
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Front cover: *Black Cat*, 2017. Oil on panel, 29 x 24 in. Artist collection.
Inside front cover: *Fight at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar* (detail), 1993–1994.
Oil on linen, 80 x 120 in. Artist collection.
Back cover: *Last Call at the Shepherd Park Go-Go Bar* (detail), 1983–1987.
Oil on linen, 78 x 234 in. Artist collection.

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FOR WASHINGTON ART

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