

SKARSTEDT



**Step Inside.**



**Eric Fischl: “Hotel Stories”  
at Skarstedt Gallery, New York.**

**By JAMES SALOMON April 5, 2024**

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“What I’m going for is the effect of the moment itself: the people, the emotional psychological content. I’m trying to stop the moment where it’s open enough to allow you to come in. The moment that’s most full in terms of potential meaning, without me controlling the meaning... It becomes their scene, their memory.”

- Eric Fischl

It’s hard to think that with all the things Eric does and accomplishes in his life that he has any time at all for painting. He and his wife, April Gornik, have become cultural mayors of the Hamptons with the dynamic and community engaging programming at [The Church](#) and [Sag Harbor Cinema](#). If you don’t know about these institutions, you should.

So, last month I get an email announcement for his now current exhibition at [Skarstedt Gallery](#) in New York titled “Hotel Stories”, up through May 4<sup>th</sup>. Just by reading the title and knowing the breadth of his work, I’m very curious and excited. I may have even said “of course” out loud. Many painters, filmmakers, writers, musicians, and storytellers in general have used hotels as a backdrop for their narratives. And why is that? Do these rented spaces apart from *la vie quotidienne* give license to bigger feelings? Are the secrets darker? Does the sex have more sizzle? Are the nights more naughty? Perhaps. Or perhaps loneliness sinks in deeper, or upsetting news seems more profound. Perhaps we’re more anonymous, for better or for worse. Perhaps it’s just business as usual. There is an ocean of possibilities, and now it’s Eric’s turn to take a stab at

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it with his first full series (and maybe not his last – hint, hint). It does not disappoint.

The artist was gracious enough to take me on a private tour, and with his gentle swagger pointed out a few things to be aware of. For instance, in one gallery room there are two paintings set across from one another. I notice that the carpets are the same, then realize that the rooms are the same, compositionally. He simply states that one painting is titled “October 7”, which has now become a marked day in recent history with grave troubles in the Middle East, while the other is “October 8”, with no relation whatsoever to the day before. Here are two complete paintings with completely different situations and moods, and yet it’s hard for me to think that one exists without the other, as space is the constant while time is the variable.



*October 7: Heading Out*

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*October 8: Heading Home*

In between these two works sits a woman on a bed turning back to the viewer in a “Girl with a Pearl Earring” type of pose, naked, though self-consciously covered with pillow on her torso and hair towel, flanked by two Cocker Spaniels as her guardian angels. We walk into the adjacent gallery room to encounter another mysterious woman also breaking the fourth wall. She’s staring at me, tensely. She’s barefoot and dressed in bohemian chic, while the man next to her wears a cowboy hat and boots with his jacket and tie. Inferences abound, as the waiter rolls out a room service cart. Maybe the banana wasn’t ripe enough.

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*Companions*

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*Hotel Service*

In other rooms, we witness a mature couple in an open cabin surrounded by tropical blue waters, in a seemingly post coital moment of embrace, aptly titled “Last Days at Tender Cove.” Then there’s a painting called “King’s Highway: Killing Time,” where a man strums his guitar on the bed with an AK47 assault rifle not far from reach. Eric says it’s loosely inspired by a [Joe Henry song](#), and highly recommended that I have a listen, which I did, as the chilling lyrics made sense of it all.

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*Last Days at Tender Cove*

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*Kings Highway: Killing Time*

To the artist's point, by being let in, there are all sorts of situations that we can invent for these characters, and that's part of the reason why Eric Fischl's work is so compelling and sometimes even fun to look at. The theatres of the mind are filled with comedy and tragedy, and I'd be tempted to write short stories on all of these paintings, but that would be a disservice to the viewer who can use their own imagination on these identities and representations.

Enjoy.