

# ANNA ZORINA GALLERY

532 W 24 ST NYC NY 10011 TEL 212 243 2100

**JOHN BRADFORD**

*All the World's a Stage*

April 9 - May 18, 2024

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 18th, 6-8PM

*"I'm so happy I've been completely free in my studio to paint whatever strikes my fancy and take it however far I possibly can. I've had a lifelong love of opera, classical music, and Shakespeare. I've come to believe that art doesn't imitate life; just the opposite."*

John Bradford 2024

Anna Zorina Gallery is pleased to announce the John Bradford exhibition entitled *All the World's a Stage*. This is Bradford's fourth solo show with the gallery. For Bradford, the stage is a completely man-made world of rules that can inspire us to suspend our dis-belief and willingly submit to the legitimate authority of art. In such a world, the Puritans weren't wrong to try to close down the Globe Theater where every performance was a celebration of the art of the agnostic; always shifting and moving, skeptical, self-governing, nuanced, with checks and balances, contradictions, full of gorgeous grays, chroma that sings, and the push and pull and flow of life freely lived.

The exhibition is organized as a performance in 2 acts, with an overture and a final ensemble.

Upon entering the gallery, viewers feel the grandeur, space, light and fun of delving into the world of the performance. In *Rosalind and Celia*, Bradford organizes the space as a series of almost oppressive overlays of vertical and horizontal grids; the familiar construction of the Globe stage with its pillars and balcony; the awkwardly built forest flats. These distinctions, separations, and boundaries have to be resisted and broken through to arrive at the lyrical moment centered on a disguised Rosalind in the shade of the Forest of Arden. The work presents a sleight-of-hand that seems to frame, constrain, and resist but actually reveals some true sentiment, certainly not Shakespeare's, fighting to become visible through the layers of artifice.

In *The Four Seasons*, the feeling of the music has the Venetian light, the shimmering movement of the water. But the performance onstage is disciplined, even autocratic, as the structure of the baroque orchestra was, with the women of the Orchestra of the Ospedale della Pieta seated like musical notation written out on a page.

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The following gallery space is organized like a “Baroque Room” in a museum, powerfully focused-in on the stature, dress, and presence of individual actors. In *White Hat 2023*, very roughly modeled after one of van Dyke’s exquisite monuments to aristocratic taste, Bradford pays homage while transforming everything. To paraphrase Clemenza, “Leave the gun, take the cannoli,” these works leave the Empire, take the grandeur for us all to play in, to splash around in pink, green and blue.

The final room, here called the Galleria, like the final sublime octet of Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* with its multiplicity of voices, presents small works of various contemporary subjects as if to say all the world is, indeed, a stage, inviting the contemporary viewer to be an active participant in the ensemble.

Over his 50 year career as a narrative painter, Bradford has mastered a radically physical technique which, now, in its most advanced phase, moves effortlessly from palette knife, to fingers, to brush, rag, impasto build up, scrub, to translucent wash, high chroma and tonal painting; through the entirety of the elements and principles of design and back, worked until there’s nothing else that can be added or subtracted.

John Bradford (born 1949, Wilmington, Delaware) received his BFA from Cooper Union in 1971 and MFA from Yale University School of Art in 1978. He is the 2011 recipient of prestigious American Academy of Arts and Letters Award for Painting. John Bradford’s work has been reviewed in the *New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *New Criterion*, *ArtNews*, *Village Voice*, the *Jewish Press* and *Hudson Review*. His work is held in numerous private collections around the world and is represented in the public collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT.

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