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MARSHALL FIELD



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Marshall Field, 2010, Oil on canvas with collage, 40" x 32"

# Patrick LoCicero

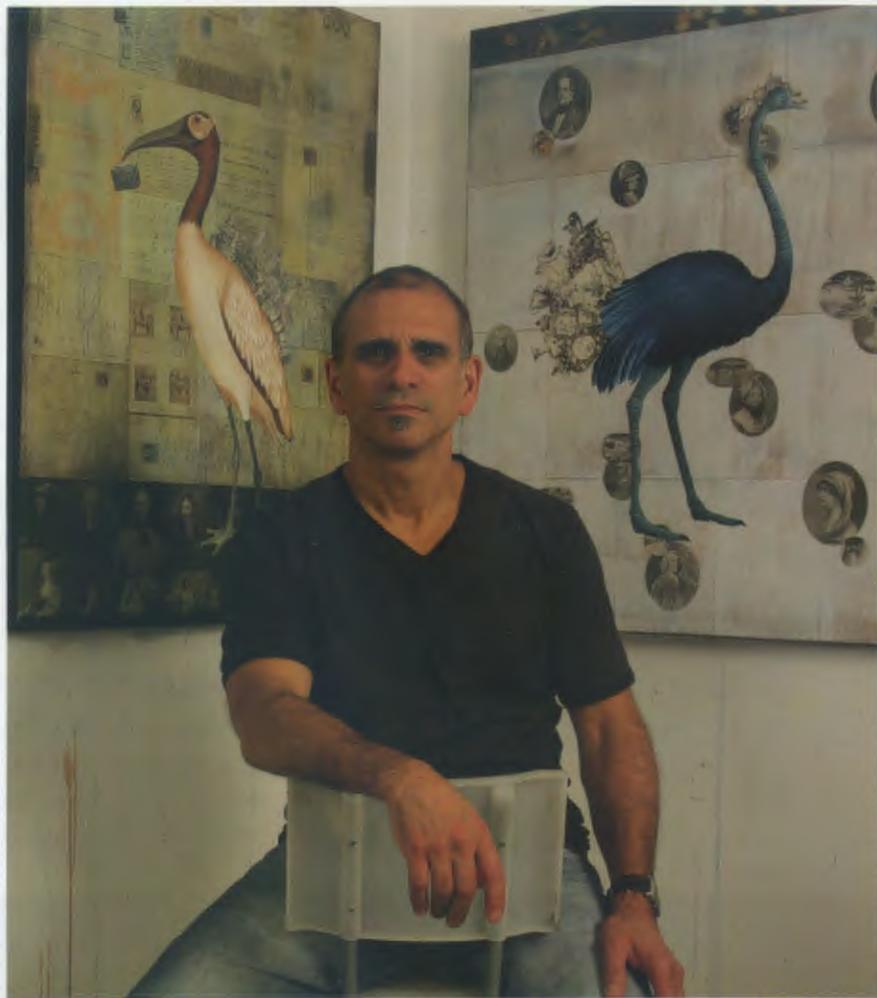


PHOTO: RICHARD NICOL

by Michelle Jones

**C**ollage isn't necessarily the first thing that jumps out from Patrick LoCicero's paintings. Rather, it's likely to be a vintage carnival ride, a panama hat, or an exquisitely rendered porcelain vase—all recurring images in LoCicero's vocabulary—that catches your eye. Pulling iconography from the past (1950s and earlier) and infusing sometimes related or wickedly surprising paper elements is this veteran artist's way of composing clever, complex pictures. He shies away from the word nostalgia but nevertheless seeks to imbue his paintings with the historical associations of the papers, books, and other ephemera he incorporates into his compositions, each painting hinting at a compelling backstory waiting to be discovered.

Working out of a large studio in Seattle, the Ohio-born LoCicero has an efficient, almost streamlined approach to his art. He jokingly refers to himself as a one-man factory and speaks of his creative space in industrial terms. There's a research/development room outfitted in shelving salvaged from a post office, a shipping/receiving room, office space, and the main work/production room. LoCicero devotes about six months to developing each theme, working on six to ten paintings at once, with two to three paintings placed on each wall of his work room.

"I think artists have a lot of ritual in their way of working. For me it's really cutting out paper. I love paper. If I'm not actually painting oil with brushes, I'll sit and just cut out imagery for hours and really not know what I'm going to do with it," LoCicero says. He's used the same black-handled tailor's shears for twenty-five years to cut out fish, birds, turn-of-the-century inventions, etc. "I call myself a tailor," he says. "I can cut out a piece of paper down to the size of a dime."



**Social Studies, 2009, Oil and collage on panel, 20" x 16"**

He sorts the various cutouts by theme and stores them in cigar boxes in his R&D room, plucking them out at will when he starts a new painting. Thus begins an intuitive process driven alternatively by image subject or by the feel or color of the paper. Once he applies the initial pieces, which can involve sanding them down to merge with the canvas and manipulating the tones using washes and paint, the collage serves as an outline or blueprint directing the rest of the painting.

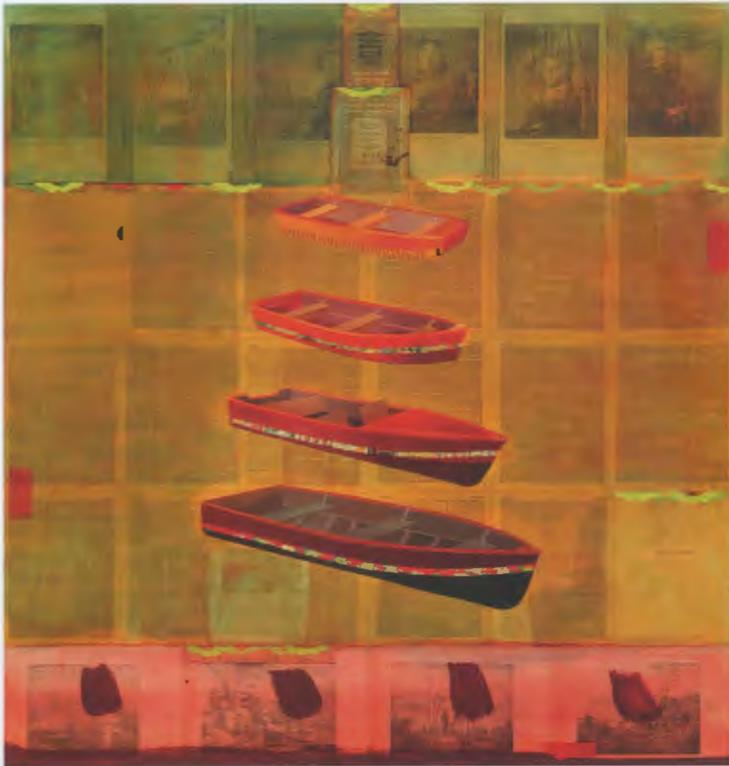
LoCicero has a vast cache of papers sourced by visits to flea markets, online purchases, and frequent trips to book sales hosted by the Seattle public library system. He uses the actual papers and the pages right out of the books on his paintings, no scanning or copying. LoCicero favors old books aged to warm tones from the sepia ink used on them.

He uses pages to great effect in *Men of Peace*, a picture showcasing seven men's hat styles from fedora to pith hat to uniform hat with visor. The painted hats float over a background covered in pages from a book of biographies of historical figures—Thomas Jefferson's for example—each illustrated with a portrait. Look closely and the portraits are revealed to be composites, the subjects morphing from one person to another.

*Men of Peace* also features one of LoCicero's favorite subjects: hats. Indeed, LoCicero says hats are his signature image; he's been painting them for twenty years. The hats, specifically the fedora image, came out of a twelve-year gig he had creating paintings of men's apparel for Nordstrom's stores around the



**The Politician, 2011, Oil on canvas with collage, 28" x 40"**



**Merchant of Venice, 2010, Oil on canvas with collage, 44" x 42"**



**Holbein's Dog, 2011, Oil on canvas with collage, 28" x 40"**

country—thus the similarity to vintage ads and posters (along with a slight nod to René Magritte). “The fedora or a hat is a metaphor for my father, who died when I was seven years old, who I didn’t really know,” LoCicero says. “This hat is an image I return to many times over the years. It’s an image I’m really familiar with, I know.”

“I work in metaphor,” LoCicero says. “I use painted iconography that acts as a stand-in for a personality or a memory. I do paintings that hopefully spark a collective memory in the viewer’s mind.” That doesn’t mean he’s stuck in the past though, and he’s even taken on traditional forms to shake them up a bit. Take still life, for example.

“I tried to tweak and reinvent the idea by collaging controversial or surprising imagery in my painting.” The results, as shown in paintings like *Social Studies*, are both beautiful and subversive.

In that piece, a classic vase shape painted in a swirling blue-and-white pattern holds a tassel of plant matter topped with cutout images of ancient Chinese figures. These sprout forth like Monty Pythonesque animation of tumbling knights. In his attempts to move beyond garden-variety still life, LoCicero sometimes spices up the arrangements by creating the floral forms from pornography or images taken from a copy of the *Kama Sutra*. “You think they’re daisies or roses; you come up to it and it’s images of fornication and whatnot,” he says. “It’s kind of surprising and disarming a little bit.”

The botanical paintings are among some of the simplest of LoCicero’s works. Most of his other paintings involve layer upon layer of collage and painting, with the collage elements often relegated to the background as fields of color behind one large element or series of elements painted onto the foreground. On the other hand, LoCicero occasionally displays an adept method of integrated collage with painted object, having a typewriter integrated with cigar box labels in *Marshall Field* or as flowers in his botanical paintings.

“Though collage is tantamount to my work, I consider myself a painter. I consider myself a pretty astute painter,” LoCicero says. “The pieces that succeed for me the most are the ones that are painted beautifully and have a lot of rich color.”



**Men of Peace, 2011, Oil on canvas with collage, 42" x 34"**

**Patrick LoCicero's works are on view now through November 26 in Cumberland Gallery's exhibit *A Showing of New Collages*. Cumberland Gallery is located at 4107 Hillsboro Circle, 37215.**

**[www.cumberlandgallery.com](http://www.cumberlandgallery.com) [www.patricklocicero.com](http://www.patricklocicero.com)**