

# Time Passes

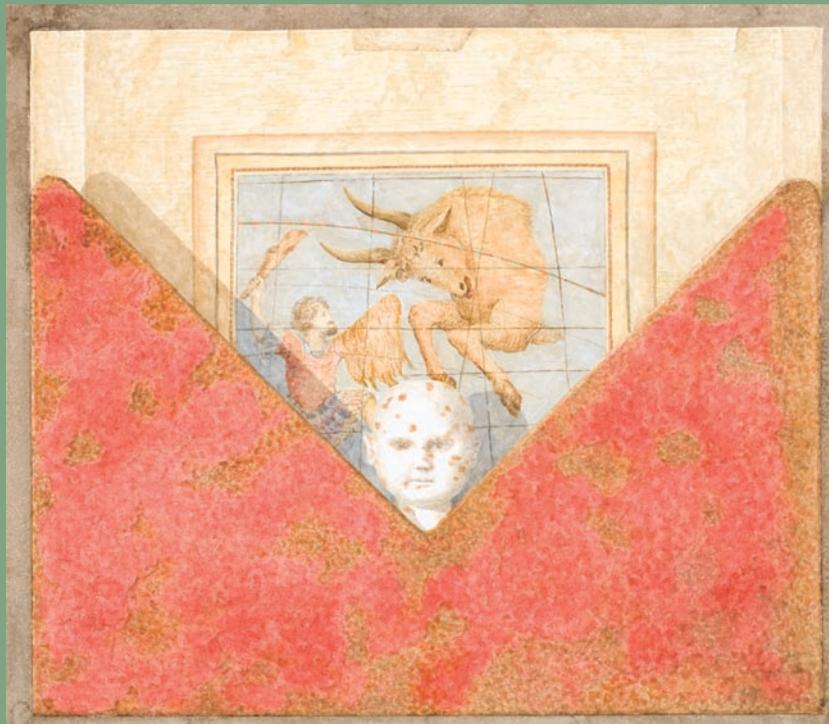
RECENT WATERCOLORS BY  
ROBERT ESHOO



Pucker Gallery • Boston



*Mirage*, August 30, 2010  
19 x 15 1/2"  
RE241



*Le Taureau*, January 4, 2011  
15 1/4 x 17 1/2"  
RE236

ALL WORKS ARE  
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER.

# Time Passes

RECENT WATERCOLORS BY  
ROBERT ESHOO

"Objects in one's youth quickly become objects of antiquity—  
toy boats and cars, game boards, a metal goose, dried flowers and leaves,  
marbles, pieces of aged wood... I preserve them in my work  
and, by doing so, time and memories stand still."

—ROBERT ESHOO, 2012

Belgian surrealist René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* depicts a pipe along with the caption, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("This is not a pipe"). The piece playfully mocks the viewer with the overt discrepancy between the image one sees and the words one reads. We are forced to ask ourselves important questions. What is the difference between the depiction of a thing and the thing itself? What is the relationship between visual language and verbal or other forms of communication? Several other Magritte works, as well as those of nineteenth-century Irish-American artist W. M. Harnett, more conventionally embrace the trompe-l'oeil tradition of deceiving the eye, displaying what convincingly appear to be three-dimensional objects in the two-dimensional framework of a painting.

In a similar vein, Robert Eshoo creates constructions and watercolor paintings that invite the viewer to contemplate various layers of reality and meaning, as well as different forms of representing some of the oldest and most elusive quandaries. His *Mirage* (RE241), for example, operates much like Magritte's pipe piece: below the scene of an ocean wave, glimpsed through a sort of port-hole or window, is the word "MIRAGE," challenging our perception of what it is we are seeing and establishing the idea that the artist frequently chooses our visual point of view for us. The majority of the other paintings

in this exhibit feature brightly colored game boards and pieces, children's toys, and dolls, many of which appear to protrude into and inhabit the viewer's own space. Despite their connection to childhood, the pieces are rather melancholy and ponderous, for they suggest issues as fundamental and expansive as the passage and power of time.

Aside from the clocks which Eshoo depicts, yellowed parchment, cracked wood, and rusted nails and hooks make several appearances, while the desiccated flower in *Dried Out* (RE246) evokes the Shakespearean sonnets that decry the inevitable loss of beauty, youth, and, ultimately, life. The doll's faces, too, frequently appear without bodies or even eyes, and they are stern and pockmarked; those that are made to appear two-dimensional just barely and eerily emerge from the surface of the parchment represented in the paintings. The figures are decapitated and disembodied, hollow in their construction and in their lifelessness. Indeed, several of the figures portrayed are hand-puppets, marionettes, or faces on sticks, inert on their own and requiring human intervention for animation. In several instances, the dolls and figurines portrayed in the round are echoed in the same or other paintings by two-dimensional photographs, drawings, or paintings, emphasizing the tenuousness of their—and perhaps our own—place in the physical world.



*Dried Out*, July 27, 2010  
18 ¾ x 12"  
RE246

"It has been important to me to use a variety of media in my work—oils, dried pigments, conté crayon, constructions, ceramic sculptures, returning to watercolor again and again to express the fluidity of it all."

—ROBERT ESHOO, 2012

Many of Eshoo's clown figurines and other dolls seem not so much to emerge from various containers in the paintings, but rather to be trapped inside of them, vestiges of a past time, much like the objects in his constructions. The jesters in the characteristically ironically titled *My, My, What a Show* (RE251) gesture as if to invite us to see their show or enter into their world, and yet there is the sense that they themselves are captives of the multiple, perspectival wooden frames surrounding them. Likewise, the puppet in *I Still Have My Marbles* (RE264) is suspended within a wooden box, the marbles seemingly just beyond his grasp.

One painting in this exhibit approaches the idea of entrapment and vulnerability with imagery that initially appears out of place. *Treasure Trove* (RE266) also contains a box with a shelf of marbles, though this time they are next to small portraits of Native American men. While the portraits are clearly not playthings, the relationship of the depicted men to the marbles is reminiscent, in a metaphorical sense, of the puppet in the previously discussed work. The plight of the Native Americans throughout history and up to the present day is well-known and has been treated in earlier Eshoo series. Native Americans, like the puppet, have not always been in control of their destinies, and in this painting they are mere images, not living beings with agency. The artist indicates that this theme resonates with his own life, as his "parents immigrated to this country many years ago from Assyria, a lost country that was overthrown."

Although he has lived and worked in the U.S. and specifically here in Boston throughout his life, Eshoo's pieces are ultimately more European than American in both style and content. He has said that he still listens to classical music while he works in the studio and that "the early masters greatly influenced my work, when I worked with dried pigments, egg tempera... media that is not often used these days," but we can still observe their impact in his watercolors. The concept of *trompe-l'oeil* and the aesthetic of many of the figures and scenes in his pieces originated across the Atlantic centuries ago. For

example, the ochre-red background color which appears in a handful of paintings recalls the famous frescoes of Pompeii. In *Le Taureau* (RE236), we see what may be the story of Theseus and the Minotaur (the latter figure appears in another work, *El Toro*), foregrounded by one of the many vacant-eyed heads which seems to belong to a porcelain doll or perhaps a sculpted cherub from the days of Bernini. The famously frescoed story is one of triumph and bravery, but also of despair. Theseus escaped the labyrinth, but he was trapped in his grief upon leaving behind his love, Ariadne, on the isle of Crete.

More frequently, we can see courtly Europe in the aforementioned jester-like puppets and also in Eshoo's stone castles and brick buildings. In contrast to the fairly worn wood and metal of some of the other paintings, the buildings appear to be in excellent condition—medieval in style, modern in wear. These structures have better withstood the test of time, but they are featured in broader, tidier, and more abstract contexts than the shabby and confined, yet warm world of wood, parchment, and color. In works such as *The Castle V, Homage to Franz Kafka* (RE256), we see a variety of ideas and motifs at work. An ominous gray castle is visible in the distance through an arched window in a red brick wall. As the title's reference to Kafka and his novel suggests, perhaps now we, in the present day, are trapped within a box of sorts, looking out on a cold, gray fortress and its equally gray surroundings.

The neat rows of bricks, windows, and castle stones in several related pieces call attention to simple aesthetics—geometry, rhythm, pattern, texture—and to the lack of figures or any significant reference to human life. Eshoo's point of view here is precise and scientifically observant, rather than detailed and emotional. Unsurprisingly for this set of pieces, *The Castle VIII, Homage to Franz Kafka* (RE257) likewise presents the notions of reflection and cyclicalality in a literal and cerebral manner: a gray castle and wall below, a reddish castle and wall above, each with accompanying orbs which recall the sun and moon. While Eshoo notes that the style of James Wingate Parr,



*Treasure Trove*, March 24, 2011  
17 x 12"  
RE266

with whom Eshoo worked at the Vesper George School of Art in Boston, influenced his preoccupation with the sky, we nevertheless sense the predictability—and relentlessness—with which time passes in these castle pieces.

Whether it is nostalgia for the past or fear for the future, pessimism or realism, which plague Robert Eshoo in his “old age,” as he calls this phase in his life, his watercolors allow us, as viewers, to confront his relationship with time as well as our own.

– PERRI OSATTIN, Boston, 2012

Perri Osattin, Gallery Assistant at Pucker Gallery, graduated from Williams College in 2010 with a degree in Art History, as well as a concentration in Middle East Studies and a certificate in Spanish Language and Culture. She grew up in New York City and is grudgingly learning to be a citizen of Red Sox Nation.

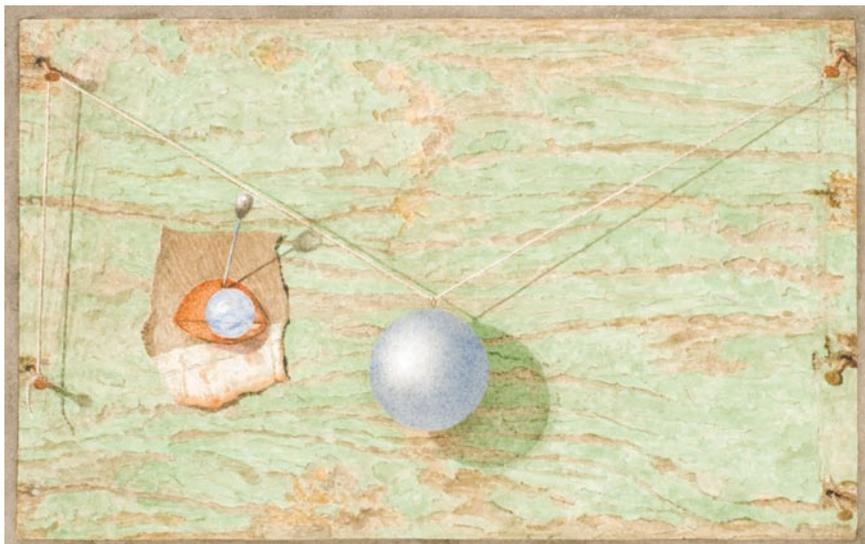
*The Castle V*, February 23, 2008  
*Homage to Franz Kafka*  
23 x 17"  
RE256



*A View Within*, December 19, 2008  
15 ¼ x 23"  
RE260



*One Way Out*, June 20, 2008  
22 ¾ x 18"  
RE259



*Hanging by a Thread*, August, 9, 2010  
11 ½ x 17 ¼"  
RE233

*Tempus Fugit V*, February 3, 2011  
17 x 17"  
RE248



*The Letter*, October 2, 2010  
17 x 11 1/2"  
RE234



*El Toro*, August 19, 2010  
18 1/2 x 14"  
RE238



*Music of Spheres*,  
November 1, 2010  
28 x 28"  
RE249



*Self-Portrait*, March 1, 2010  
10 1/4 x 9"  
RE245

*The Final Landscape*, September 12, 2010  
 18 ½ x 18 ½"  
 RE255



*Smile, It's Only a Game*, January 20, 2010  
 18 x 22"  
 RE254

**The Castle VIII**, April 6, 2008  
 Homage to Franz Kafka  
 23 x 22 1/2"  
 RE257



**Once Around II**, April 16, 2011  
 15 3/4 x 15 3/4"  
 RE267

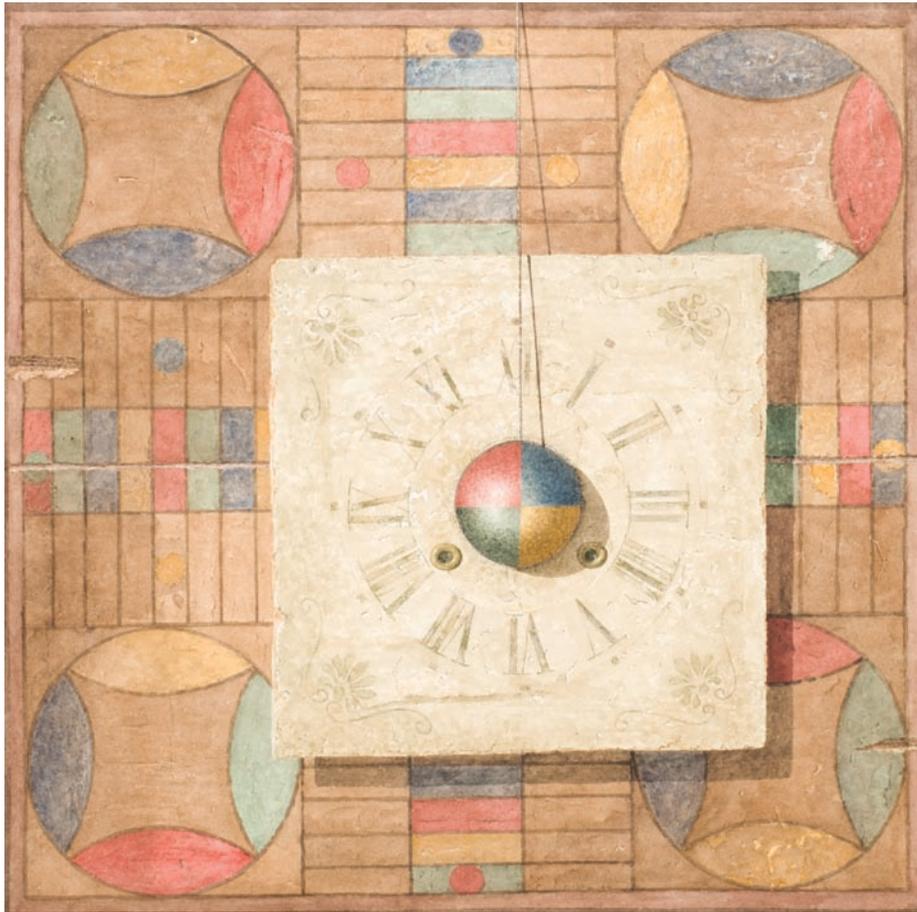


**No Spinner - No Winner**, September 15, 2011  
 12 1/2 x 12 1/2"  
 RE273

*Time Game*, April 1, 2010  
18 x 16"  
RE244



*Par Avion*, November 15, 2010  
17 x 17"  
RE242



*What Time Is It? II*, March 1, 2009  
17 ¼ x 17 ¼"  
RE252



*The Gate Keeper*, March 29, 2010  
16 x 12 ¼"  
RE232

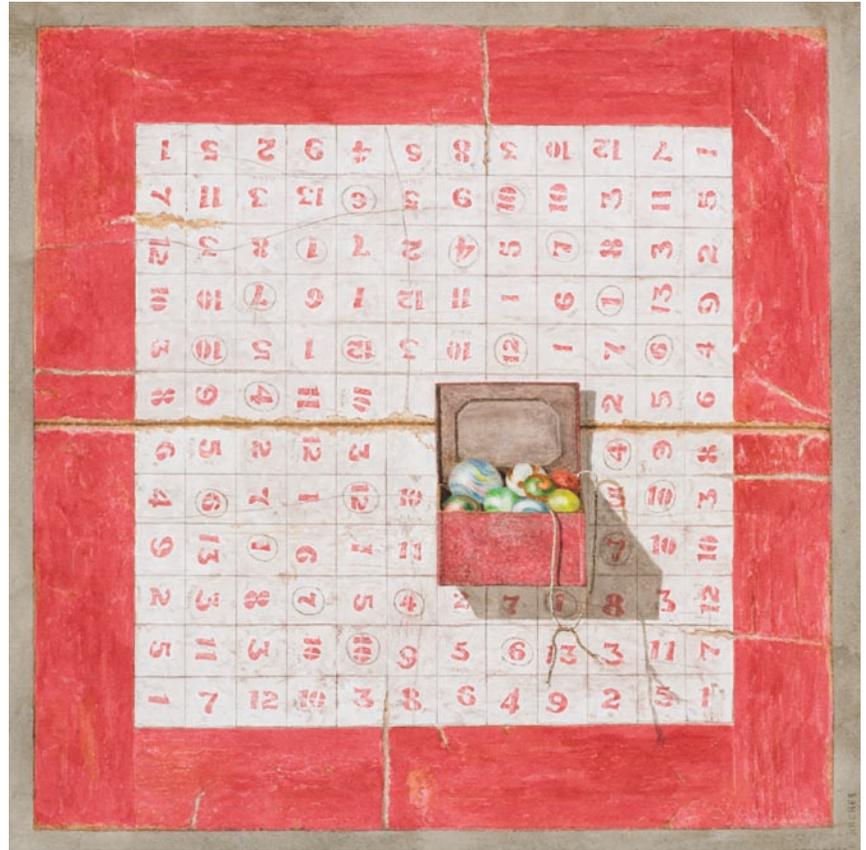


*Eve in Paradise*, February 11, 2010  
14 x 13 ¼"  
RE237

*The Treasured Prize*, August 12, 2011  
18 x 18"  
RE268



*Toy Box*, February 2, 2011  
16 3/4 x 12 1/2"  
RE231



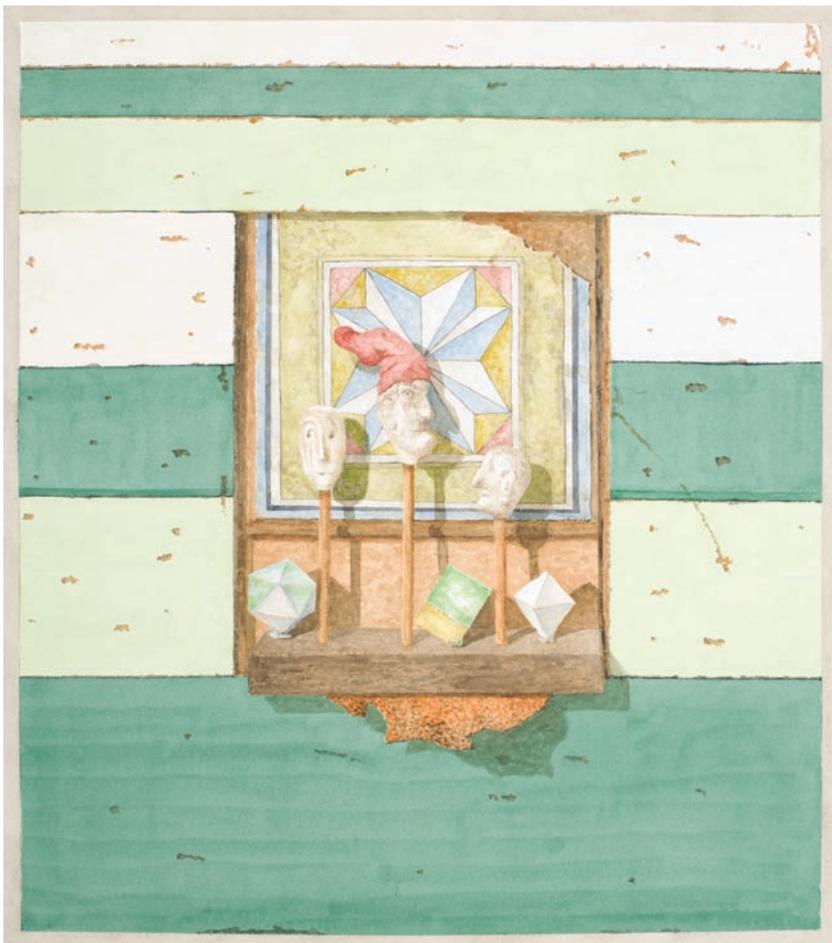
*Who Are You Calling a Silly Goose?*, May 6, 2011  
12 x 18"  
RE270



*The Next Great Adventure*, March 2, 2011  
17 ¼ x 13"  
RE243



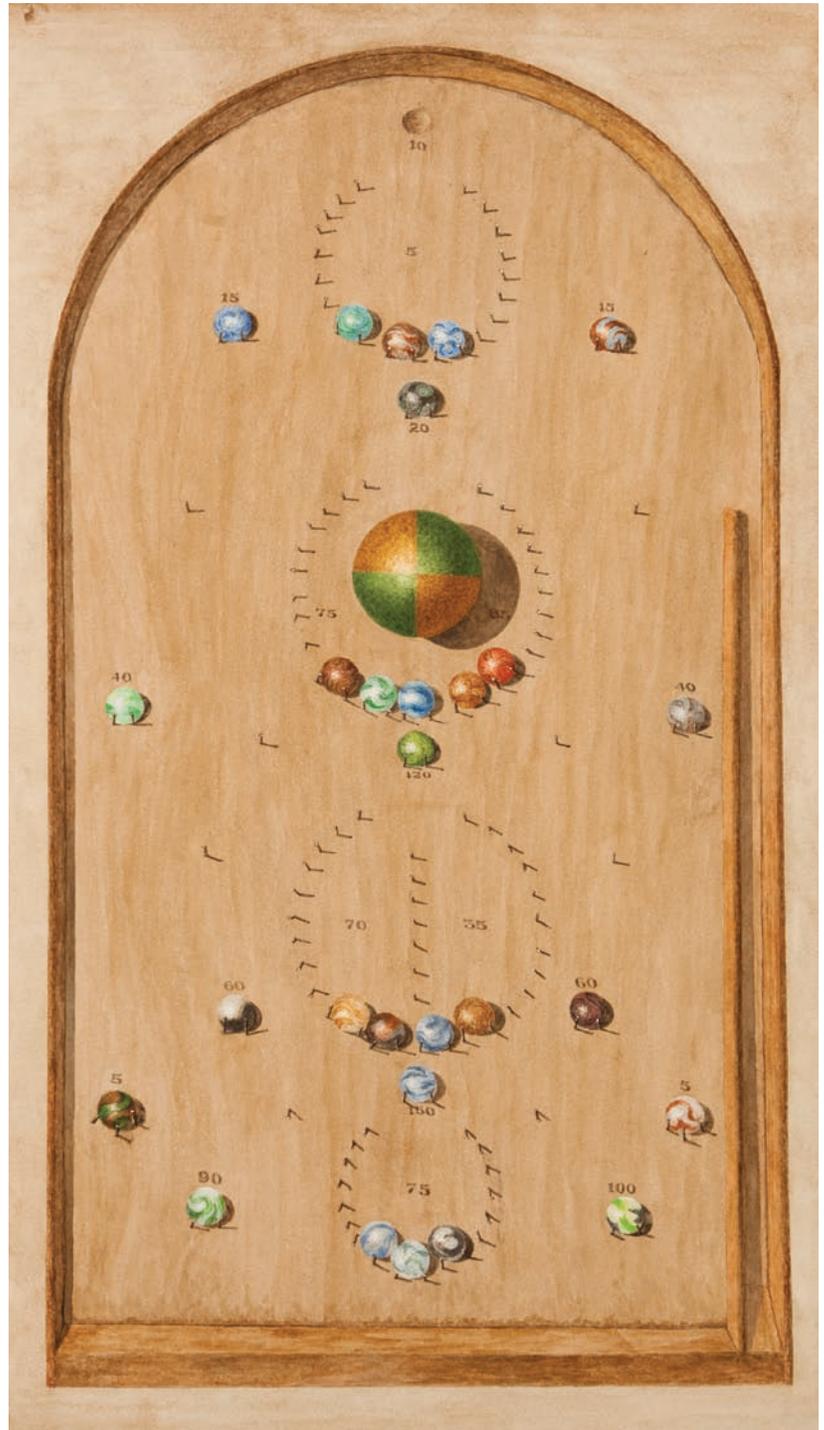
*Cameo*, March 16, 2010  
16 ¾ x 16 ¾"  
RE240



*Jester's Court*, September 10, 2010  
20 ½ x 18 ¾"  
RE253



*Always the Clown*, June 29, 2010  
18 x 11"  
RE235



*Final Tally*, November 11, 2011  
29 1/2 x 17 1/4"  
RE271



*I Still Have My Marbles II*, July 9, 2011  
17 x 12 1/2"  
RE265



*Once Around IV*, December 1, 2011  
17 1/4 x 15 1/2"  
RE275



*Do You See It? I Think I Do.*, April 27, 2011  
21 x 14"  
RE269

*Three Windows*, April 20, 2008  
 15 3/4 x 30"  
 RE262

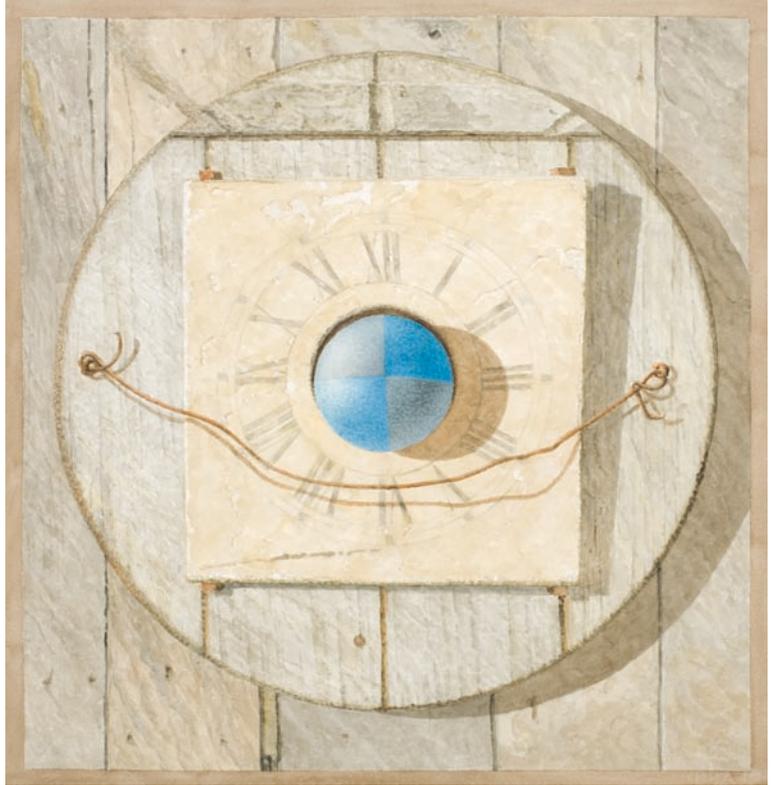


*Go! Stop! Dead End!*, June 2, 2008  
 23 x 30"  
 RE263



*Window Passage*, July 13, 2007  
30 x 22 3/4"  
RE261

*Life Line*, April 22, 2010  
18 x 17"  
RE239



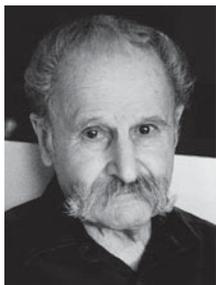
*Suspended Time*, April 27, 2010  
19 x 16"  
RE250

*The Unknown Number*, October 5, 2011  
 19 ½ x 21"  
 RE274



*Away, Far, Far Away*, June 20, 2010  
 22 ¾ x 18"  
 RE258

## ROBERT ESHOO

*Biography***BORN:**

April 27, 1926, in New Britain, CT

**RESIDES:**

Staten Island, NY

**EDUCATION:**

BFA and MFA, Syracuse University,  
Syracuse, NY

Five-year diploma, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Vesper George School of Art, Boston, MA

Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME

**POSITIONS:**

The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Fitchburg Art Museum,  
Fitchburg, MA

Phillips Academy, Andover, MA

Currier Art Center, Manchester,  
NH

Derryfield School, Manchester,  
NH

MacDowell Colony Fellow,  
Peterborough, NH

Haystack Mountain School of  
Crafts, Deer Isle, ME

**EXHIBITIONS:**

Museum of Modern Art, New  
York, NY

Whitney Museum of American  
Art, New York, NY

Boston Art Festival, Boston, MA

Chicago Art Institute Annual,  
Chicago, IL

Arts in Embassy Program,  
Bangkok, Thailand; Paris, France

Institute of Contemporary Art,  
Boston, MA

Corcoran Gallery, Washington,  
DC

Currier Museum of Art,  
Manchester, NH

Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME

Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA

DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA

New Britain Museum of Fine Arts, New Britain, CT

Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA

New England College, Henniker, NH

Paul Creative Arts Center, University of New Hampshire, Durham,  
NH

Swetzoff Gallery, Boston, MA

St. Paul School, Concord, NH

Mobile Art Gallery, Mobile, AL

Rieglehaupt Gallery, Boston, MA

Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA

Taft School, Watertown, CT

National Academy of Design,  
New York, NY

**SELECTED  
COLLECTIONS:**

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,  
MA

Addison Gallery of American  
Art, Phillips Academy,  
Andover, MA

Portland Museum of Art,  
Portland, ME

Hood Museum of Art,  
Dartmouth College, Hanover,  
NH

Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts  
Institute, Utica, NY

Wadsworth Athenaeum,  
Hartford, CT

New Britain Museum of  
American Art, New Britain, CT

Chase Manhattan Bank, New  
York, NY

Currier Museum of Art,  
Manchester, NH



*Tempus Fugit VI*, February 11, 2011  
21 ¼ x 16 ½"  
RE247



*Once Around III*, October 18, 2011  
22 x 29 3/4"  
RE272

# PUCKER GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1967 BOSTON

*Pucker Gallery*

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To view this catalogue and other Gallery publications and to experience an audio tour of the exhibition, please visit [www.puckergallery.com](http://www.puckergallery.com).

*Gallery Hours:*

Monday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM

Sunday 10:30 AM to 5:00 PM

We offer one free hour of validated parking at the 200 Newbury Street Garage. The garage driving entrance is located on Exeter Street between Newbury and Boylston Streets. The nearest MBTA stop is Copley Station on the Green Line.

Pucker Gallery is a member of the Boston Art Dealers' Association and the New England Appraisers Association.

*Change Services Requested.*



*I Still Have My Marbles*, May 30, 2011  
20 x 26 1/2"  
RE264

**COVER IMAGE:**  
*My, My, What a Show*, October 20, 2010  
17 x 16 3/4"  
RE251

**CREDITS:**

**Design:** Leslie Anne Feagley

**Editors:** Destiny M. Barletta and Justine H. Choi

**Photography:** Keith McWilliams and John Davenport

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Printed in China by Cross Blue Overseas Printing Company

## Time Passes

RECENT WATERCOLORS BY  
**ROBERT ESHOO**

DATES:

2 June through 16 July 2012

OPENING RECEPTION:

2 June 2012, 3:00 to 6:00 PM

*The public is invited to attend.*

*The artist will be present.*