

The background of the entire page is a textured, abstract painting. It features a window frame with a view of a blue sky and white clouds. The painting is done in a style that uses thick, visible brushstrokes or pastel marks, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors are primarily earthy tones (browns, greys, and tans) for the interior and frame, with bright blues and whites for the sky and clouds outside.

125

Jennifer Bartlett  
*Hospital*

THE  
DRAWING  
CENTER





The Drawing Center

January 22 – March 20, 2016

Drawing Room

Jennifer Bartlett *Hospital*

*Curated by*  
Brett Littman



DRAWING PAPERS 125

Essay *by* Brett Littman

Poems *by* Wystan Curnow

# Jennifer Bartlett: Hospital

Brett Littman



In June 2012, Jennifer Bartlett began a new series of ten pastels entitled *Hospital*, based on photographs she took during an extended stay at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. The images are of quotidian things: corridors and views from the windows of waiting and treatment rooms. What makes them emotionally charged is not their mundane subject matter but their powerful subtext—Bartlett’s own mortality. These pastels are not maudlin, but, as discussed below, they register the particular circumstances of their creation—that they were made during the treatment of a grave illness.

These are not Bartlett’s first hospital-related works. In 2004, after an exploratory surgery, the artist had to convalesce at home and, lacking the energy to paint, began to write short stories and dialogues, which became the basis for her *Word Paintings*, 2004–06. The series consists of personal reflections on illness, recovery, dreams, friends, and family. One, *Purple Corridor*, 2004, is a twenty-three panel text-and-image painting that begins with the phrase “HERE IN THE HOSPITAL I FIRST SAW THE PURPLE CORRIDOR...”. The *Word Paintings* and Bartlett’s earlier series *Air: 24 Hours*, 1991–92—made during a complicated divorce—are the most directly intimate works in Bartlett’s career, dealing as they do with specific difficult personal emotional states. Interestingly, both series also deal with interior spaces—an imaginary corridor and the insides of rooms. In this sense as well, these series are a departure for Bartlett who generally works with systems or landscapes. I would posit that the *Hospital* pastels, due to their intimate nature and their emphasis on interiors over landscapes, should be viewed in relation to *Word Paintings* and *Air: 24 Hours*.

In the *Hospital* pastels, Bartlett visually expresses what might be called “hospital time,” a temporality marked by the alternation

between periods of intense treatment and extreme boredom that fosters a hyper-attunement to small changes in one's immediate surroundings. From pastel to pastel, Bartlett tracks micro-shifts, rendering similar landscapes at different times of day and under different weather conditions or drawing the way a railing in a corridor stretches into the distance from two distinct vantage points. Her attention to these kinds of details, reflected in shifts of color and perspective, imbue the works with a palpable sense of her own changing emotional states, which seem to oscillate between resignation and hope. This logic of alternation and subtle shifts is reinforced by the way Bartlett pairs her pastels by subject matter. There are two hospital corridor views with railings [PLS. 4, 5], two hallway views with Arne Jacobson Swan Chairs in front of a window [PLS. 2, 6], two views of the 59th Street Bridge [PLS. 1, 3], two views of buildings [PLS. 7, 8], and two abstracted views through windows [PLS. 9, 10]. None of the images include figures.<sup>1</sup>

Bartlett's strategy of employing a limited number of visual motifs repeated from differing vantage points links *Hospital* to another series, *In the Garden* from 1981—the artist's first major work using the medium of drawing. Comprising 200 multi-media works on paper, it was inspired by Bartlett's visit to Nice, France, between 1979 and 1980. The story goes that she was a bit disappointed with the run-down villa where she was staying, so she began to focus her attention on the garden attached to the house. Neither highly designed nor decorative, it consisted of a grove of cypress trees surrounding a rectangular pool with a kitschy sculpture of a urinating cherub at one end. This somewhat banal scene, however, acted like a generator that motivated Bartlett to create a multitude of drawings.

---

<sup>1</sup> Later in 2012, Bartlett used the same set of photographs to create a series of ten large oil paintings also entitled *Hospital*, which were shown at Locks Gallery in 2015 and are included in this catalogue in order to document all the works under this title in one place. Using the same basic visual vocabulary of corridors, views through windows, and urban landscapes, Bartlett repeats the motifs she established in the pastels with two major differences: all of the paintings have the word "Hospital" written on them and all have a colored line or lines running through the images. For those interested in the *Hospital* paintings, I refer you to the excellent essay by Raphael Rubinstein in the catalogue entitled *Hospital*, published by Locks Gallery in 2015.

Bartlett made preparatory sketches for her panel paintings throughout the 1970s, but rarely displayed them. *In The Garden* was surprising both as a public presentation of her drawings and for the fact that she showed so many in a single exhibition. One of the other unusual elements of *In The Garden* was the inclusion of almost fifty works that employed pastels—a medium rarely used by artists working in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Pastel drawing had fallen far out of fashion and was more associated with eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century figures like Quentin de la Tour, Georges Seurat, Jean-François Millet, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Odilon Redon, and Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer. At a moment when the dominant aesthetic movements of the day—Conceptualism, Minimalism, and Post-Minimalism—privileged idea and system over image, there was something radical in Bartlett’s championing of the highly sensuous and visual medium of pastels.

So what was Bartlett trying to do with these pastels in *In The Garden*? The whole project was almost an auto-didactic lesson for Bartlett to teach herself how to draw in different media: in addition to pastel, we find pencil, graphite, pen, ink, charcoal, conté crayon, watercolor, and gouache. The images range in style from simple line sketches to fully rendered scenes, and Bartlett chose to depict a wide range of vignettes that included landscapes, figurative works, abstract drawings, studies of the trees and other isolated objects, perspectival views of the pool and its surroundings, multiple views of the sculpture, and many diptychs juxtaposing cinematic vantage points of the same scene. *In the Garden* is a veritable Beaux-Arts education condensed into a very short period that links Bartlett’s work to broad themes in art history. In addition, the works, in their totality, lay bare Bartlett’s relentless exploration of a limited landscape for all its formal, geometric, emotional, and atmospheric possibilities. (Bartlett even writes notes in the margins of *In the Garden*, 1980, about measurements of scale, perspective, hue, and time of day.) The prevalence of pastels in these works might be connected to the fact that they offer more “painterly” applications and color options than pencils, graphite, or crayons. With the pastels in *In The Garden*, Bartlett seems best able to capture and synthesize the changing conditions of the site itself with its shifts of weather, clouds, coloring, and wind, making these particular works a very strong aesthetic

foundation for the series's overall project of presenting a specific time and place.

Since *In the Garden*, Bartlett has continued to employ pastels and has made more than 600 works in the medium. Pastels appear in other earlier multi-media serial works like *Elements*, 1990, *Seasons*, 1990, *24 Hours: Elegy*, 1992–93, *Air: 24 Hours*, 1993, and *Earth*, 1993–96. Here, the pastels are offered as variants on paintings also contained within the series. In 1995, however, starting with *Aspen, 6 Weeks*, a suite of twenty-four pastels made during a vacation in Aspen, Colorado, it seems that Bartlett shifted her thinking about how she would use the medium moving forward. Since that series, Bartlett has used pastels almost exclusively to document places she visits (much like the initial pastels for *In the Garden*), creating a sort of art travelogue. Each series is identified by the name of the place and often the months that Bartlett was there (e.g. *Jumby Bay, February*, 1998, or *Parrot Cay, March*, 2011). According to Joan LiPuma, Bartlett's longtime studio assistant, 30 x 30 inch sheets of paper would be shipped to these various locations so that she could work on site and then send the resultant pastels back to the studio at the end of her trips. For Bartlett, these series act as a way to keep busy and limber during downtimes from her studio practice.

The post-1995 “travel” pastels are always devoid of human figures. They focus on exterior landscapes populated by flowers, fauna, trees, clouds, water, snow, sunsets and nightscapes, architecture, boats, chairs, fencing, mountains, and deserts. Their color palates are varied due to the seasonal nature of Bartlett's travel and also due to the different locales in which she works. From the bright blues, purples, yellows and greens of Bermuda, Nevis, and Parrot Cay to the snowy white vistas of Iceland and Aspen to the earthy browns and ochres of Arizona—these works perfectly harmonize and exploit the nature of the quick pastel sketch with Bartlett's empirical and emotional reads of the daily conditions during their making.

Can we also then say that the *Hospital* pastels act as a kind of travelogue? I would argue yes: these pastels are made during a journey—not to a beautiful vacation spot but to a specific place

nonetheless. Of course, the results are more disquieting than her other “travel” pastels. In a sense, with *Hospital* Bartlett has come full circle through *In The Garden* to *Air: 24 Hours* and *Word Paintings* to tie together the more personal reflections and ideas that she has explored throughout her career to create a new body of work that eschews sentimentality while remaining indelibly poignant.



# Pastels





as for  
what's  
in store

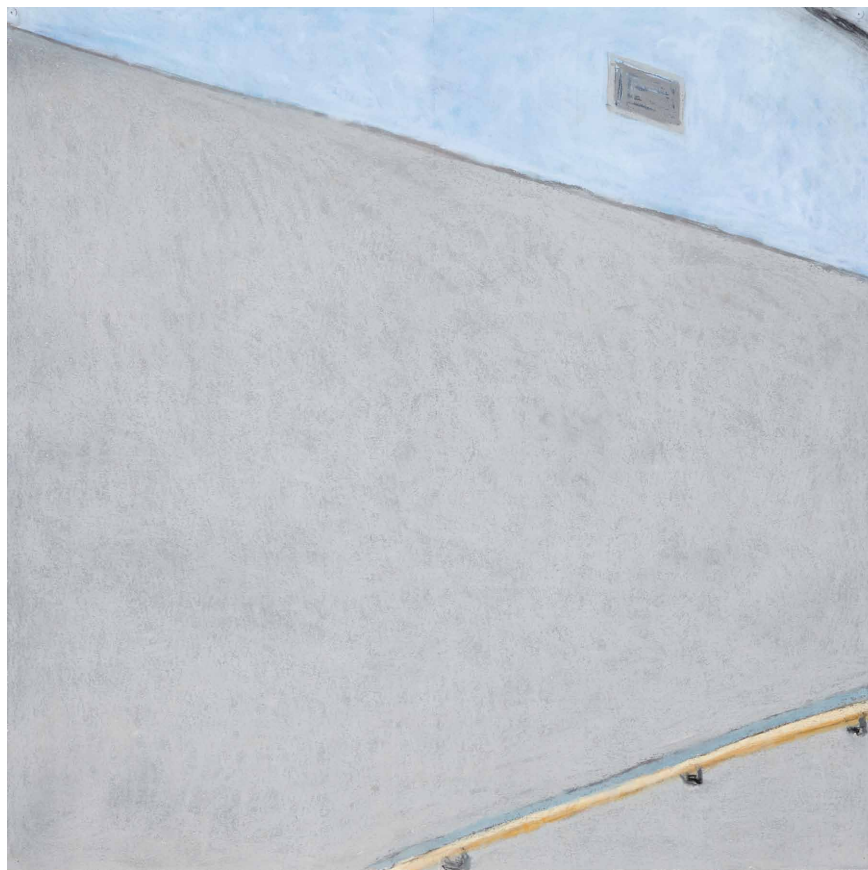
what-  
ever

I and  
you who

do al-  
so care

to think  
means  
nothing

26. 7. 82



*what*

was the

point

is

still

the

point

is

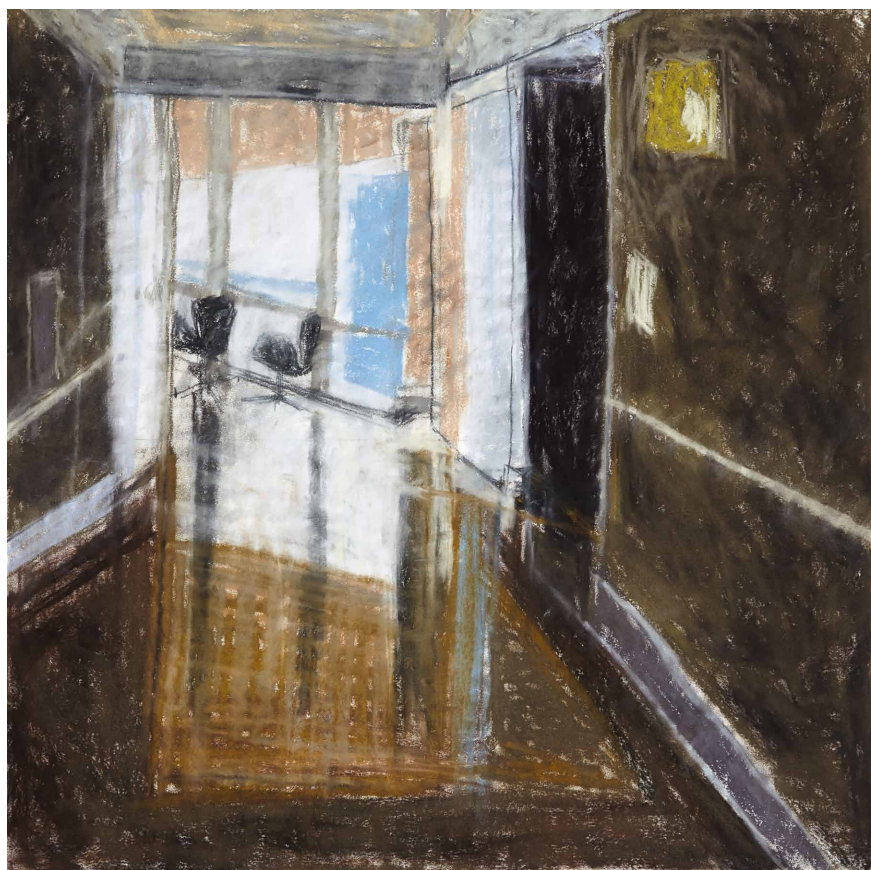
the

9. 8. 82



you  
go  
on  
with  
out  
me

*13. 8. 82*



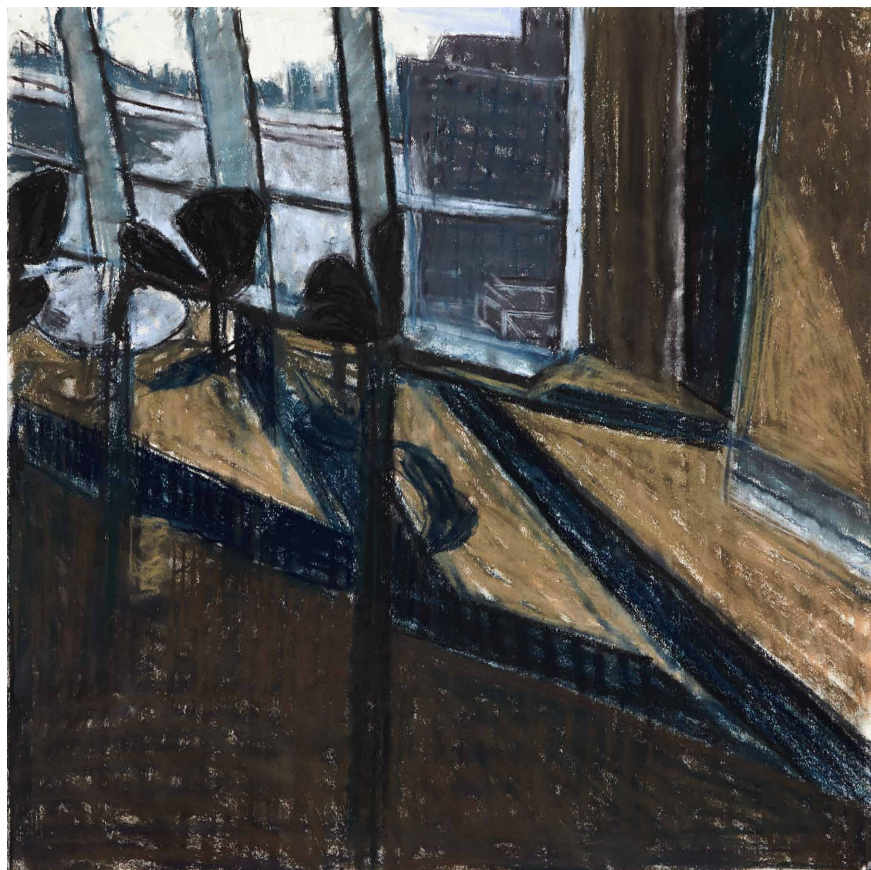
get

me

for

not

*7. 11. 82*





Now that

I

have it

(death)

in my

sentence

I'm the

more

composed.

*27. 7. 82*



*Have it*

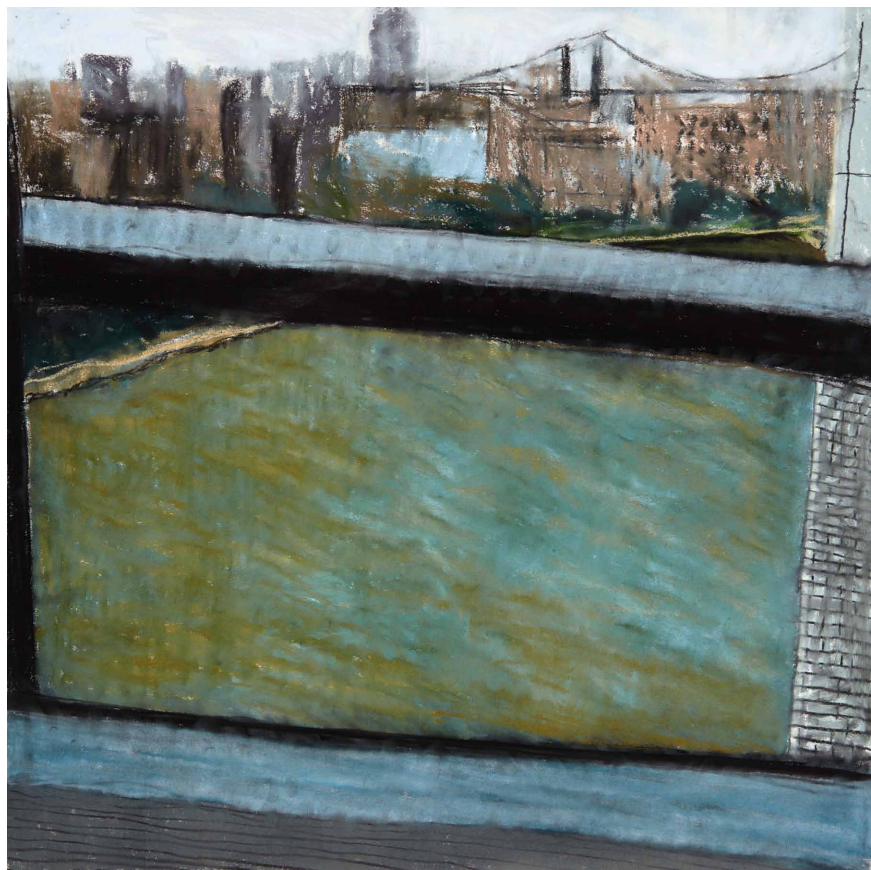
in for/

out with

my one  
and only

body

*17. 12. 82*



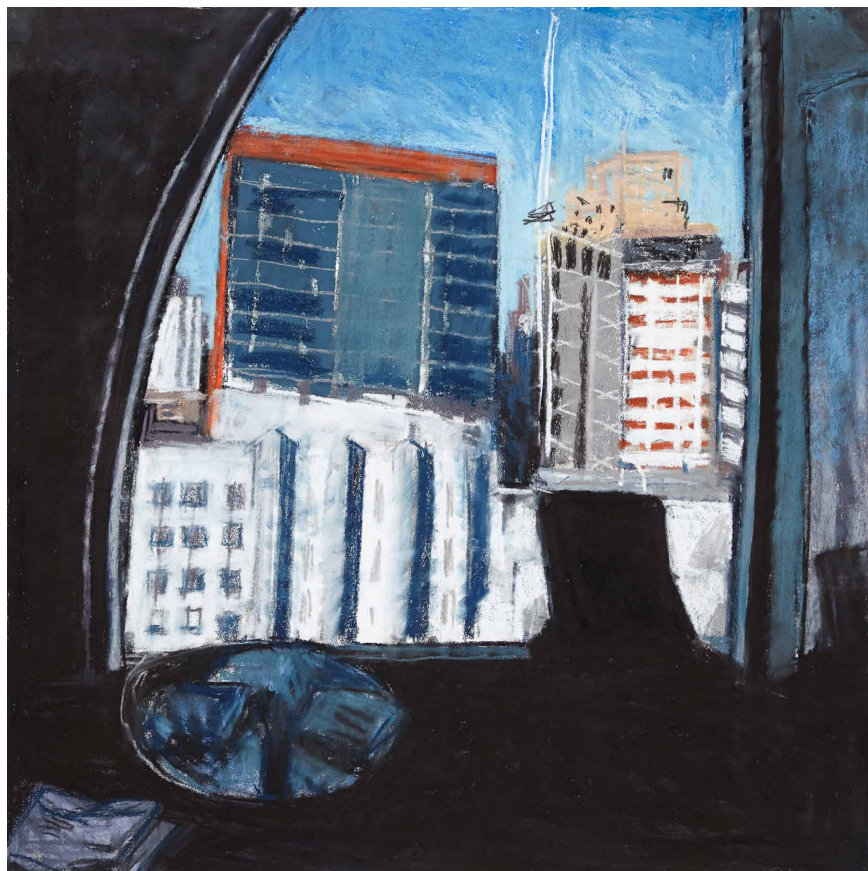
my out-

cast is

your ov-

er look

*19. 9. 82*



*One*

an

other

*An*

other

one

*15. 12. 82*





to one

side not

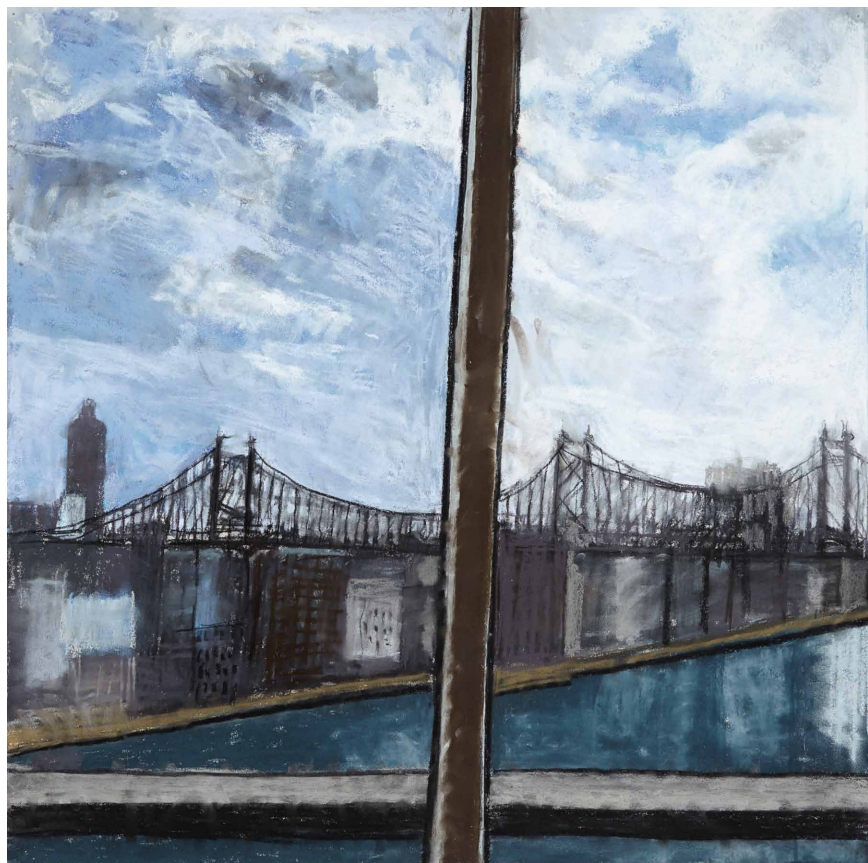
in side

one to

side with

out sides

*27. 1. 83*



cut	it
out	cut
it	out

*26. 7. 82*



now to

face

known

facts

not yet

known

27. 7. 82

Who

*leads*

a life?

*21. 11. 82*

Wystan Curnow's *Cancer Daybook* was published in 1989. He was diagnosed with colon cancer in June 1982 and following surgery and chemotherapy was given a 50 percent chance of remission within five years. He concluded his book with a note: "These poems had at the time of their composition a peculiar purpose: that of distracting a disease. On a day to day basis. It seemed best to delay their publication as a volume until such time as that purpose had been well and truly served."

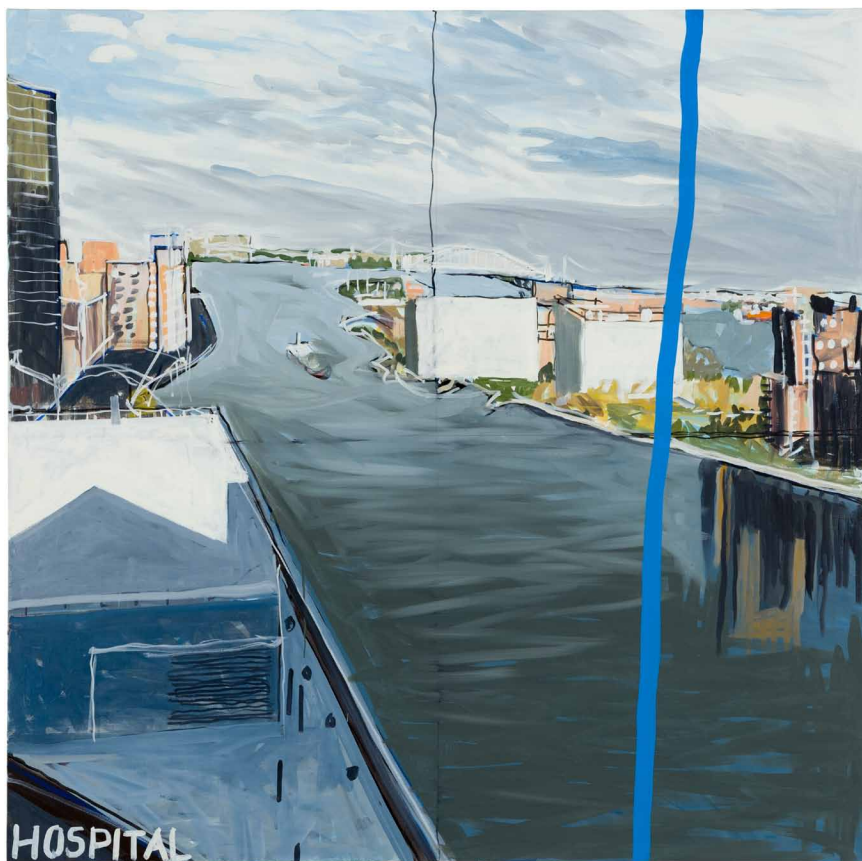




# Paintings



















## LIST OF PLATES

PLS. 1–10 / COVER (DETAIL)

*Hospital*, 2012

Pastel on paper

30 x 30 inches (76.2 x 76.2 cm)

Courtesy of Michael Forman & Jennifer Rice

Photographs by Joseph Hu

PLS. 11–18

*Untitled (Hospital)*, 2012

Oil on canvas

54 x 54 inches (137.2 x 137.2 cm)

Courtesy of Locks Gallery

Photographs by Joseph Hu

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### *Co-Chairs*

Rhiannon Kubicka  
Jane Dresner Sadaka

Frances Beatty Adler  
Dita Amory  
Brad Cloepfil  
Anita F. Contini  
Andrea Crane  
Stacey Goergen  
Steven Holl  
Iris Z. Marden  
Nancy Poses  
Eric Rudin  
David Salle  
Galia Stawski  
Barbara Toll  
Isabel Stainow Wilcox  
Candace Worth

### *Emeritus*

Bruce W. Ferguson  
Michael Lynne  
George Negroponte  
Elizabeth Rohatyn  
Jeanne C. Thayer

### *Executive Director*

Brett Littman

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Jennifer Bartlett: Hospital* made possible by the support of Jerry Speyer, Michael Forman and Jennifer Rice, and the Schiff Foundation. Additional support is provided by members of The Drawing Center's Exhibition Fund.

The Drawing Center would also like to acknowledge Sueyun Locks and Doug Schaller of Locks Gallery for their longterm commitment to making this exhibition possible, as well as Joan LiPuma, Jennifer's studio manager, who assisted with crucial research on Bartlett's pastels.

Lastly, the poignant simplicity of Wystan Curnow's poems were a guiding light for this project, and we are grateful that they anchor the book.

## EXHIBITION FUND

### *Director's Council*

Frances Beatty Adler and Allen Adler  
Dita Amory and Graham Nickson  
Rhiannon Kubicka and Theo Blackston  
Nancy and Fred Poses  
Fiona and Eric Rudin  
Jane Dresner Sadaka and Ned Sadaka  
Barbara Toll

### *Curator's Circle*

Grant Johnson

### *Artist's Patron*

Anne H. Bass and Julian Lethbridge  
Flobelle Burden Davis and Henry Davis  
Emy and Jacques Cohenca  
Hester Diamond  
Libby and Adrian Ellis  
Rebecca and Gilbert Kerlin  
Carol LeWitt  
Marion Miller  
Sarah A. Peter  
Joyce Pomeroy Schwartz  
Candace King Weir  
Claire Weisz

### *Catalogue Sponsor*

Eugenia Bell  
Jill Baker and Jeffrey Bishop  
Douglas Cramer and Hugh Bush  
Jody Falco and Jeffrey Steinman  
Jane Furse  
Carol and Arthur Goldberg  
Susan M. Gosin and Richard Barrett  
Herbert Kasper  
Werner H. Kramarsky  
Mi Young Lee  
Linda Macklowe

### *Education Benefactor*

Georges Armaos  
Vittorio Calabrese  
Mia Enell and Nicolas Fries  
Shelly and Vincent Fremont  
Francis Greenburger  
Betty Lou Hudson  
Margaret and Daniel Margaret Loeb  
Jay McInerney  
Anthony Meier  
Beatrice Scaccia  
Serena Trizzino

### *Program Underwriter*

Elizabeth Albert  
Louis Blumengarten  
Thomas Buser  
Prudence Carlson  
Joan Spaulding Cobb and Henry Cobb  
Fran Deitrich and Peter Capolino  
Stephen Figge  
John Forgach  
Christian Frederiksen  
Mary Freedman  
Barrett and Peter Frelinghuysen  
Nancy and Stuart Goode  
Myiesha Gordon  
Christine Grounds and Jonathan P. Mir  
Susan Harris  
Michael Kihn  
Nancy King and John McDevitt King  
Joanna Kleinberg Romanow and Daniel Romanow  
Janet Kraynak and Stefano Basilico  
Pierre Leval  
Scott Lifshutz  
Anne Lindberg  
Diana Littman-Paige and Adam Paige  
Joanne Lyman  
Myra Malkin  
John Melick

Mireille Mosler  
Susan Palamara  
G. Layng Pew III  
Victoria Reese and Greg Kennedy  
Andrea Rosen  
Barbara Schwartz  
Richard Spain  
Alfred Steiner  
K. Brad Van Woert III  
Daniela Velan

*Gallery Supporter*

Elizabeth Albert  
Noriko Ambe  
Gina Amorelli  
Elizabeth and Chris Apgar  
Margery and Howard Appelbaum  
Olivia Bernard  
Sally B. Brown and Thatcher M. Brown III  
Nancy and Charles Busch  
Barbara Campisi  
Carol Caputo  
Laura Cosgrave  
Elizabeth Coyne  
Stephen Daly  
Heide Fasnacht  
Lindy Fyfe  
Anne Gilman  
Tatiana Ginsberg  
Karina Givargisoff  
Susan Gofstein  
Leonard Gold  
Kathryn and Mark Green  
Hilde Grey  
Constance Grey  
Josephine Grieder  
Francoise Grossen  
Ann Hamilton  
Graham Harles  
David Hart

Jack Hazerjian  
George Held  
Nona Hershey  
Donald King  
Carla Klevan  
Nancy Koenigsberg  
Martha Lewis  
Patricia Lyell  
Karen Mainenti  
Tom Morton  
Lucia Cirino Murphy  
Sarah Jane Mustin and Craig Stockwell  
Barbara Nessim  
Marcia Patmos  
Ellen Paxson  
Jody Pinto  
Deborah Pohl  
Barry Redlich  
Peter Shedd Reed  
Bill Rock  
Carol Ruderman  
Joan Ryan  
Peter Saul  
Christa Savino  
Robert Schechter  
Robert Seng  
Drew Shiflett  
Joan Greenfield and Dominique Singer  
Mimi Smith  
Frances Sniffen  
Ann Tsubota  
Lynn Umlauf  
Judith and Phillip Vander Weg  
Wendy Vanderbilt-Lehman  
Dorsey Waxter  
Jill Weinstein  
Richard Zakin



EDWARD HALLAM TUCK PUBLICATION PROGRAM

This is number 125 of the *Drawing Papers*, a series of publications documenting The Drawing Center's exhibitions and public programs and providing a forum for the study of drawing.

Margaret Sundell *Executive Editor*

Joanna Ahlberg *Managing Editor*

Designed by AHL&CO / Peter J. Ahlberg

This book is set in Adobe Garamond Pro and Berthold Akzidenz Grotesk.

It was printed by BookMobile in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

ISBN 978-0-942324-95-2

© 2016 THE DRAWING CENTER

THE  
DRAWING  
CENTER

35 WOOSTER STREET | NEW YORK, NY 10013

T 212 219 2166 | F 888.380.3362 | [DRAWINGCENTER.ORG](http://DRAWINGCENTER.ORG)





DRAWING PAPERS 125

\$12.00 US

ISBN 9780942324952



9

780942

324952

51200

