

# Maine Home

March 2013

+ DESIGN



March \$5.95



## Elegant, Simple Lines

An artist's spare, Swedish-inspired  
home on Deer Isle's Wing Cove

# The Figure

## REAL & IMAGINED



David Graeme Baker, Scott Kelley, and Devin Dobrowolski are highly skilled painters who depict the human figure realistically but not photo-realistically—observation and imagination play equally important roles in their work. Characters and the scenes they inhabit conflate reality and fiction to suggest ambiguous narratives of larger symbolic significance.

---

DAVID GRAEME BAKER  
SCOTT KELLEY  
DEVIN DOBROWOLSKI

---



## DAVID GRAEME BAKER

Born in South Africa, David Graeme Baker has continued to visit his native country since immigrating to the United States at age two. As a high school student he lived in France and now he believes that these experiences have given him a sense of cultural relativism. Baker studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and has received multiple grants and fellowships, most recently from the Ballinglen Arts Foundation in Ireland. Baker has had 11 solo shows in galleries from Ellsworth to Philadelphia, and his work is included in *The Art of Maine in Winter* by Carl Little and Arnold Skolnick. Baker is represented by the Dowling Walsh Gallery in Rockland, Gallery Henoch in New York City, Quidley and Company in Boston, and Artists' House Gallery in Philadelphia.

Utilizing a form of constructed realism, Baker employs his considerable pictorial skills to create narratives of ambiguity and innuendo that capture archetypal human experiences of motherhood, youth, and belonging. Like the Dutch genre painters he admires, including Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675), Baker places great emphasis on creating an atmosphere of stillness in the midst of ordinary life. Baker's images depict children, adolescents, and adults in relationships to each other that reveal their respective stages of self-awareness. Baker uses friends and family as models, and some images appear to be so intimate that they position the viewer as

a voyeur. Intensely meaningful to the artist, these scenes are, however, fully staged and carefully planned by him. "They function as springboards for contemplation," he says.

Convincingly rendering certain details—a face or a hand—enables Baker to suggest the reality of the entire picture even while letting go of veracity in other areas. "The great power of realism is its ability to twist the truth to say something more than what happened," he explains. After prolonged consideration and consulting many varied sources, including art history, literature, and folk tales, as well as his own observations, Baker conceives an idea to be expressed in pictorial terms. The idea itself, as well as the model, will determine

the scale of a painting, which can reach the monumental. Each element of the final composition bears significance in support of the overall theme, yet the image remains open enough for viewers to explore their private responses. *Hunters and Rabbits* is asking questions about vulnerability but also strength, about seduction but also aggression. Stuffed animals lie next to a bra; the line of an arrow continues into a bouquet of flowers. The girl's decorous posture belies her nascent sexuality. "I am interested in the tension caused by the duality of roles people play," the artist explains.





■ ..... *Hunters and Rabbits*, 2012, oil on linen, 36" x 36"



## SCOTT KELLEY

Born in Binghamton, New York, Kelley has been living on Peaks Island since 2003. He studied at the Cooper Union School of Art in New York, the Slade School of Fine Art at University College London, and the Glassell School of Art at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Kelley had his first solo show of watercolors at the American Realist Gallery in New York at age 18. Since then he's shown annually in galleries in New York City, on Long Island, and in Maine. Recently, the Portland Museum of Art added his work to their permanent collection. In 2003 Kelley became an artist-in-residence at the Palmer Station in Antarctica. The sights and experiences of that monthlong stay are still occupying him. The artist currently shows at the Dowling Walsh Gallery in Rockland and at Sigrid Freundorfer Fine Art in New York.

Kelley has made a name for himself with minutely detailed watercolors of birds, rocks, pot warps, and trompe l'oeil renderings of vintage postcards. He bases his imagery on research and observation, to which his slightly offbeat aesthetic and humor lends an edge. "One obsession at a time," Kelley says. The result is a strange mingling of history with contemporary life, of fact with fiction.

Kelley's watercolors are painstakingly and very slowly executed, accumulating up to 40 coats of paint in the process. The feathers of birds, mottled surfaces of rocks, and designs on coils of rope satisfy his interest in color and pattern. The artist's other prominent pursuit, history, finds expression in his deliberate

evocation of the past: portraying extinct species in historical settings and adding foxing effects to his paper. These brown specks are usually a sign of age, but Kelley mastered the technique of imitating foxing while working for a forger many years ago. Kelley also draws precisely patterned and hatched scenes of nature with sepia ink on paper treated to the same aging process, which makes them look suspiciously like products of nineteenth-century sketching trips.

Kelley has worked in theater as well, and likes to treat his art shows as dramatic narratives. For his past one he studied the history and economics of whaling, including the records of lost whaling ships. Without becoming nostalgic, the resultant work tells true stories. The young

girl in *Isabella*, whose patterned dress and hair ties match the color of her eyes, is a neighbor of the artist. She holds a framed scherenschnitte silhouette, a relatively affordable historical form of portraiture, of her actual father. However, the handwritten log entry underneath tells another story—that he "was lost at sea while sperm whaling in the Southern Pacific Ocean, 1859." Kelley's image appears suspended in time, a narrative of truth and make-believe. The artist splendidly succeeds in his stated goal: "to create worlds you can believe as long as you are in them."



Isabella, 2012, watercolor and gouache on paper, 30" x 22". Private collection