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Steve Mumford Paints a Picture

by Charlie Finch



[Steve Mumford](#)

[Arizona](#)

[2001](#)

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Inka Essenhigh and Steve Mumford opened up their Loisada studio last Friday night to showcase Mumford's excellent new painting, soon to be shipped to London's hot [Victoria Miro](#) gallery for a group show.

The piece, still greasy fragrant, highlights a riverrun Eden worthy of Thomas Cole, although, per usual in Mumfordland, there's something terribly wrong going on in the foreground -- a leopard about to pounce from behind on an unwitting woman in an orange sweatshirt, jogging.

Presumably the jackrabbit and the fox camouflaged in Steve's forest primeval are next.



[Steve Mumford](#)

[Jack Rabbit](#)

[2001](#)

In spite of the generous spread and careful selection of wines proffered by the painterly lovebirds, the usual grumblings were heard when nature meets the brush these days.

The black edges and hidden agendas in artists like Mumford, Walton Ford, Ann Craven, John Newsom and Alexis Rockman, among others, quickly inspire the sophisticates to groan, "Ugh!! It's nature -- just a few tricks that you leave behind in art school."

Inka Essenhigh voiced her concerns. "You know, none of Steve's paintings sold out of his Postmasters show." Last spring's solo gig garnered three or four positive reviews (including one from this corner), and prospects of a show out West.



[Steve Mumford](#)

[Dolphins](#)

[1999](#)

[originally shown at Postmasters](#)

One couldn't help but admire Mumford's sheer force of will as a painter and his willingness to inject the sharpest side of himself into each beast, until it looked back at you.

"They'll go for this one in England, Steve," we said. "It's by far your best yet."

Spurred on by most-hostess Inka, the crowd got a little sexual, with 303 firebrand Mary Spirito rapidly tongue-kissing (iguana style) Kiki Seror and an unidentified blonde for the amusement of boyfriend Peter Ryan of Helman Gallery.

Ryan can take it -- Douglas Kelley wants him to play Russell Haswell in his proposed Cecily Brown movie.



[Walton Ford](#)

[Necropolis](#)

[1999](#)

[at Paul Kasmin Gallery](#)

On a snowy night, indoor headgear was de rigueur! [I-20](#)'s Paul Judelson didn't remove his Russian fur number, complete with Huckleberry Hound earflaps, while *Artnet Magazine*'s Sherry Wong sported a mile-high pile of pop-red curls.

Around 10:30, a fruitless search for sparkling water found the studio groaning board picked clean to the last atom of salmon, six kinds of

[Steve Mumford Gallery](#)



[Ann Craven](#)

[Royal Rose](#)

[1998](#)

[at Curt Marcus Gallery](#)

cheese, copious loaves of bread, bottles of wine and vodka, and a big icy tub of Corona.

Even the Cedar Tavern gang couldn't grasp and graze like the new millennium's art locusts! Dozens of invitations to upcoming shows were passed around amid a general sense of satisfaction that things were gearing up again on the New York art scene, as they had for 50 years past.

Since every day is a holiday in artland, the "real" holidays are just a nuisance.

Merry Chelsea, folks.

CHARLIE FINCH is coauthor of *Most Art Sucks: Five Years of Coagula* (Smart Art Press).



[Alexis Rockman](#)

[Dire Wolf Tracks](#)

[1999](#)

[at Works on Paper, Inc., Los Angeles](#)

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