

## LOUISE E. MARIANETTI: MAGICAL REALISM

Bert Gallery • Providence, RI • [www.bertgallery.com](http://www.bertgallery.com) • Through March 19, 2011

Luminous and dark paintings from Louise E. Marianetti's prolific career—particularly the 1930s and '40s—are on display in this one-woman exhibit. Modeled after Marianetti's critically acclaimed 1949 show at the Vose Gallery in Boston, the show features twenty-seven of the thirty-five works in the original exhibition.

Viewers are treated to an intimate look into Marianetti's style and work habits, as her cousins donated painting supplies and props—think Rembrandt pastels, her famous black beret, and various tinctures and solvents—to the Bert Gallery when she died in 2009. The items are juxtaposed smartly with the artwork.

The show begins with four self portraits, all done during various stages of Marianetti's career. In *Portrait with Slippers*, done in tempera on paper, a confident, even sultry Marianetti stares out from the amber background, her hair falling in waves onto her bare shoulders, one eye obscured by a pair of frayed ballet slippers. (The original slippers are in a corner of the room, identical save for a bit of fading over the

years.) In another portrait, she is facing backward and looks older—her features drawn, brow furrowed, hair pulled back.

Her works on tempera almost glow with an eerie luminescence. While working with tempera, Marianetti worked slowly, using up to forty coats of paint per piece. *At the Market*, tempera on board, seems at first to be a mere portrait of an exotic beauty plucking vegetables from a seller's stall. She seems lit from within: A periwinkle-colored turban draws the eyes down to her



Louise E. Marianetti, *At the Market*, 1942, egg tempera, 10 x 14".

magenta hair and lips, wisps of soft blue highlights frame her ruddy face and ignite her indigo eyes. A blonde woman nearby seems to be pleading—hand on her shoulder, her blue eyes ghostly, almost translucent.

Every work in the exhibit seems to hint at a dark underside. A doll in a pretty yellow dress covers her face almost shamefully with a bouquet of flowers. A grotesque skull wears a wreath of pink roses. A black veil hints at a whiff of death. Marianetti was an expert in picking apart the every day, exposing the brooding dark magic that

lives inside everything that seems beautiful on the surface.

—Dana Rae Laverty