

Christopher Chippendale

About

Christopher Chippendale is an observational painter based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was born in southern California and received his training as a painter at Massachusetts College of Art and Boston University, where he took his BFA and MFA respectively. Chippendale holds a previous BA in French and French Literature from Marlboro College, Vermont. He is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, and is represented by Soprafina Gallery, Boston.

In addition to his work as an artist, Chippendale has published critical essays on art, curated and juried many exhibitions, and had a distinguished professional teaching career. He has been a member of the Painting faculty at MassArt for twenty-five years.

Chippendale's paintings are based in perception. They reflect an implicit trust in what his eyes actually see. Paradoxically, however, for him, what his eyes see is fluid and mutable. As Plato suggested, appearances are fundamentally unstable and relational, subject to distortion both from without as well as from within. This paradox interests the artist because the problem of establishing what is "true" is central to his work.

Chippendale works in a modernist tradition of perceptual enquiry and representation based upon the raw data of sight. He works with a world seen, and translated, as arrangements of relational tone-colors prior to the censorial, parsing role of knowledge. His is an approach to painting based more in finding than in making, in perception more than preconception. Chippendale's paintings reflect an engagement not with the nameable world of objects and things, but with the less effable "abstract" world of changing conditions and relationships that he seeks truthfully to portray.

Larry Groff interviews painter [Christopher Chippendale](#).

Chippendale comments extensively on observational painting and studying with painter George Nick: "Observational painting, I learned, was not a mimetic art form. We were

not in the business of copying or duplicating what was before us, but of transposing it through paint, and through the forms we each adopted as individual painters. Our goal was not to match or try to outdo what nature did best, but to interpret it through metaphors that were 'parallel' and in every way 'true' to the facts we perceived, except in being literal about them. Ideas of 'truth' in observational painting were, accordingly, not limited to ideas of 'likeness' or verisimilitude. One could be absolutely true to the richness of one's perceptions without being literal about them, in the same way that poetry can bear witness with great precision to truths and realities that lie far outside of, and are in fact inexpressible within, the jurisdiction of the literal. I found observational painting richly full of paradoxes and contradictions, often vexingly so. Nick taught me to think more with my brush. I learned from him that making was itself a form of expressed thought, and that solutions were to be found in painting itself. Standing before the easel, considering the variables that arose in my paintings with every passing moment, I learned that it was ultimately important to act—to paint—in clear material terms, and sooner rather than later. If recklessness was the consequence, and errors and mistakes the result, then these were simply the facts and uncertainties of painting. Risk, in Nick's view, would forever trump cautiousness, and I inferred from his approach, which I came largely to adopt myself, that being overly guarded and calculating in painting was ultimately a dishonest act."