

STEVEN ASSAEL PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS
PAYNE GALLERY OF MORAVIAN COLLEGE
Dec 7 - Jan 28 1996

This exhibition of paintings and drawings by Steven Assael is a highly significant exception. His work, inspired by the narrative, figure - painting tradition advanced by Rembrandt, Velazquez, and Goya, and drawing from the kinship of contemporary Spanish painters like Antonio Lopez Garcia, dramatically and skillfully edifies and inspires. Drawing from life, he paints "a thoroughly contemporary painterly finesse." ⁴ When asked about his choice of subject matter or his place in the history of art, Assael asserts that " Modernism has taken a direction toward the North Pole--with nowhere to go, frozen. On the way back, we are discovering new territory, using the past as a means of expressing the present. To go forward we must, at times, take a step back and evaluate our position. With progression there is always a [positive, studied] regression." ⁵

In the tradition of figure painting, the artist makes life - drawings that he uses as studies for his paintings, many of which are included in this exhibition. Also shown are several of his major paintings, including *Preparation of the Bride.*, (cover), that critic Gerrit Henry called "...a celebration of life more realistic and at the same time lovely, more exciting and simultaneously more melancholic, and, finally more

narrative... His gift is for a matchless perfectionism the spirit, as ever --but especially in this new body work-- manifesting itself, sensually, but un sentimentally, in the form of exalted human matter." ⁶

We are very grateful to Peter Tatistcheff and Carol Craven at Tatistcheff & Co., New York, for their help and cooperation and for loaning so many of the artist's works for this exhibition. We are also indebted to the help provided by Mr. Assael and for his loan of several recent paintings from his studio. Always, we thank Priscilla Payne Hurd, whose generous support of our exhibition program make show like this possible.

Les Reker, Associate Professor of
Director/Curator, Payne Gallery of Moravian College

1. Perl, Jed. "Past Thoughts", *Modern Painters*, Spring, 1995, p.
2. Kramer, Hilton. "Interview", *Bridges: A Liberal Conservative Dialogue with Larry Josephson*, National Public Radio, November 10, 1995
3. Goodyear, Frank H, Jr. *Contemporary American Realism Since 1960*, New York Graphic Society and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1981
4. Henry, Gerrit. *Steven Assael: Paintings and Drawings*, Exhibit catalogue, Tatistcheff & Co., New York, 1994, p.1
5. Interview with the author, November, 1995
6. Henry, Gerrit. p.2