

Press Release:

**JAY BATLLE**

**BETWEEN MEALS**

**27<sup>TH</sup> OF FEBRUARY – MARCH 30<sup>TH</sup> 2014**

**Opening: Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 6-8p**

Rare is the individual who can look at a satisfying painting – or even a decent reproduction of a satisfying painting - without feeling a secret impulse to do something similar. The picture doesn't need to be particularly good to have this effect. Yet for some reason most people still see painting as a skill that is confined to a gifted few, little suspecting that anyone can learn to do it.

It takes only a little equipment and patience, once you have a real desire to paint.

If you habitually doodle on a sheet of paper when you're on the phone; if the vision of a cottage with a flower garden delights you; if you love to watch the sun as it sets; if a glimpse of a pretty woman in gaily-colored clothes has power to thrill you; if you are the type who is constantly arranging and rearranging furniture to make your home look more attractive - then you're certainly the kind of person who will enjoy painting.

It really is fun, right from the start.

The Proust *madeleine* idea is now as firmly enshrined in the world's folklore as those of Newton's falling apple or Watt's steam kettle. Proust ate a tea biscuit, the taste of it conjured up memories of his past life, and he wrote a book based on those memories.

The *madeleine* idea might be encapsulated in the formula **TMB**, for Taste > Memory > Book. Some time ago, when I began to read a book called *The Food of France*, by Waverley Root, I had an inverse experience: **BMT**, for Book > Memory > Taste. Happily, the tastes that *The Food of France* re-created for me – small birds, stewed rabbit, stuffed tripe, Côte-Rôtie, and Tavel were more robust than that of the *madeleine*, which Larousse defines as *a light cake made with sugar, flour, lemon juice, brandy, and eggs*. I might add that the quantity of brandy in a *madeleine* would not furnish a gnat with an alcohol rub.

Given the astonishing volume of prose that Proust achieved with so mild a stimulus, it is the world's loss that he didn't have a heartier appetite. On a dozen Gardiner's Island oysters, a bowl of clam chowder, a peck of steamers, some fresh-picked corn, bay scallops, three sautéed soft shell crabs, a thin swordfish steak of generous breadth, a pair of lobsters, and a Long Island duck, who knows what he might have done.

The artist's role is to interpret the facts as Proust interpreted his memories, rather than report them with any particular accuracy. He pinpoints a few essentials from his subject matter and begins to paint around them. He paints because he wants to paint and because he enjoys it, whether he does so as a hobby or to earn a living. He paints interestingly if he has something to say and has an interesting mind. He paints uninterestingly if he has nothing to say and a commonplace mind. He paints skillfully if he has mastered the craft of painting; he paints poorly if he has not.

A fellow artist once told me that painting is both a trade and a profession. Neither can be learned by just reading and looking. You need practice too, and plenty of it.

To anyone who may be timid about the act of painting in public, for the public, I would say that those who know nothing about painting are in theory great admirers of artistic endeavor, but in practice they tend to look briefly, nod and pass on. Conversely, you may be sure that people who really understand painting won't even glance at what you're doing. Even if they do, they will offer no suggestion as to how you might do it better.

In fact no really accomplished artist will examine your work unless you positively compel him, or her, to do so. There have been only two instances in twelve years where a passerby who knew what he was talking about has spoken to me.

If timidity deters you from this work, you have nothing to fear. There will be no comments to embarrass you. The only comments will be your own.

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Bleecker Street Arts Club is pleased to present ***Between Meals***, a solo exhibition of new works by New York artist Jay Battle. Battle's exhibition will open with his "Anti-Social Pasta Performance." For the food performance, Battle has bought 37 pounds of ninety-nine cent pasta, (one pound of pasta for each year of his life). He will serve the cooked pasta in an anchovy cream sauce at his opening, from 6-8pm.

For the exhibition *Between Meals*, Battle focuses on the idea of inspiration. What drives a person to create an artwork, or be creative? For Proust it was a cookie. For a painter, the motive is is fun.

Eating is a necessity, something that we have to do from time to time because if we don't, we starve to death.

Battle asks: So what do we do between meals?

These new works for Bleecker Street Arts Club are his answer. They deal with the time and space of living from the viewpoint of someone who is driven to make things, day in and day out.

Battle's "epicurean" paintings, drawings, videos and sculptures take his own gourmet habits as a source of inspiration and social commentary. His work is not only a critique of comestible-related decadence, but also a celebration of the way food is prepared and consumed by human beings everywhere.

Works by Jay Battle have been exhibited in galleries and museums all over the world, including Metro Pictures, Paul Kasmin, Casey Kaplan, the Chelsea Museum, Exit Art, The Dorsky Gallery in New York, the Ausstellungshalle Zeitgenössische Kunst in Münster, The Abteiberg Museum in Mönchengladbach, Germany, the National Museum of Fine Arts, Santiago de Chile, and the Museum of Liverpool, United Kingdom. His paintings and sculptures feature in many important private collections and in the public collection at the Artothek in Cologne.