

EDWARD THORP GALLERY
Press Release

Matthew Blackwell
Picklelilly

October 17 through November 30, 2013
Opening reception October 17, 6-8 p.m.

Picklelilly will be Matt Blackwell's fifth solo show at the Edward Thorp Gallery and will include recent mixed media paintings and sculpture.

The show is titled after the tomato-based condiment sometimes called chili sauce canned in western new york state kitchens during the depression of the 30s, when self-sufficiency was a necessity, not a fashion. Unlike salsa, picklelilly relies on sugar and vinegar to impart its flavor rather than heat.

In Blackwell's inspired vision of America, he works within a variety methods, at times raw and spontaneous, and at others analytical, but always delivered with driving authority and a touch of absurdity. Rather than reflecting a forlorn and nostalgic condition his participants are depicted as free spirits who not only persevere but also often prevail.

His highly expressive and lavishly imaginative paintings are infused with irreverent humor, their cheerfulness often offset by dark elements lurking in the background a skull, a devilish figure. Some of the works have an uncanny, fairy-tale quality. Others are almost documentary-like, capturing a moment within an individual's existence. Incorporating both a flat paint application with dollops of impasto giving off a diverse, physical, rough-hewn quality. As in *Prodigal Son*, a large vertical canvas, a limping survivor of the '60s walks through a large Brueghel-like landscape, sporting a vest made of palette scrapings.

The sculptures, which loosely recreate folkloric elements of American history, are assembled from found objects: tin cans, sheet metal, rivets, and sometimes canvas. In two recent sculptures, oversized galvanized steel dunce caps appear to linger in space keeping each other company, although the party seems to be over for them.

The landscapes of Maine, Western New York State and the Southwest are inspirations for the artist. Maine, Western New York State and the Southwest. Blackwell's family lives in Santa Fe and trips there have brought about new vistas and stories. He sources characters and locales culled from his experiences and from traditional folk music and early American recordings of blues and roots music.