

# In Pennsylvania, Art Stirring Imaginations

BY MAX GILLIES



For insights into a dynamic field that overlaps with the art highlighted in these pages, readers of *Fine Art Connoisseur* should consider attending *IlluXcon 6*. Set to occur September 11-15 at Pennsylvania's Allentown Art Museum, this is the world's only annual convention of artists, students, collectors, and fans of imaginative realist art. At *IlluXcon's* heart will be an exhibition of more than 1,000 original artworks created by over 80 contemporary artists, including the two illustrated here, which were specially commissioned for the event. Every exhibiting artist will be present for the entire symposium, and most works will be available for purchase.

*IlluXcon* was launched six years ago by Patrick and Jeannie Wilshire, who have also co-founded the Association of Fantastic Art and the Illustration Exchange, and who guest-curated the Allentown Art Museum's successful exhibition last summer, *At the Edge: Art of the Fantastic*. The Wilshires are currently writing their third book in the field, a critical history of imaginative realism that will clarify, among other contributions, how such historical masters as Gérôme, Waterhouse, Vedder, Pyle, and Parrish have inspired the renaissance in storytelling art we see around us today.

From 2008 through 2012, *IlluXcon* was held in a convention center in Altoona, Pennsylvania, 200 miles from the Allentown Art Museum, which has a solid art historical rationale for hosting it this year. As Patrick Wilshire notes, "Ancient art is rife with narrative depictions of gods, monsters, shining deeds, and things crawling from dark shadows. Moreover, *IlluXcon* artists include some of the world's best realist painters, among them artists who have been named Living Masters by the Art Renewal Center or who have placed in its competitive salons."

Beyond its massive exhibition, *IlluXcon 6* will offer lectures, workshops, demos, and portfolio reviews through which participants can truly get to know each other. The Wilshires are proud of the fact that here, "egos are checked at the door, there are no 'Guests of Honor,' and the highly recognized artist takes away just as much as the newly established artist/student." Multi-day passes can be purchased online now. Single-day tickets for Saturday and Sunday will be available at the door. And on the weekend, additional artists will be exhibiting in the museum's Community Gallery. ■

**Information:** 31 N. Fifth Street, Allentown, PA 18101, 610.432.4333, [illuxcon.com](http://illuxcon.com) and [allentownartmuseum.org](http://allentownartmuseum.org)

MAX GILLIES is a contributing writer to *Fine Art Connoisseur*.



Boris Vallejo (b. 1941) and Julie Bell (b. 1958)

**Jeannie's Kitten**

2013, Oil on illustration board mounted to foam core, 25 x 18 in.

Commissioned by *IlluXcon* for its 2013 edition

Opposite page:

David Palumbo (b. 1982)

**Unknowable**

2013, Oil on panel, 48 x 36 in.

Commissioned by *IlluXcon* for its 2013 edition

