

Flash Art

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A travelogue by James Collins

Love and Loathing in Europe



Rick Prol, *Sailor*, 1984.
Acrylic on canvas, 98" x 78". Photo Hal Gromm.

Ended my European odyssey back in the belly of the New York beast—the Lower East Side. I found its spirit in the work of Rick Prol: an engaging hybrid of European and American values! If the East Side's still of quintessential ugliness and danger—the toilet of so many of Prol's paintings—he's found in its shattered windows and blitzed buildings a landscape of inspiration. If the Lower East Side aspires to a European ideal of community, Prol aspires to the European language of painting. Garish colors and the black outlines of a Bernard Buffet animates Prol's tattered—and much stabbed—hero, as he walks not the gentle bohemia of Buffet's Paris, but that of violent New York. Despite the number of knives in the throat of Rick Prol's Everyman he survives! And this survival makes me understand why this city of extremes forces its people to continually leave with a sense of loathing, but only to return because of a sense of loss.