Dividing art according to media may seem like an outdated exercise. Yet if we look at larger survey exhibitions from the past two years, we realize that painting may be an exception. Exhibitions like “Painting at the Edge of the World” at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2003), or more recently, “Dear Painter” at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and “Painting on the Move” at the Basel Kunsthalle, reveal an episodic urge to regroup, to consider and even pronounce a prognosis for the health of the medium. As Walker Art Center curator Douglas Fogle has suggested, this has an historic precedent: “For centuries painting was THE artistic medium bar none. All the legendary exhibitions in the modern period were painting exhibitions. Perhaps we feel the need to take a limusin of the art world by having painting exhibitions.” There may also be some sense of renewal, of periodically and ceremoniously purging painting of its historic baggage, making way for a new understanding of painting practice — to collectively regain the sort of “ignorant state” that John Curtin describes in a conversation with Center Pompidou curator Allison M. Ginges, also published in this issue. Following “Focus Germany” (Flash Art May/June 2002) and “Focus Mexico” (Flash Art July/September 2002), we continue our commitment to exploring specific art territories in “Focus Painting,” a special supplement divided into two parts. “Focus Painting - Part One” includes profiles on contemporary artists who have emerged over the last 10 years, and a series of companion feature articles and panel discussions. This first section represents a wide range of both established and emerging artists. We have not included profiles on artists who are featured elsewhere in this issue (Verne Dawson, John Curtin, Karen Kilimnik, Peter Doig, Lucy McKenzie, Tomma Abts, Wilhelm Sasnal, Dara Schulte, Marianna Ustinen, Jukka Korkola, Tai R. and Birgit S. Biggisson). “Focus Painting - Part Two” will feature on Flash Art November-December 2002. (Edited by Charles Gute, Samuele Menin and Michele Robecchi)

MICHAEL BEVILACQUA

“I learned about color from ’60s psychedelic rock posters. Stuff like Hendrix, Cream, and the Jefferson Airplane. The colors never seemed to go together; they clashed. I think that kids really respond to color. Not that I’m trying to finesse some sense of childlike innocence or faux-naïveté, but look at these Disney animations. I find it funny, though, that my son could care less about stuff like Digimon, Sailor Moon, etc. We both kind of dig the old stuff like “The Little Prince,” or even stuff that appeals to adults as camp and kids as serious entertainment like Pee-Wee’s Playhouse.”

(Interview by David Hunt)

Represented by: Fredericks Freiser, New York.

Atom Tan, 1999. Acrylic on canvas, 92 x 110 cm.