

# signature

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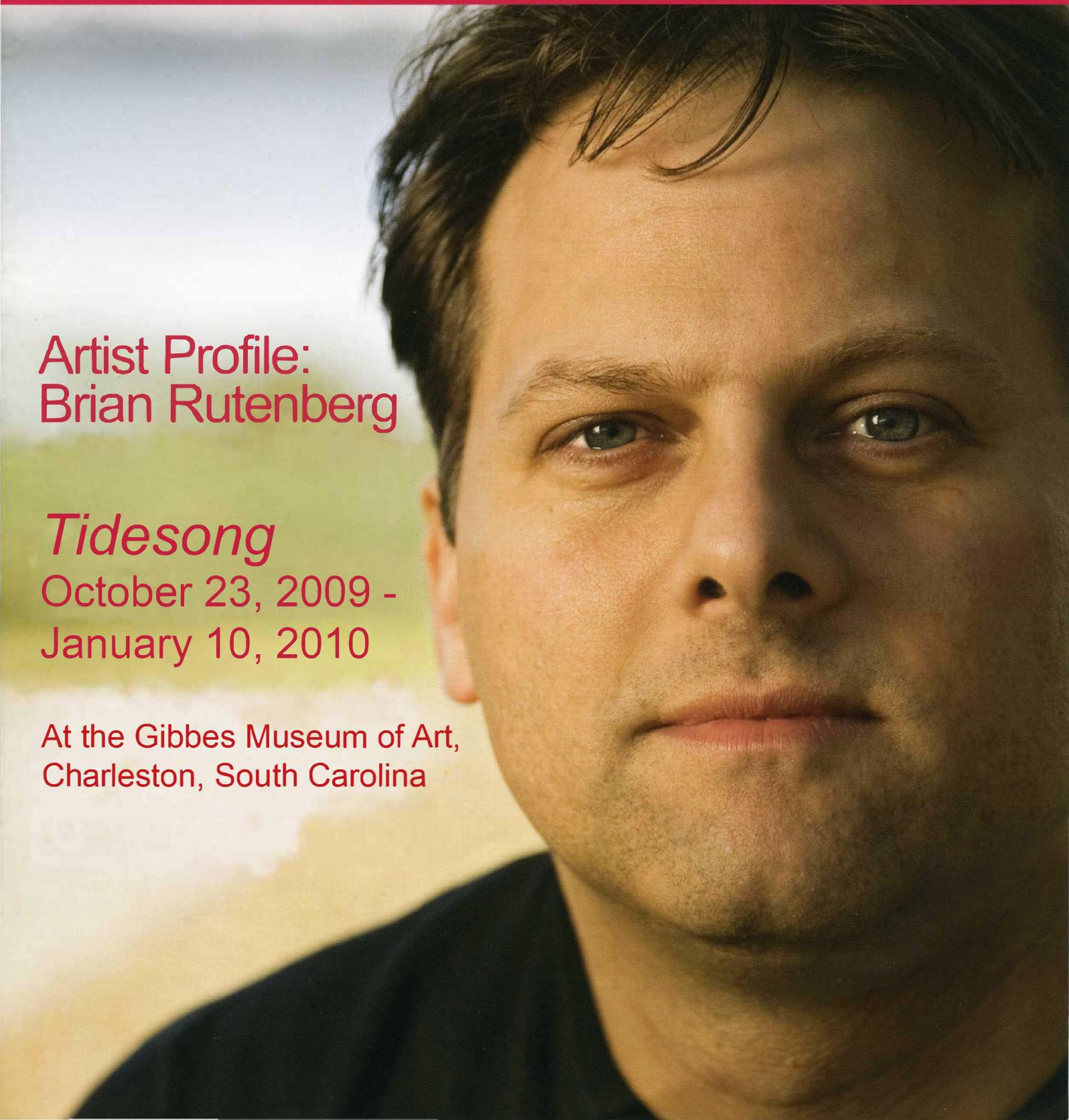
GIBBES MUSEUM OF ART • FALL/WINTER 09

Artist Profile:  
Brian Rutenberg

*Tidesong*

October 23, 2009 -  
January 10, 2010

At the Gibbes Museum of Art,  
Charleston, South Carolina



## Artist Profile: Brian Rutenberg

Brian Rutenberg is a man comfortable in his own skin. He loves his native South Carolina, yet thrives in his adopted home of New York City, where he has lived and worked for over 20 years. He has built an incredibly successful career as a painter but, above all else, relishes his role as husband and father. He seems completely at ease with where he is and the path that led him to this point. Quite simply, Rutenberg is a man who enjoys his life and enjoys what he does. And lucky for us, he has a long career ahead of him.

Growing up in Myrtle Beach, Rutenberg was surrounded by the waterways and marshlands of the Lowcountry. His early interactions with the landscape made an enduring impression, one he carries with him to this day. As a young child, Rutenberg took an interest in drawing and he began taking watercolor lessons in middle school. Making art felt natural, and Rutenberg decided to pursue his passion as an undergraduate at the College of Charleston. At the College he studied with a number of professors who made an impact, including William Halsey, Barbara Duval, and particularly, Michael Tyzack. His professors recognized his talent and level of commitment and encouraged him to blaze his own path. Rutenberg took full advantage of the College's liberal

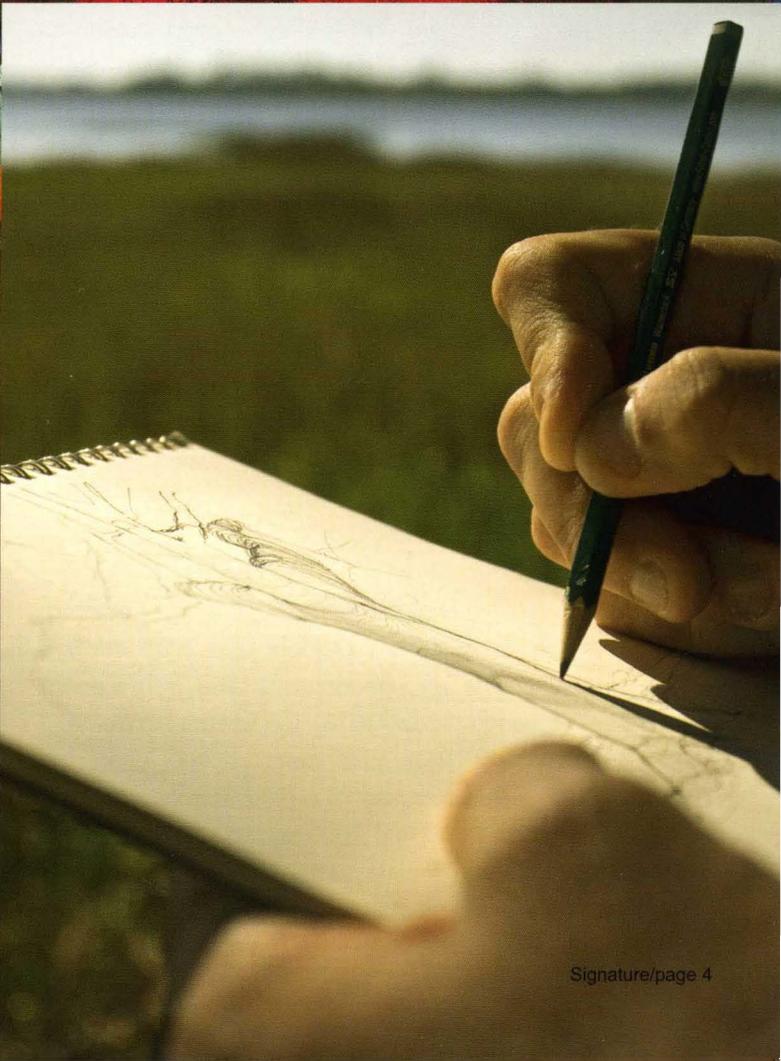
arts curriculum and tailored his studies to include music, theater, and art history, as well as studio art. This creative exchange across disciplines was very important for the young artist, and continues to be important today.

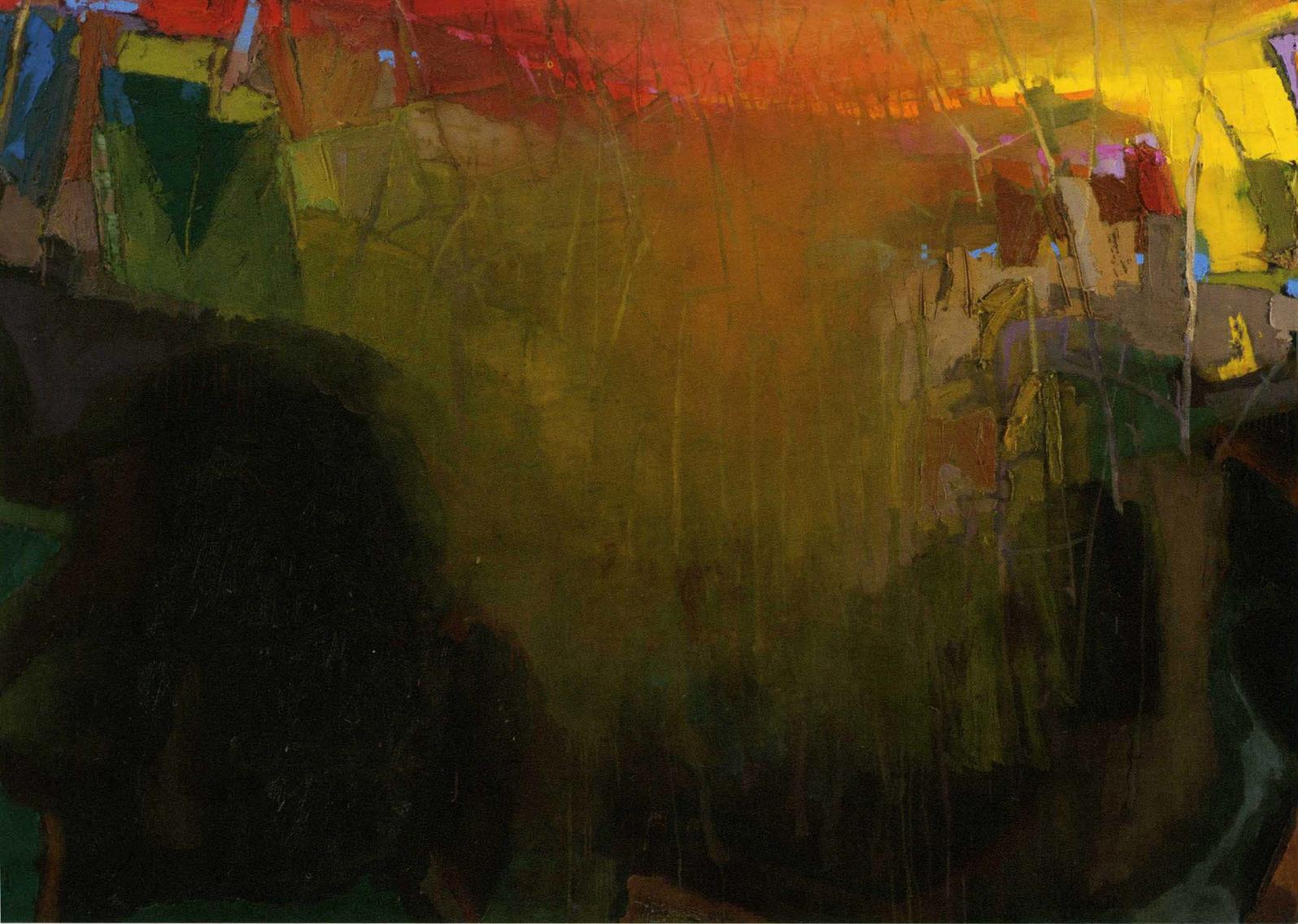
When asked about his influences, Rutenberg names visual artists such as Gregory Amenoff, Hans Hoffman, and Joan Mitchell plus the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould, with whom he feels a deep connection. And while all of these artists fuel Rutenberg's creative fire, perhaps his greatest influence is the land itself. Watching Rutenberg sketch outdoors, one can immediately sense his connection with nature. He sketches for the love of the act, drinking in every detail of his surroundings. And though he does not create preparatory drawings, Rutenberg's sketches serve as a means to internalize the landscape for later reference in his paintings.

Rutenberg begins a painting with a selection of colors and a general idea of the composition. From there he lets the process evolve naturally, applying thick layers of paint with brushes and knives. Rutenberg trusts his instincts as he paints, and with good reason. His signature abstract style has gradually evolved over time, the result of a careful

Left: *The Fading 2*, 2008-09, by Brian Rutenberg (American, b. 1965), oil on linen, courtesy of the Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, N.C.

Right: *Tidesong 10*, 2008, by Brian Rutenberg (American, b. 1965), oil on linen, courtesy of the Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, N.C.





*The Fading 5*, 2008-09, by Brian Rutenberg (American, b. 1965), oil on linen, courtesy of the Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte, N.C.

investigation of color, light, and composition. Rutenberg's paintings must be experienced in person, and for the artist, this is exactly the point. Visual art is meant to be experienced with the eyes, and Rutenberg's paintings certainly reward viewers. His brilliant use of color combined with his expressive brushwork and thick application of paint create a rich, three-dimensional surface. And though Rutenberg's work is abstract, it always evokes the waterways and landscape of his home state.

This fall will be somewhat of a homecoming for Rutenberg with the opening of the exhibition *Brian Rutenberg: Tidesong*, on view at the Gibbes from October 23, 2009 through January 10, 2010. The title *Tidesong* was taken from a poem by Archibald Rutledge (1883 - 1973), the first poet laureate of South Carolina who, like Rutenberg, mused upon the Lowcountry rivers and marshes. The exhibition is comprised of works created in 2008 and 2009, including two massive paintings over thirteen feet in width. These recent works place an emphasis on light, particularly the two series entitled

*The Fading* and *Pale Silent*, which feature canvases bathed in golden hues.

If his recent paintings are any indication, Rutenberg's best work may be ahead of him. And in talking with the artist, this certainly seems to be the plan. Rutenberg exudes a quiet self-confidence and a sincere dedication to his art. He is motivated, inspired, and has an intellectual and artistic curiosity that is bound to keep him painting for years to come.

*To learn more about Brian Rutenberg please visit [www.brianrutenberg.com](http://www.brianrutenberg.com). The artist will be in Charleston on October 21, 2009 to give a public lecture about his work in conjunction with the opening of **Brian Rutenberg: Tidesong**, on view at the Gibbes October 23, 2009 - January 10, 2010. For more details, visit [www.gibbesmuseum.org](http://www.gibbesmuseum.org).*

*Photographs shot on location at Lowndes Grove along the Ashley River.*