

Two Midwestern Artists Use Photorealism to Capture ‘Forgotten Industry’ in New Exhibition

Shown at Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York, artists Randy Dudley and Robert Gniewek tap the potential of the meticulous painting genre.



Robert Gniewek, *Al's Diner* (2024). Courtesy of Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York.

by

Artnet Gallery Network (<https://news.artnet.com/about/artnet-gallery-network-737>)

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On view from through June 1, 2024, [Louis K. Meisel Gallery](https://www.artnet.com/galleries/louis-k-meisel-gallery/) (<https://www.artnet.com/galleries/louis-k-meisel-gallery/>) in New York is presenting the dual-artist exhibition “[Randy Dudley and Robert Gniewek: Forgotten Industry](https://www.artnet.com/galleries/louis-k-meisel-gallery/forgotten-industry/) (<https://www.artnet.com/galleries/louis-k-meisel-gallery/forgotten-industry/>).” Both artists are recognized for their meticulous employment of photorealism in paintings, and their ability to capture in extreme detail and nuance in vignettes that are often overlooked within the American landscape. Though the subject matter and stylistic genre of their work frequently parallel, each painter’s approach remains distinctive as their composition, execution, and locales diverge in unique and sometimes surprising ways—with each of these elements highlighted respectively within the show.



Randy Dudley, *Scrapmetal on Smith St.* (2024). Courtesy of Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York.

Originally from Peoria, Illinois, and currently based in Ottawa, Illinois, [Randy Dudley](https://www.artnet.com/artists/andy-dudley/) (b. 1950) draws sharp focus on industrial facets of everyday places, such as train or road underpasses, collection yards, desolate warehouses, or old seaports. A regular site across the Northeast and Central regions of the United States, Dudley's careful handling of light and framing emphasizes the unique beauty that can be found within these often-ignored scenes of America.

Born in Detroit, Michigan, [Robert Gniewek](https://www.artnet.com/artists/robert-gniewek/) (b. 1951), also hails from the Midwest, but while Dudley's work frequently focuses on the natural elements of his chosen scenes, Gniewek's creative vision homes in on the artificial—specifically artificial light. Neon signs, marquee boards, and diner windows at night frequently appear within the artists compositions, and as his work as evolved, as he [discussed in an interview with Artnet News](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/7-questions-robert-gniewek-2402971) (https://news.artnet.com/art-world/7-questions-robert-gniewek-2402971), the clarity of these works has continually increased.



Robert Gniewek, *O & W Rib Cabin* (2023). Courtesy of Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York.

Juxtaposed with one another, the creative possibilities of photorealism are brought to the fore; not simply a tool to faithfully render and document, but a creative approach that offers viewers a new vantage from which to view reality and the quotidian aspects of recognizable places.



Randy Dudley, *On the Columbia River at Cathlamet* (2024). Courtesy of Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York.

Pieces included in the show such as Gniewek's *AI's Diner* (2024) elevate the classic diner exterior to subjecthood in its own right, going beyond using the building simply as a site or foil for other events or a piece of a

larger landscape. The focus on the light from the signs and windows animates the diner and allows viewers to reflect on the things that comprise the everyday. Similarly, in Dudley's *Scrapmetal on Smith St.* (2024), the universality of the overlooked space—adjacent to an underpass and full of nondescript vans and materials—suggests the ability to find beauty in what is otherwise unheeded by observers.

"Randy Dudley and Robert Gniewek: Forgotten Industry"
(<https://www.meisलगallery.com/exhibition/andy-dudley-robert-gniewek/>) is

on view at Louis K. Meisel Gallery, New York, through June 1, 2023.



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