



Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art/Mira Mar Gallery

New angles, fresh perspectives

Leslie Lerner's work is an eloquent, ongoing refutation of the occasional claim that painting is a dying art form. His mysterious narratives play out on beautifully rendered canvases, for several years tracing the path of a lost boy exploring shifting landscapes. In recent work, he has found new metaphors, such as *Annibale's Donkey*, shown here.

In a statement, Lerner explains: "(It is) a particular donkey in a painting illustrating the holy family's flight to Egypt by Annibale Caracci. I identified with this donkey, so I stole him. Then the war started and my donkey became an iconic connector representing the artist, the event and our crude understanding of it. So here we all are in donkeyland, caught up in a spectacle fueled by religion, technology, oil and revenge. Mute, saddled, led and faithful."

Whatever ambivalence is stirred up by its references to war, I'm still going to root for the donkey.

Lerner's new work is on view at Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art/Mira Mar Gallery, 1284 N Palm Ave., Sarasota, beginning Wednesday through April 3. (941) 366-2093.

— LENNIE BENNETT, Times art critic

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