

Simply put, Chandler did what she needed to do: she threw caution to the wind, style-wise, condensed a lot of growth into a short time and offered up a unique commentary on the psychologically dense origins of contemporary desire. Indeed, Chandler's engagement with painting's potential to describe or imagine pictorial realms outside of, or just beyond, those of our rational world can now be seen as both prescient and increasingly pervasive. Echoes of her unabashed romantic "realism" can be found in the work of her near contemporaries Karen Kilimnik, Laura Owens, Thomas Woodruff and Peter Dolg, among others. To be sure, security and intimacy are increasingly sought out in a society that has been saturated by media bombardment with bad news and rapid restructuring of social networks. The longing for an intact world and idealized safe haven become part of everyday life. By developing provocative, poetic counter-worlds, these artists devise new relationships between the individual and nature. All of them yearn for a paradisaical, fairytale-like state. Such transitory moments, however, oscillate between a certain melancholy, a mourning of loss and desire or expectation. Whereas their works are based on a profound knowledge of art traditions and reflect current world events, these artists resolutely take up the Romantic spirit, aiming to leave the quotidian well behind them. Still, a romantic style of painting that basks in sentiment and sweet colors will all too easily be dismissed as reactionary, gushing and picturesque. But for a generation of artists who grew up with television and other technologies, romantic motifs are filtered through a second, mediated layer, thereby dovetailing the real and the artificial.

For the most part, Chandler's early work seemed somewhat enervated and remote, as if the artist hadn't yet formulated her own attitude toward natural history and cultural detritus, or as if she were beguiled by the gossamer luminosity of butterfly wings and tender foliage. By contrast, the current series projects a far greater sense of visual urgency that must itself issue from a deeper emotional involvement on the part of the artist. The bolder use of color in these works, as well as a less inhibited attitude towards facture, is at least partly responsible for their success. But in largest measure, it is Chandler's use of spatial illusionism—and the unfettered sense of drama in whose service she puts it—that makes them so compelling. Chandler records the beauty of the natural world, preserving images of things that pass away, or which we must leave behind. In doing so, we are treated to meditations about time and age and death, and finely honed musings about the waning of an era, the wisdoms of

nature, of the archaic, of chance, of sacred texts, of transcendent forces. It's as if Chandler wrestles with passing moments before they are all closed to us, frantically trying to discover the poetry there and preserve it, perishable as it is. Thus, Chandler infuses the reverberative weight of history into her work by spiraling time. We pause between "narratives," each a radiant and separate world that settles around us for hours afterward, like weather. Often a scene begins in the now, then cycles back to memory so that events unfold toward the present again with an intimate urgency and overlay of nostalgia. Loss, for Chandler, is wedded to desire. The idea of nostalgia accounts for the feeling we have on realizing the effect of her process—that on the finished canvas there is only a damaged trace of what once was. Nostalgia encapsulates our feelings on seeing recognizable icons of a lost culture—Old World birds, Samuel Pepys's library, the theatre of a young queen's playground, the Petit Trianon. In other works, the rising seas, vaporous skies and pristine snowy wilderness allude to the lumbering processes of the ancient earth against which daily experience—the ebb of tides, the attentions of distracted dogs, the recollections of the artist herself—plays itself out.

Chandler's images convey an eerie beauty, but they also reflect a gnawing anxiety about the mismatch between the ageless and the temporal, the divine and the mortal. The more we look at them, the less the paintings seem extraordinary celebrations of atmosphere and moments, of sense and sensation but, rather, strong, contentious and thorny. The tension can be felt not only in the variegated colors of the feathers of exotic birds she paints, but also in the attempts to capture the vibrancy, unpredictability and even tragic grandeur of an unlothered world. Some images tap into memories of strange places and the wonder that both attracts and frightens us. Her works exert a palpable closeness, an intimacy with viewers that is disorienting and destabilizing. By uncovering hidden layers of meaning, by pointing out inconsistencies in our world, Chandler breaks down social and intellectual hierarchies and reintroduces the play of intuition and metaphor. She explores boundaries, junctures and distances as part of the process of reimagining them. The artist literally breaks up, wrenches open and disrupts the familiar, thus creating new realms of significance. Such an endeavor can only be described in terms of a revelation, a profoundly physical awareness of our momentary place within a broader order, a chance to ponder what we are seeing and how we are living, to feel a kinship with ancestral memories from deep time, to