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# NOVEL GRAPHICS

For **thirty-two years** we have championed the **fine art** of **fiction**.  
**Linden Frederick's** new project is a **mash-up** of **fiction illustrating fine art**.

**N**ight Stories the book is launching in tandem with "Night Stories" the exhibition at Rockland's Center for Maine Contemporary Art. Here's a taste of six of the 15 duets created when writers responded to paintings.

## Richard Russo, *Downstairs*

Painting: *Downstairs*, 2016. Oil on linen.

She's not a gifted thinker, his sister. All her life she's arrived at bizarre conclusions based on dubious logic. Unnervingly, though, she's seldom wrong about him, a fact that's always made him just a little crazy.

She opens the door before he can knock. "Roger."

"Maggie," he says, his voice sounding funny after so many hours alone in the car. Stepping back into the hall, she teeters and he instinctively reaches out, remembering too late that this is what she always does. And that he always falls for it.

God, he hates her.



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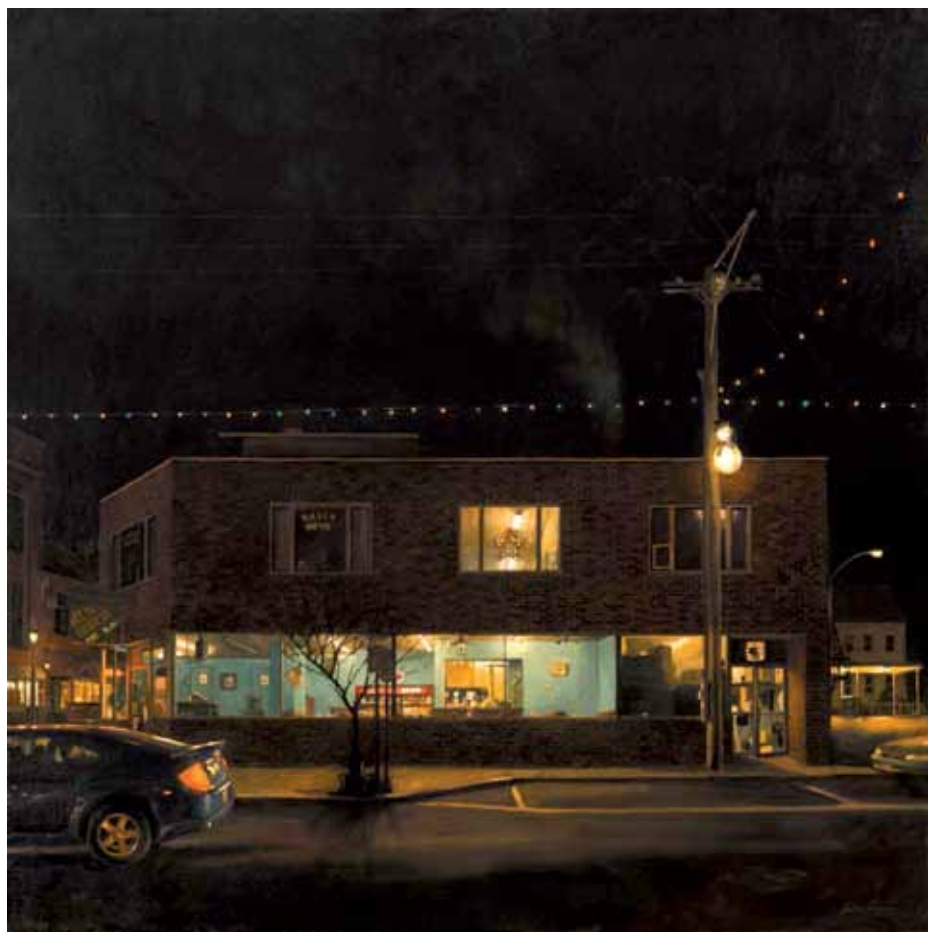
# PORTLAND MONTHLY

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(WEE-ID)

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## FICTION



### Tess Gerritsen, *Takeout*

Painting: *Takeout*, 2016. Oil on linen.

He watches how gracefully she circulates from table to table, how she tenderly pats an old man's shoulder and stops to ask a woman about a new litter of puppies. Everyone in the diner knows her, and they smile as she passes by, as if they've just glimpsed the sun on a winter's night. Does the girl wonder about the world outside this café, this town? Her shoes are badly scuffed and she wears a cheap dime store wristwatch. Does she dream about owning nicer things, a new dress, shoes from Italy? How can this be enough for her?

### Elizabeth Strout, *The Walk*

Painting: *Dish*, 2016. Oil on linen

And then his mind returned to his children. They were quiet, he thought. Too quiet. Were they angry with him? All three had gone to college, and his sons had moved to Massachusetts, his daughter to New Hampshire; there seemed to be no jobs for them here. His grandchildren were okay; they all did well in school. It was his children he wondered about as he walked. Last year at Denny's fiftieth high school reunion, he had shown his eldest boy his yearbook, and his son had said, "Dad! They called you Frenchie?" Oh sure, Denny said, with a chuckle. "It's not funny," his son had said, and gotten up and walked away, leaving Denny with his yearbook open on the kitchen table.



## Lily King, *Mansard*

Painting: *Mansard*, 2016. Oil on linen.

Frances had spoken of him only once, three years ago, at Sue's house, when their afternoon tea had bled into cocktails and Sue's nurse had taken all the children up to the bath. They were talking about their parents' marriages, how they were trying to do things differently. Upstairs the children were shrieking. Audrey worried about them getting too wound up and hitting their heads on the edge of the tub. Frances said that her parents were divorced. Audrey had never known anyone with divorced parents. They split right after the war, Frances said. In '46, when she was three. She had no memory of them together. How awful, Elinor said, and Frances said, No, it was for the best. Her father was dangerous. He had aliases. A spy, Frances said. A double agent. Maybe a triple agent.



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## FICTION



### Anthony Doerr, *Save-A-Lot*

Painting: *Save-A-Lot*, 2016. Oil on linen.

The year Bunny turns twenty-two, she takes home \$49,500. Then Mike Ramirez, a dishwasher at Sea Dog Sushi, gets her drunk on sake, knocks her up, and bolts for Tampa. More than once during her pregnancy Bunny wakes in the night and stands in front of the mirror and sees Momma's dark kitchen, hears Momma's drunken voice: You're sucking hind teat, Bunny, you're dumb as a box of hair, you're not worth spit.



### Lois Lowry, *Vital Signs*

Painting: *50 Percent*, 2016. Oil on linen.

The four men stood silently in the dark and watched Grafton Larabee move slowly through the room. Beside the mannequin in the blue gown he paused, leaned forward, kissed its shoulder, and stroked its arm.