

Second Sight

Ed and I had been friends for several years when a whole new window opened on his life. Something had happened that he barely understood. An awakening, and it was all he talked about. It sprang from his rapidly evolving relationship with Alison Keeler. There had been a lot of love in Ed's life and Alison—lovely, mellow, simpatico—was its ultimate expression. Alison's incandescent bloneness made an immediate contrast to Ed's dark masculinity. They were gorgeous together. She began to show up with Ed at every party and art opening. She also showed up in an outpouring of new paintings he infused with her sunny beauty and his enormous passion for her. In his last years, Ed's world was unified by Alison's care and devotion. His paintings were saturated with their life together, their garden, the shrines and colorful artifacts of their home, the memories of their summers in Baja. His sense of play had acquired its ultimate destination.

Ed's work invariably, and idiosyncratically, embraces his New World roots. The light and dance of Mexico, the heat and hustle of Los Angeles, these influences made a dynamic partner for his classical training in European master techniques. In each of his works, he seemed busy becoming Eduardo Carrillo, a magic realist, an acrobat of dreams, a close observer of illumination. Ed transformed the most obvious details of his immediate surroundings—sexuality, oranges, wine bottles, guitars, lamps, cacti—into visual magic. His figures, always monumental and earthy, are more sculpted than painted, as in his middle-period *Two Brothers Fighting*, here we're almost able to step inside the boxing ring with two monumental sparring figures. They bear a fundamental sense of physicality that seems directly descended—or perhaps ascended—from muralist progenitors who inspired many of Ed's large-scale public artworks.

One of my favorites, a late painting, *Leda and the Swan*, underscores Ed's fascination with the luscious textures of flesh and his mastery of highlighting curves and angles of the body as if etched in neon. Set within a cool boudoir of deep blue green, the nude Leda/Alison, flesh glowing bronze, allows us a glimpse of her face in a hand mirror, straddling her seduction couch surrounded by woven curtains, potted palms, and a mandolin. The themes of the painter's deepest passions are all present in that painting. Music, nature, light, and desire.

Ed's artistic career was spent as much in playful experimentation as in sensitive observation—always pushing against canonic constraints in favor of bold celebration. Each painting is an invitation to share that invisible music to which his life was deeply attuned. It was impossible to know him without feeling lucky.

Ed painted like he lived—letting go and surrendering to the fullness of his moment in the universe. Trusting that moment completely. For all of us left in a world without Eduardo Carrillo, his moment was not nearly long enough.

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EDUARDO CARRILLO

Cabin in the Sky, 1966
oil on panels, 72 x 60 in.



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