

Luke Dougherty

fable



Bethlehem Series: 26, oil on canvas on panel 8x6"



Bethlehem Series: 38, oil on canvas on panel, 8x6"



Bethlehem Series: 24, oil on canvas on panel, 8x6"

For Immediate Release

Luke Dougherty: fable at Hawk + Hive

September 17 - October 18, 2026

Opening Reception: September 19, 2pm - 6pm

61 Main Street, Andes, NY 13731

The paintings in *fable*, created over the past year at Dougherty's studio in Bovina, NY, move through a world of rabbits, deer, foxes, sleeping children, wrestlers, houses and miniature figures. Their subjects are familiar, even archetypal, but in Dougherty's hands they become less objects to be decoded than points of entry - into vulnerability, kinship, childhood, shelter, fear, play and the uncertain boundary between ourselves and the living world.

Animals recur throughout the exhibition. Rabbits gather in great, restless formations or appear alone; a deer stands momentarily apart from the landscape; foxes and owls inhabit the edges of night. Dougherty does not turn these creatures into characters or allegorical stand-ins. Instead, their fragility, alertness and strangeness remain intact. They seem to carry something we recognize without ever quite being able to name it.

In the Bethlehem paintings, Dougherty turns to the imaginative possibilities of play. Working from tiny model-train figures he found in his studio, he paints them at their intimate scale, using brushes and gestures almost too large for precise description. The title Bethlehem carries several associations: the steel mills of Dougherty's Buffalo childhood and the idea of a small place capable of containing a larger story. Here, scale shifts, objects awaken, and play becomes not an escape from life, but another way of entering it.

Throughout fable, the ordinary becomes a threshold. A rabbit, a sleeping child, a house or a tiny figure may begin as something observed, imagined or remembered, but painting carries it elsewhere. Across works that move from the intimate to the monumental, familiar forms gather unexpected weight. Tenderness, unease, humor and strangeness coexist, and the commonplace can suddenly feel larger than itself.



Gemini Variation, oil on panel, 16" x 12"



Night Run, oil on canvas 54" x 60"



High Meadow, oil on canvas 60" x 54"



Bower, oil on canvas, 54" x 60"



Like Wind in the Trees, oil on canvas, 54" x 78"



Dark Water oil on canvas, 14" x 18"



Luke Dougherty was born in Buffalo, New York, a city that has remained central to his sense of identity. During his childhood, Buffalo was often described in terms of industrial decline, poverty, and urban neglect, but his father's Irish Catholic family took deep pride in the city and in its working-class character. Their loyalty to the underdog became an enduring part of his own outlook. After moving with his family to Southern California, Dougherty continued to think of himself as a transplant and returned to New York as soon as he was able.

He received his early art education in New York City, studying at Hunter College, the Art Students League, and the Water Street Atelier. He later earned his MFA from the University at Buffalo and eventually settled in the Catskills, where he now lives and works.

Dougherty has continued to paint and exhibit while supporting his practice through teaching and building. He teaches drawing at SUNY Oneonta and has worked for many years constructing houses, including his own home and studio.

These experiences, Buffalo, the rigor of his training, the landscape of the Catskills, teaching, and building, continue to shape his work and his understanding of care, labor, place, and belonging.

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View the full series and read the catalogue essay at www.hawkandhive.com