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New York University



**“At Moments Like These  
He Feels Farthest Away”**

**TIM DLUGOS AND PHILIP MONAGHAN**



**FROM THE WATER COMES A THICK AND EERIE TROPICAL SILENCE**  
18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas

# “AT MOMENTS LIKE THESE HE FEELS FARTEST AWAY”

TIM DLUGOS AND PHILIP MONAGHAN

The Gilligan's Island Project  
1983/2009

Essay by David Trinidad

Fales Library and Special Collections,  
Tracey/Barry Gallery,  
Elmer Holmes Bobst Library  
New York University  
70 Washington Square South, Third Floor  
New York, NY 10012

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“Gilligan's Island” reprinted from  
*Powerless: Selected Poems 1973-1990*  
by Tim Dlugos (High Risk Books, 1996).  
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## “Take a deep breath. Hold it. Let it go.”

Tim Dlugos from “Healing the World from Battery Park.”

Tim Dlugos’ life was too short. It was like the invocation to breath that opens his poem “Healing the World from Battery Park.” There is a breeziness about his works that seems at first simple, until you look beneath the use of pop cultural references and discover the gale force that is about to sweep you away to some place you didn’t know you needed to go. This happened to me with Dlugos’s work—I almost feel like I should call it “Tim’s work,” though we never met—when Ira Silverberg called me in 1996 and asked if I was interested in Dlugos’s papers for the Downtown New York Collection here at the Fales Library. I didn’t know the work, though I remembered his name from issues of Outweek magazine where his poems had appeared. I read the amazing compilation of Dlugos’s work, edited by David Trinidad, and titled *Powerless* (New York: Serpents Tail/High Risk Books, 1996). I was blown away! Here was the common language of Frank O’Hara, but with references that resonated with my childhood: The Jetsons. Barbie. Teen idols. Gilligan’s Island. And my adult life as a gay man with the cocktails, cigarettes, mussed up beds of one night stands, and boyfriends with poppers. Sex was a given; How we respond to it, the stuff of poetry. This was not the “he entered me like a rose” poetry that made all of us snotty, cynical, punk kids cringe. This was our language, our symbols, our self-aware, sometimes comic, sometimes graphic understanding of the world. Dlugos found the beautiful in the kitschy every-day and elevated the language of tricks, friends, and camp into tightly structured poetry. This was fresh air and possibilities.

Tim very much saw himself as a New Wave Frank O’Hara. As a New York School poet, he was very aware of the tradition of collaboration between contemporary poets and painters. O’Hara and Larry Rivers and Joe Brainard and Kenward Elmslie come to mind. In fact, Brainard and Elmslie were friends of Tim’s—Tim lived in Elmslie’s Greenwich Village townhouse when he first moved to New York. Tim had all of these role models on his mind as Philip and he dated and collaborated. It is an honor for the Fales Library to exhibit “At Moments Like These He Feels Farthest Away” and to help realize this project that began in 1983 at NYU and now is complete and displayed at NYU.

**Marvin J. Taylor**

Director, Fales Library and Special Collections



GILLIGAN HOLDS HIS HAT IN THE 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas



## On “Gilligan’s Island”

Tim Dlugos wrote “Gilligan’s Island” in the mid-1970s, a time when old TV shows were only available in reruns, and old films only on the late show or at the local art theater. John F. Kennedy’s assassination was still felt as a collective trauma, something we could still remember experiencing, rather than as a conspiracy; it had yet to become a movie. In those pre-VCR/Nick at Nite days, there was a sense that the sitcoms and motion pictures many of us had grown up watching would gradually fade to black as we took our roles as adults in an adult society. Dlugos’s poem turned such a presumption on its ear. Those silly characters and inane plots are in us, the poem announced. Those flickering images are more indelible than anyone would have thought; they aren’t ever going to go away. Dlugos was there, just ahead of the curve, to tell us that.

The poem is deceptively entertaining, a definite crowd pleaser, and yet its complexities, its disturbing implications, are immediate. The internalization of actual and artificial horror, the marketing of JFK’s death (prescient here), the loneliness and isolation of the boy “playing back” the image of another student as he masturbates. Everything—movies, history, objects of desire—viewed from the same impassive distance. And everything interfused. TV screens, movie screens, the “screen” of reality, reality seen on a TV screen, the screen of our own imaginations: we are all stuck in the same whirlpool of stock images. A society of voyeurs—insulated from experience, numb to actual touch. We are all stranded on Gilligan’s Island.

In the spring of 1983, Dlugos was commissioned by Bob Littman, then director of the Grey Art Gallery at New York University, to create an installation of one of his poems for their window overlooking Washington Square. Dlugos selected his signature piece “Gilligan’s Island” for the exhibition, and arranged for his ex-boyfriend Philip Monaghan (Dlugos called him “my ex-beau” in a letter), who at that time was doing art direction and windows at the fashionable Italian boutique Fiorucci, to design it. The opening was scheduled for June 6, and a party planned. That date, however, came and went without any exhibition. In October, Dlugos wrote to poet Michael Lally that as far as the window at Grey Gallery was concerned, things were “at loggerheads.” Littman, it turns out, had “decided that the poem was too sexually explicit to go into the window.” Although Dlugos revised “the jerk-off fantasy” (making it better, he believed), Littman still found the poem too explicit. “I’m furious over the entire affair,” said Dlugos.

That was that. Until twenty-four years later, when Monaghan revisited the unfinished project. While spending the summer of 2007 on Fire Island (which Monaghan likens to his own Gilligan’s Island, where he feels “shipwrecked with a crazy cast and crew”), his “unfulfilled commitment” to Dlugos (who had died of AIDS in 1990) came flooding back to him. He began working on a series of paintings that illustrates and interprets Dlugos’s poem. That December, Monaghan sought me out, and learned that I was in the process of editing Dlugos’s collected poems. It was a serendipitous moment; Monaghan and I both felt Dlugos’s hand in it. Dlugos was an incomparable socializer; he loved bringing people together. My next trip to New York, I visited Monaghan’s studio and was excited by his paintings. They manage to capture all the pop pathos of the poem—a progression of comic strip boxes (or televisions on pause) that recreate the hapless destiny of the castaways, of JFK, of Tippi Hedren, and of course ourselves, history’s anonymous viewers. I find it moving that Monaghan has managed to complete, all these years later, his collaboration with Dlugos, to rescue (a very “Gilligan” word) what had heretofore been perceived of as an ill-fated endeavor. It proves that it’s never too late to revise history. And after all, isn’t that a theme of Dlugos’s poem?

Just sit right back and enjoy this wonderful return to “Gilligan’s Island.”

**David Trinidad**  
Chicago, 2010



AROUND THE LAGOON 18"x 24" oil on canvas





**A LITTLE MAN IS AIMING AT JACKIE KENNEDY'S HUSBAND** 18"x 24" oil on canvas

## "At moments like these he feels farthest away"

He and I first met at Julius' in January of 1980. Tim Dlugos invited me to his poetry reading at the Ear Inn. His poem "Gilligan's Island" made a huge impression on me. I was immersed in the New Wave style of that era and the references to pop culture and the sixties enthralled me. But this poem linked these references to a childhood trauma of mine: I was nine years old and living in Houston, Texas, when JFK was assassinated in Dallas. Like Tim, I struggled to figure out the adult world of the mid-1960s. Television sitcoms and feature films were important sources of information.

In Gilligan's Island, the castaways are creating the ideal of sixties suburban comfort out of bamboo and coconuts, while simultaneously trying (and failing) to escape in each episode. In Hitchcock's The Birds, as Tippi Hedren battles the birds in a small town, we understand that she is fighting the outside forces that would invade and corrupt our culture. The Kennedy assassination plays back endlessly in our minds. Each time, we hope there will be a different outcome and we will be spared the meaningless murder of the president at the hands of some nobody.

As I began to work on this project, I realized that, in the poem, Tim is talking about a very specific point in time: 1964. JFK had been killed the previous fall; The Birds was in theaters; Gilligan's Island premiered on CBS; and Tim was a horny 14-year-old with a crush on The Professor. As a gay boy, he longed to be like Ginger Grant, Jackie Kennedy, or Tippi Hedren. I realized that I had always had the same feelings.

These paintings lift images out of their original frames, then cut and paste them together in a childlike manner to form a new story line. Drawing, oil painting, and ink jet printing are layered creating playful yet disturbing images that interpret Dlugos's poem. This is not illustration of the poem, but a dark riff on its emotional content.

As Dlugos does in his poem, these paintings deal in archetypes: the sixties' ideals of masculinity, femininity, and power. All the while, there is growing awareness that, below the surface, something is not as it seems. The Professor is the sexy geek-next-door on whom all the women (and some of the men) have crushes. Like JFK, he is the handsome, all-American ideal: brains and brawn. Gilligan, like Lee Oswald, is a fall guy, the ultimate patsy. These two are seen side by side and, at times, drawn over each other. Ginger Grant, a Marilyn Monroe doppelganger, is the ultimate in sixties' glamour and sexuality, not unlike Tippi Hedren and Jackie Kennedy. JFK is seen gazing at Ginger as she impersonates Monroe, whose tragic suicide, like JFK's assassination, defined the era.

We feel that doom surrounds these characters. Cio-Cio-San stalks Ginger Grant. A dead body (Suzanne Pleshette) lies face-up on a porch. JFK rides in the open car, as seen from Oswald's rifle. The cast of Gilligan's Island gathers around the radio as JFK's profile floats over and we imagine they are learning of the events in Dallas. Tippi Hedren reacts in horror at the cast of Gilligan's Island dressed as birds. The transistor radio, a virtual character in the TV show, is depicted in a Gauguin-like setting. But the news is always bad: the castaways are not going to be rescued.

Finally, there is a still sadness as snow falls on Gilligan's island, almost like a nuclear spring. The Howell's power and prestige have failed to free the castaways once again. Jackie Kennedy is a widow; Oswald rests in his grave. Like the last frames of The Birds, we wonder: What will become of us?

He (Tim) is not here to tell us.

**Philip Monaghan**  
New York City, 2010

# Gilligan’s Island

by Tim Dlugos

The Professor and Ginger are standing in the space in front of the Skipper’s cabin. The Professor is wearing deck shoes, brushed denim jeans, and a white shirt open at the throat. Ginger is wearing spike heels, false eyelashes, and a white satin kimono. The Professor looks at her with veiled lust in his eyes. He raises an articulate eyebrow and addresses her as Cio-Cio-San. Ginger blanches and falls on her knife.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile it is raining in northern California. In a tiny village on the coast, Rod Taylor and Tippi Hedren are totally concerned. They realize that something terrible is happening. Each has been savagely attacked by a wild songbird within the last twenty-four hours. Outside their window thousands of birds have gathered in anticipation of the famous school-yard scene. Tippi Hedren is wearing a colorful lipstick.

\* \* \*

Ginger stares back at the Professor. His sullen good looks are the perfect foil for her radiant smile. The Skipper and Gilligan come into sight. The Skipper has been chasing Gilligan around the lagoon for a long time now. Gilligan holds onto his hat in the stupid way he has of doing things like that. The Professor’s lips part in a sneer of perfect contempt. Ginger bares her teeth, as if in appreciation.

\* \* \*

Jackie Kennedy bares her teeth. Behind and above her, the muzzle of a high-powered rifle protrudes from a window. A little man is aiming at Jackie Kennedy’s husband. The man is wearing bluejeans and a white T-shirt. There isn’t a bird to be seen. As he squeezes the trigger, the little man mutters between clenched teeth, “Certs is a candy mint.” The hands of Jackie Kennedy’s husband jerk automatically toward his head.

\* \* \*

The Professor is noticing Ginger’s breasts. He thinks of the wife he left at home, who probably thinks he’s dead. He thinks of his mother, and all of the women he has ever known. Mr. and Mrs. Howell are asleep in their hut, secure in their little lives as character actors. Ginger shifts her weight to the other foot. The intensity of the moment reminds the Professor of a Japanese city before the end of the war.

\* \* \*

In his mind he goes down each aisle in his government class, focusing on each face, each body. He is lying on his bed with his white shirt off and his trousers open. Dorothy Kirsten’s voice fills the room. He settles on a boy who sits two desks behind him. He begins to masturbate, his body moving in time with the sad music. At moments like these he feels farthest away. As he shoots, his lips part and he bares his teeth.

\* \* \*

The Professor and Ginger are watching each other across the narrow space. The Skipper and Gilligan have disappeared down the beach. The Howells are quietly snoring. The Professor and Ginger are alone. From the woods comes the sound of strange birds. From the water comes a thick and eerie tropical silence. The famous conversation scene is about to start. Clouds appear in the sky, and it begins to snow.





THE PROFESSOR LOOKS AT HER 18"x 24" oil on canvas



PUCCINI ON THE RADIO 18"x 24" oil on canvas

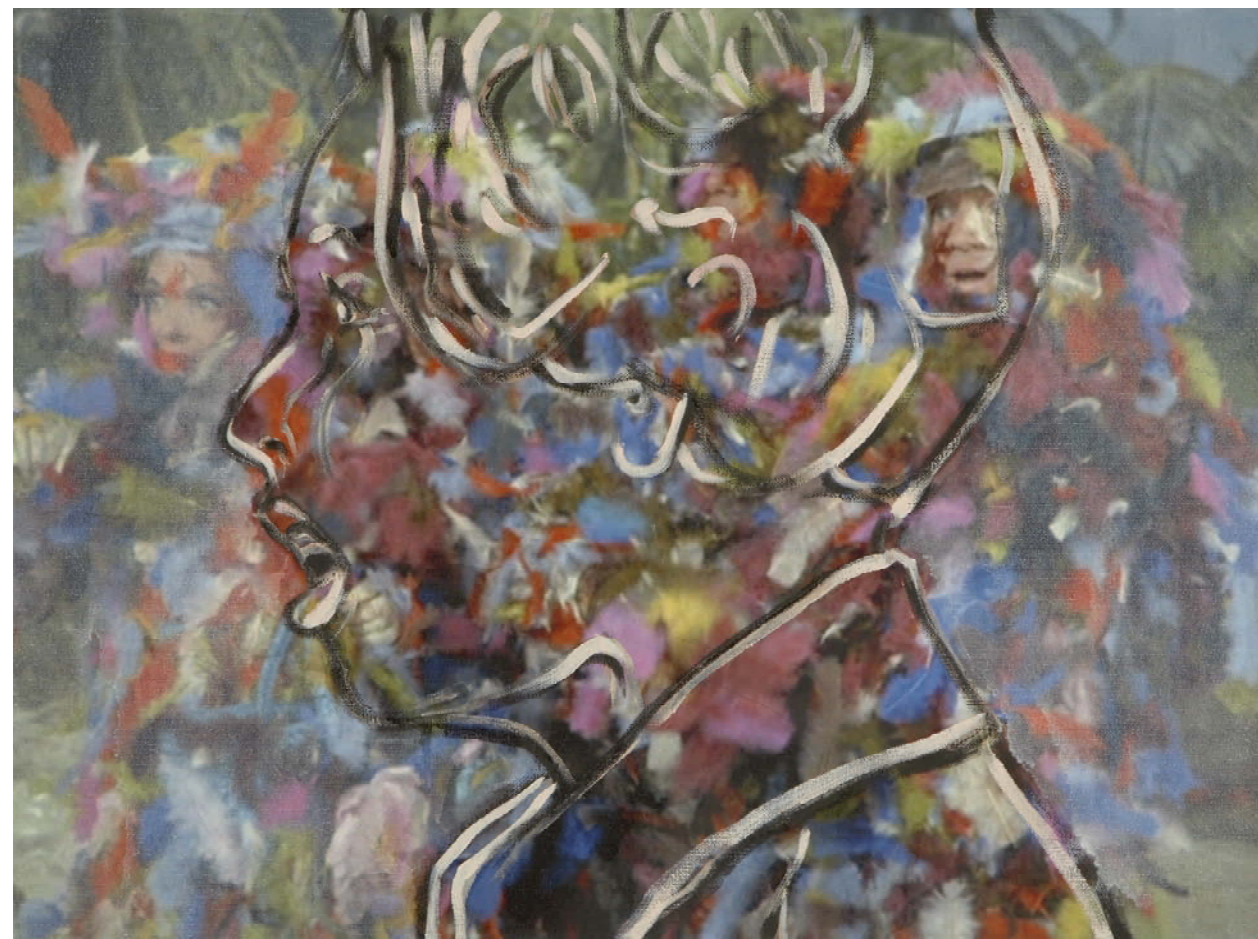


HE ADDRESSES HER AS CIO-CIO-SAN 18"x 24" oil on canvas





\*\*\*\* 18"x 24" oil on canvas



THE SOUND OF STRANGE BIRDS 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas



TIPPI HEDREN IS TOTALLY CONCERNED 18"x 24" oil on canvas



THERE ISN'T A BIRD TO BE SEEN 18"x 24" oil on canvas



THE MAN IS WEARING BLUE JEANS AND A WHITE T-SHIRT  
18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas



THE MUZZLE OF A HIGH-POWERED RIFLE PROTRUDES FROM THE WINDOW  
18"x 24" oil on canvas





**HIS LIPS PART AND HE BARES HIS TEETH**  
18"x 24" oil on canvas



**THE PROFESSOR AND GINGER ARE ALONE**  
18"x 24" oil on canvas



**IT BEGINS TO SNOW**  
18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas





**SNOW FALLS ON GILLIGAN'S ISLAND** 18"x 24" oil on canvas



## Painter's Biography

Philip Monaghan is a painter from New York City. For more than 20 years he pursued a creative career in the fashion industry, highlighted by collaborations with such artists, designers, and photographers as Andy Warhol, Francesco Scavullo, Antonio Lopez, Steven Meisel, Patrick DeMarchelier, Bruce Weber, Peter Arnell, and Peter Lindbergh. Monaghan received an MFA in Painting from Pratt Institute in 1979 and a BFA in Painting from Texas Tech University in 1976. For more information, [www.philipmonaghanstudio.com](http://www.philipmonaghanstudio.com)

*Photo: Daniel Thompson, Fire Island, 1983.*



## Poet's Biography

Tim Dlugos was a prominent younger poet who was active in both the Mass Transit poetry scene in Washington, D.C., in the early 1970s and New York's downtown literary scene in the late seventies and eighties. His books include *Je Suis Ein Americano* (Little Caesar Press, 1979), *Entre Nous* (Little Caesar, 1982), and *Strong Place* (Amethyst Press, 1992). He died of AIDS on December 3, 1990, at the age of forty. In 1996, David Trinidad edited *Powerless*, Dlugos's selected poems, for High Risk Books. *A Fast Life: The Collected Poems of Tim Dlugos*, also edited by Trinidad, is forthcoming from Nightboat Books.

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## The Fales Library

The Fales Library and Special Collections are the primary repository for rare materials in literature and the arts at New York University. The collection holds more than 200,000 printed books, 12,000 linear feet of archives and manuscripts, and more than 50,000 media elements. In addition to the Fales Collection, which documents developments in prose narrative, the Downtown Collection documents the New York art scene from the 1970's-1990's. Our Food Studies collection contains more than 20,000 volumes, making it one of the largest in the country. For more information please see [www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/fales/](http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/fales/).





## Exhibition List

1. **IN FRONT OF THE SKIPPER'S HUT** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
2. **THE PROFESSOR RAISES AN ARTICULATE EYEBROW** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
3. **PUCCINI ON THE RADIO** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
4. **HE ADDRESSES HER AS CIO-CIO-SAN** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
5. **THE PROFESSOR LOOKS AT HER** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
6. **GINGER IS WEARING SPIKE HEELS, FALSE EYELASHES AND A WHITE SATIN KIMONO** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
7. **WITH VEILED LUST IN HIS EYES** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
8. **GINGER BLANCHES AND FALLS ON HER KNIFE** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
9. **TIPPI HEDREN IS TOTALLY CONCERNED** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
10. **IN A TINY VILLAGE ON THE COAST** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
11. **SAVAGELY ATTACKED BY A WILD SONGBIRD** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
12. **SOMETHING TERRIBLE IS HAPPENING** 18"x 24" oil on linen.
13. **THE FAMOUS SCHOOLYARD SCENE** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
14. **THOUSANDS OF BIRDS ARE GATHERING** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
15. **\*\*\*\*** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
16. **TIPPI HEDREN IS WEARING A COLORFUL LIPSTICK** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
17. **HIS SULLEN GOOD LOOKS THE PERFECT FOIL FOR HER RADIANT SMILE** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
18. **THE SKIPPER HAS BEEN CHASING GILLIGAN** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
19. **AROUND THE LAGOON** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
20. **EXOTIC TRIP, FREE LUNCHES** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
21. **GILLIGAN HOLDS HIS HAT IN THE** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
22. **GINGER BARES HER TEETH** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
23. **JACKIE KENNEDY BARES HER TEETH** 18"x 24" oil on linen.
24. **A LITTLE MAN IS AIMING AT JACKIE KENNEDY'S HUSBAND** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
25. **THE MUZZLE OF A HIGH-POWERED RIFLE PROTRUDES FROM THE WINDOW** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
26. **THE MAN IS WEARING BLUE JEANS AND A WHITE T-SHIRT** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
27. **THERE ISN'T A BIRD TO BE SEEN** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
28. **HE SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
29. **CERTS IS A CANDY MINT** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
30. **THE HANDS OF JACKIE KENNEDY'S HUSBAND JERK AUTOMATICALLY TOWARD HIS HEAD** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
31. **THE PROFESSOR IS NOTICING GINGER'S BREASTS** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
32. **WHO PROBABLY THINKS HE'S DEAD** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
33. **MR. AND MRS. HOWELL ARE ASLEEP IN THEIR HUT** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
34. **WIPED OUT** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
35. **MEMBERS AND THEIR GUESTS** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
36. **MR. AND MRS. THURSTON HOWELL THE THIRD** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
37. **GINGER SHIFTS HER WEIGHT TO THE OTHER FOOT** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
38. **A JAPANESE CITY BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
39. **HE IS LYING ON HIS BED WITH HIS SHIRT OFF** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
40. **HE SETTLES ON A BOY** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
41. **LITTLE BUDDIES** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
42. **DOROTHY KIRSTEN'S VOICE FILLS THE ROOM** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
43. **HIS BODY MOVING IN TIME TO THE SAD MUSIC** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
44. **HIS LIPS PART AND HE BARES HIS TEETH** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
45. **THE PROFESSOR AND GINGER ARE ALONE** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
46. **THE FAMOUS CONVERSATION SCENE IS ABOUT TO START** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
47. **FROM THE WATER COMES A THICK AND EERIE TROPICAL SILENCE** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
48. **THE SOUND OF STRANGE BIRDS** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
49. **FROM THE WOODS** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas. "Clouds appear in the sky" 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
50. **CLOUDS APPEAR IN THE SKY** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
51. **IT BEGINS TO SNOW** 18"x 24" oil and ink jet on canvas.
52. **SNOW FALLS ON GILLIGAN'S ISLAND** 18"x 24" oil on canvas.
53. **GILLIGAN'S ISLAND** 16"x 20" oil on canvas.
54. **TIM DLUGOS (CHRISTOPHER STREET)** 10"x 10" oil on canvas.