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Jaqueline Cedar/A.M. Richard in conversation
April 2010

 Jaqueline Cedar is a painter and photographer. She is showing new paintings at the A.M. Richard Fine Art gallery (May 7th-June 13th, 2010). The exhibition comprises three large scale oil on canvas paintings with the evocative titles of; ***Under a Black Star***, ***See the Setting Sun*** and ***Hand on Shoulder, Hand on Head***. Can you explain the chosen titles of your work?

JC: The first two are **PAUL KLEE** titles. I like that he uses literal language to title abstract compositions. I've been thinking a lot about his work this year so when I finished a group of paintings I went through a book of his watercolors and picked the titles of works I felt were connected to each painting via composition or palette. So while the works aren't based on the content of Klee's paintings, I wanted the titles to link my work to his language.

The third title, *Hand on Shoulder, Hand on Head*, describes the action of the person in the middle of the painting. I was thinking about the **BRUCE NAUMAN** sculpture, *From Hand to Mouth*.

 In reading your paintings, I see a lot of early twentieth-century art historical assimilation. You seem to refer to Futurist and Cubist precepts in your fragmented compositions. I detect Fauvism in your color palette and a nod to surrealism in the usage of floating figures with balloon or bird-like heads. Can you comment on your primary sources of inspiration?

JC: I tend to think more about **ORPHISM** than Futurism or Cubism, but certainly the aesthetic is similar in terms of the breakdown of figurative elements. I am less interested in using this approach to represent motion or time, and more concerned with using basic formal cues – color, composition, perspective – to create an image where there are few places for the eye to rest.

✂️ How does your background in photography affect the choices in your paintings? Is photography the point of departure? Does photography influence your sense of light?

JC: I think about each medium fairly separately. In making paintings, though, I am conscious of setting a frame for the image. I avoid cropping people, limbs, and objects because I find this action too often suggests the presence of a photographic source that at this point in my practice does not exist. When I paint from photographs I use multiple images (both found and constructed) of a person or place. I leave the images around the studio and pull information as needed, to be collaged and altered within the painting. Rarely does my relationship between photography and painting involve transferring one image to another directly. Even within painting I prefer to work from text (something I've read or written) to image.

✂️ Your early works, **Magic Show, Petting Zoo, Mountain, Funeral, Trust Walk** (all executed in 2008) are mostly set outdoors or with open views of the landscape surrounds. These paintings also share a sense of action and domestic familiarity. The activities portrayed involve a group of peers or a family. The figures are busy playing, building or watching an act, ritual or performance. Are those vignettes based on your experience, imaginary or an amalgamation of keen observations?

JC: With those works in particular, I was shifting lines of sight in order to agitate mundane domestic group activity. I was thinking about **BONNARD** and **BALTHUS** and the way each painter uses light and the structure of a room or landscape to heighten tension within a scene that might ordinarily seem dull or vast. I wanted to set up scenarios that at once held the possibility of boredom and magic.

✂️ In your more recent works, the figures seem detached from reality. Their physiognomy and living space has changed. The home is gone. We are no longer peering into a slice of common reality but rather inhabiting a dream or perhaps a nightmare. What happened?

JC: I've started to get more involved in the way color and composition can create movement and sensation in the work. The arrangement of people remains mannered because they are posed and fixed within a less literal ground. In the absence of domestic cues the figures become increasingly static and the abstract fields drive the direction of the image.

 Can you tell us about your usage of color. Do you mix your own?


JC: I have a difficult time limiting my palette so that's the first thing I do when I start a painting. I pick two or three colors that I know I want to work with and try to stay within that set for as long as possible. When I get stuck I start to expand the range, and by the end of a painting I've generally used every color in my studio at least once.

 Do you do preparatory drawings? If so, do you draw from nature?

JC: Every once in a while I'll make a small drawing on a receipt or envelope. Usually though, I think about a few options over the course of a week or a month, stare at a large blank canvas for about two hours, and then begin sketching right onto the painting. Changes occur over the course of time it takes to finish the work.

 What are you working on now? And in what direction will you next take your work?

JC: Currently I'm making a group of small paintings, which is something I haven't done in a long time. Working at this scale (around 9x12 inches) involves thinking through a completely different set of problems – especially when making paintings of people. It's always been important to me that a viewer is able to relate to each painting at a nearly one to one scale (body to body) so in making these smaller paintings I had to set aside that rubric and start developing new rules. Thinking about how to construct these smaller, more casual works is changing the way I approach the larger paintings. I'm thinking about ways to use shape and color to create depth within what has become a more flattened structure.

 Thank you Ms. Cedar. Jaqueline Cedar: new paintings on view at A.M. Richard through June 13th. An artist lecture is scheduled for Saturday June 5th at 4pm.