

PAINTING

REVIEW: ANDREA JOYCE HEIMER'S “FOUNTAINHEAD” @ NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

Feb 08, 2018 - Mar 11, 2018 Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York



We all make choices in life. What do I eat for breakfast? Should I quit my job? Get a dog? Obviously some decisions are more important than others and while we don't always have the answers, we do have the unique ability to postulate just how important those decisions can be. Whether or not hypothesizing leads to informed decisions is unclear but at least it's a way to sort through some of life's more daunting moments.

Untangling some of those ideas, good and bad, is artist [Andrea Joyce Heimer](#). In 2015, the state of Montana passed a bill that allows adoptees to unseal records and reveal the identities of their birth parents. An adopted child from Montana herself, Heimer was faced

with a decision of colossal size, whether to find her birth parents or go on, as she had been, not knowing. Confronted with this dilemma, Heimer decided to do what came naturally to her - create. Her new exhibition of paintings at [Nicelle Beauchene Gallery](#) fleshes through a multitude of possible scenarios if she were to meet her biological parents, some fraught with shame, fear and rejection while others play out differently and imagine an outcome full of love and acceptance. Clearly a wellspring of inspiration for her work, the show is appropriately titled “Fountainhead.”

Comprised of 12 new paintings, Heimer’s new works set the stage for a variety of imagined outcomes. Accompanied by hand-written, poetic titles that explain (to a degree) the sequence of events the viewer is seeing, each piece feels like a secret pass at her diary. Her densely packed paintings group dozens of figures engaging in all sorts of acts, playing out stories for Heimer to reckon with. According to the gallery “In this series, Heimer’s titles mimic an oral tradition of storytelling and the ways in which narratives change as they are passed from person to person. Heimer’s typically eloquent titles become purposefully jumbled as she translates them into a series of other languages and then back to English. Through transforming and displacing her titles in this way, Heimer uses this body of work to explore what it might mean to give up a measure of control and authorship over her own life story.” Titles like “Maybe everything will be fine, and we’ll have a group. Perhaps everything is good, we have a party” shows a jovial gathering (perhaps of her new found family) drinking and dancing and playing music, a hopeful image of what could be.

Idiosyncratic in narrative and style, her paintings are both conceptually and literally laid out. Her tightly composed works are flattened so that time and space can exist on one plane. Heimer plays with depth and places her subjects on one continuous level - a surface on which her stories can all take place simultaneously. Stylistically, her works harken back to classical greek pottery and religious medieval painting. Incredibly detailed and booming with symbolic meaning, Heimer has undoubtedly created her own kind of mythology, an unrestrained display of her own vulnerabilities and emotional journey. “Fountainhead” is truly an exploration and through Heimer’s complex, personal works, viewers are lucky enough to witness someone sort through some of life’s most important decisions.

***Fountainhead* is on view at Nicelle Beauchene Gallery through March 11th, 2018. Feel free to look at our opening night coverage above and be sure to check it out, it’s the easiest decision you’ll make all year.**

Opening night photos and article by Jessica Ross