

Katarina Janečková Walshe: Motherland

30 Orchard St, Gallery 1 & 2 ▪ Apr 7 - May 10, 2023



Harkawik is thrilled to announce *Motherland*, our first exhibition with Slovakian-born, Texas-based painter Katarina Janečková Walshe. *Motherland* presents several conflicting notions of the “mother”—as heroic nurturing figure, dominant sexual partner, solitary caregiver, weary, wise progenitor, and youthful companion. In every case, two primary processes are at work. In one, Janečková takes tropes about women’s bodies and renders them absurd, making us see what these assumptions might in fact look like: a hovering ouroboros of leaking breastmilk; an floating mammary island; a pack of women feeding each other in turn; a magical terrain-within-an-ass. In the other, she takes as her subject the mother-artist, not only making her fictive self the subject of the painting, but confusing the boundary between private family life and public vocation, inviting her children to take part in her artmaking, as her mothering becomes her painting, and vice-versa. Even as it is free-ranging and encyclopedic in scale, *Motherland* offers a look at a painter with a bold and concise vision, taking aim at some of America’s most peculiar hypocrisies, sexual anxieties, and notions of womanhood. In the massive *Almost There*, an obstreperous canvas bursting with pleasurable textures and motifs, the artist situates herself above a v-shaped doily that bridges painterly surface and illusory space, suggesting that children and paintings flow just as freely from her. *Outlaw* references legislation in Texas that prohibits individuals from owning more than six sex toys, ominously suggesting the restrictive power of more significant legislation regulating women’s bodies. In a series titled *Tensions and Intensions*, the figure-ground is eliminated entirely, in favor of a body that is itself a composition, an abstraction

and a painting-within-painting. In the exhibition's title work, Janečková situates her quasi-biographical painted counterpart in outer space, spreading her cheeks, as the universe emerges from her loins. In this way, we can think of *Motherland* not in the divisive imperialist sense of a nation state proclaiming its primacy, but as a sort of "land of mothers," a fertile territory in which mothers of all stripes are celebrated as both subject and creative force to be reckoned with.