

parrasch heijnen

Ellen Siebers

b. 1986, Madison, WI



Double Red Sun, 2023, oil on panel, 8 x 10 inches



Ellen Siebers (b. 1986, Madison, WI) is a painter based in Hudson, NY. She received her BFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2008 and her MFA from the University of Iowa in 2012. Siebers was awarded the Elizabeth Greenshields Grant (2023), Vermont Studio Center Grant (2014), the University of Iowa Quarter-time Teaching Assistantship (2009-12), the Iowa Quarter-time Fellowship (2009), and the Mildred Pelzer Lynch Fellowship (2011-12). Her recent solo and group exhibitions include: *A Particular Kind of Heaven*, curated by Ali Dipp at parraschheijnen (Los Angeles, CA); Harper's Gallery (East Hampton, NY); Frosch & Portmann (New York, NY); MARCH, New York, NY; Sardine (Brooklyn, NY); Proto Gallery (Hoboken, NJ); Big Medium (Austin, TX); The Provincial (MI); Deanna Evans Projects (Brooklyn, NY); FJORD Gallery (Philadelphia, PA); Collective 131 (Brooklyn, NY); Pt. II Gallery (Oakland, CA); and Peep Projects (Philadelphia, PA).

Using poetic washes of abstraction, Siebers memorializes the immediacy of beauty in vignettes of daily life. She envisions indistinct but familiar compositions, through a duality of sensation and perception. In these gentle scenes, the simultaneity of what is felt and observed is conveyed together yet distinctly apart.

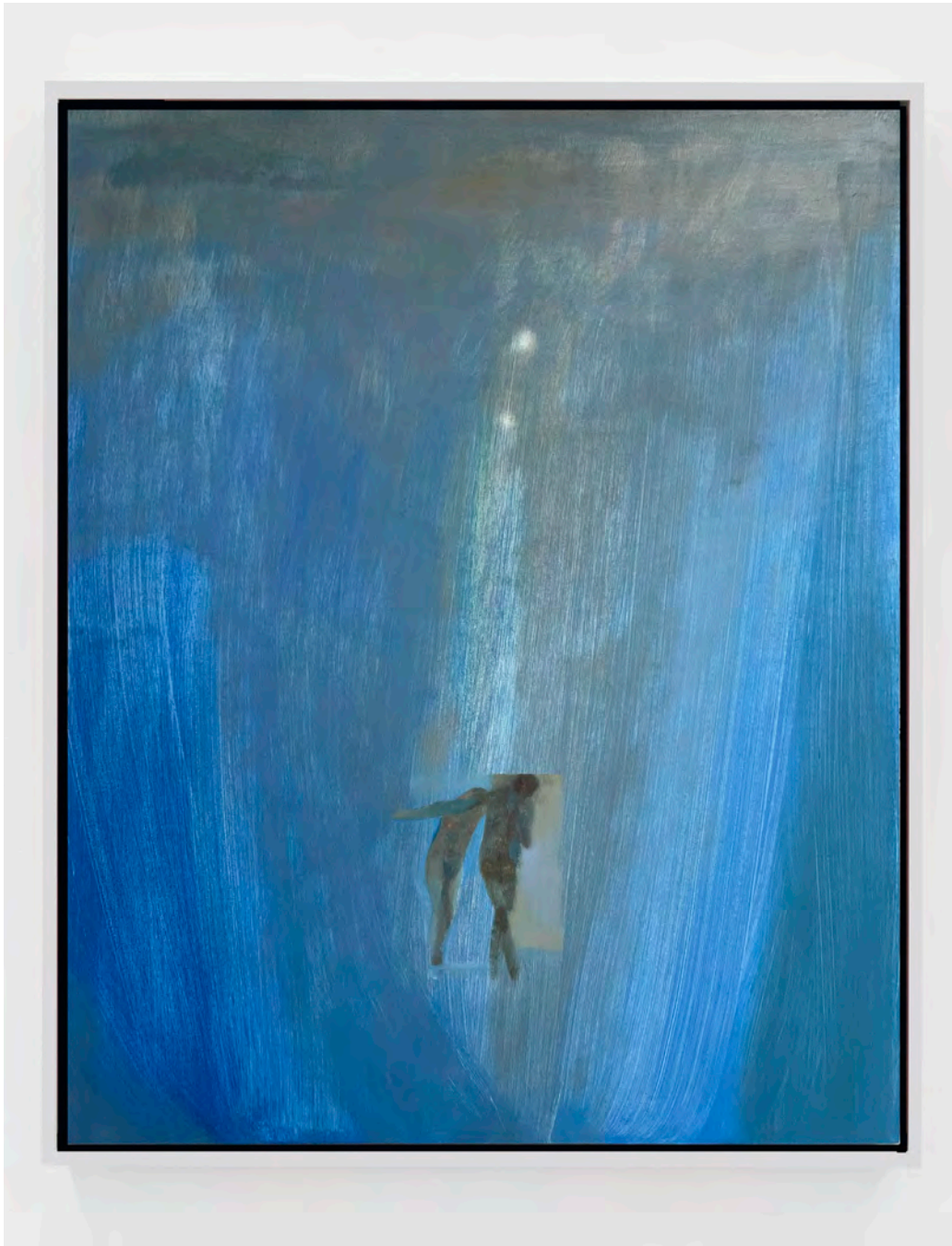
Siebers gives breath to the temporal phenomena of her subjects with fluid compositions on panel. Any distinction between sight and impression is blurred by the artist's languid brushstrokes. Intimately scaled yet uninhibited, the works capture a quality of lightness held within a fleeting moment.

In *Apples in May, 2023*, a field of vision fades in and out of focus as soft boundaries gently suggest form. Using cathartic gestures, Siebers composes still life arrangements which shine with fractals of light.



Apples in May, 2023, oil on panel, 12 x 12 inches





Half Light, 2023, oil on panel, 16 x 20 inches

The *Double Red Sun* (2023), spawned from thick atmospheric smoke due to ongoing northern wildfires, is a direct reminder of the unconstrained interconnectedness of our environment. The view remains as an impression, with painterly preservation.

Small windows open onto concurrent nested scenes, frequently depicting a nude figure in a moment of repose. The character acts as a placeholder, altering vantage points, to visually superimpose oneself within introspective stills. The artist renders her figures tenderly, with a dimensionality unique to their interior realms.

As she encounters the world, Siebers catalogues each sensation, measuring color, vibrancy, temperature and motion. This extension of present wonderment is transposed into her vulnerable scenes by a self-reflective gaze. Capturing the ephemeral atmosphere, she weaves a new mythology of beauty where her subjects are granted the gravity of their own cosmos.



Figure Model (after Delvaux), 2023, oil on panel, 10-3/4 x 10-3/4 inches



Ellen Siebers: *A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends* at March Gallery, Installation View. Photo by Cary Whittier



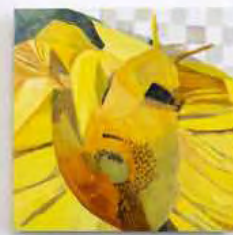
Late June, 2023, oil on panel, 10 x 6 inches

Indeed, an effusive wonderment emanates from Siebers' work – the awesomeness of staring up at the cosmos or observing the strange forms that comprise nature. Themes emerge such as the months of the year, twins or mirrored doubles, bathing and water, sleeping and dreaming, the stars and sky, animals and insects, and windows and slats. (...) Siebers' paint handling is unfussy and the color combinations are subtle and evocative: mint greens, sky blues, margarines, tangerines, and charred reds and greys.

A painterly mark carries the body of the artist who created it, ensuring an entry point for future viewers to empathize with her vision. In this way, artworks resonate through time, alive in an eternal moment.

- Patrick Neal, "Ellen Siebers: The visceral pull of her brush."

Two Coats of Paint, April 2022



Ellen Siebers: *In The Family of Things* at September Gallery, Installation View



Late September Sunflower, 2020
oil on shaped birch panel
11 x 11 inches
Collection of University of Kentucky Art Museum



Snake Gourd, 2020
oil on shaped birch panel
11 x 11 inches
Collection of University of Kentucky Art Museum

“The mind’s eye is a powerful presence in the digestion of daily experience; with every moment, our limitations and visual processes force us to link together a series of images, perspectives, and perceptual phenomenon. Everything begins to feel like mythology.”

- Ellen Siebers



Sun Ray Quilt, 2022
oil on panel
12 x 12 inches
Collection of Wolf Hill



Gentle Moth I, 2021
12-1/2 x 12-1/2 inches
oil on beveled birch panel
Collection of University of Kentucky Art Museum



Ellen Siebers: *A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends* at March Gallery, Installation View. Photo by Cary Whittier

Ellen Siebers

b. 1986 Madison, WI
lives and works in Hudson, NY

EDUCATION

2008 BFA in Painting & Drawing, University of Wisconsin-Madison
2012 MFA in Painting, University of Iowa

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2023 *dream song*, parrasch heijnen, Los Angeles, CA
2022 *a divinity that shapes our ends*, MARCH, New York, NY
2021 *sunrise to sunset*, University of Kentucky Medical Center, Lexington, KY
in the family of things, SEPTEMBER, Hudson, NY
2017 *Sunbathers*, Big Medium Gallery, Austin, TX
2015 *Soft Nails*, Matteawan Gallery, Beason, NY
2014 *Ellen Siebers*, curated by Peter Shear, Bushwick Open Studios/Do It Yourself, 3rd Ward Building, Bushwick, NY

SELECTED TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2016 *Basic Instinct*, with Peter Shear, FJORD, Philadelphia, PA
Reading a Wave, with Ian White Williams, Proto Gallery, Hoboken, NJ
2013 *Haunted House*, with Peter Shear, Madison, WI

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2023 *A Particular Kind of Heaven*, parrasch heijnen, Los Angeles, CA
in the prescence of, September Gallery, Hudson, NY
sauntering days, Harper's Gallery, East Hampton, NY
April Group Group, Pt. II Gallery, Oakland, CA
2022 *November Group*, Pt. II Gallery, Oakland, CA
Still Going, Taymour Grahne Projects, London, UK
2021 *Eau de Vallotton*, Tif Sigfrids, New York, NY
Your Got Your Secret On, Quappi Projects, Louisville, KY
Afterimage, Maake Magazine, curated by Alex Paik (online)
2020 *Portals*, PEEP Projects, Philadelphia, PA
Personal Space, Collective131 on Artsy
2019 *Love is a Bug*, Bar4000, Chicago, IL
2018 *Of Weight and Breath*, East Side Project Space, Nashville, TN
2017 *Domestic*, Deanna Evans Projects, Brooklyn, NY
2016 *Cold Summer*, curated by Peter Shear, The Provincial, Kaleva, MI
Steinpilz, Grids and Glorias, Frosch & Portmann, NYC
2015 *Cosmicomics*, curated by Vicki Sher, Frosch & Portmann, NYC

- Personal:Interpersonal:Connected*, Sardine, BK, NY
Improvised Showboat, curated by Zachary Keeting and Lauren Britton, NYC
Dear You, curated by Olivia Smith, Field Projects, NYC
- 2014 *Do It Yourself*, Bushwick Open Studios, curated by Peter Shear and Julie Torres, 3rd Ward Building, Bushwick, NY
Party Lines, Smart Clothes Gallery, NYC
Verge, Prince Street Lofts/Verge Art Fair, NYC
- 2013 *Precautionary Principle*, Porter Butts Gallery, Madison, WI
Madam I'm Adam, Remote Projects, Bloomington, IN
Wild America, Common Wealth Gallery, Madison, WI
Kentucky National, Clara M Eagle Gallery, Murray, KY
Haunted House (with Peter Shear), Pier 1218, Madison, WI
- 2012 *Tilting at Windmills*, Porter Butts Gallery, Madison, WI
Fresh Blood, Mason Murer Gallery, Atlanta, GA
R.E.S.P.E.C.T., Peter Paul Luce Gallery, Cornell College, Mount Vernon, IA
- 2011 *About Face, Decades Turn on Portraiture*, Hous Projects, Los Angeles, CA
The Beast in Me, Madison Public Library, Madison, WI
Hanna (han'na) n.2, Byron Burford Gallery, Iowa City, IA
Pulp (works on paper/works with paper), Beta Pictoris Gallery, Birmingham, AL
Master Pieces 5, Manifest Gallery, Cincinnati, OH
- 2010 *Go Figure*, The Hogar Collection, Williamsburg (Brooklyn), New York
Five hundred and thirty-one, Marshall Arts, Memphis, TN
Hanna (han'na) n.2, Byron Burford Gallery, Iowa City, IA
- 2009 *University of Iowa Poetry Anthology*, Byron Burford Gallery, Iowa City, IA
The October Occupation, Public Space One, Iowa City, IA

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2023 "Ellen Siebers." *Revue Eclipse*, June.
- 2022 Gemina, Clare. "Ellen Siebers on 'A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends'." *EV Grieve*, May.
Neal, Patrick. "Ellen Siebers: The visceral pull of her brush." *Two Coats of Paint*, April.
- 2018 NUT, second edition
- 2015 Micchelli, Thomas. "Alien Forms: 'Cosmicomics' at Frosch&Portmann." *Hyperallergic*, July.
- 2013 #107 New American Paintings (Midwest)
- 2011 Volume 31.2 The Pleiades (Cover Image), June
Volume 31.1 The Pleiades (Cover Image), January
- 2010 #87 MFA Annual: New American Painting (Editor's Choice)
Hannah (han'na) n.1. (A book of collaborations between painters & poets)

PUBLIC & PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

UK Art Museum
Wolfhill
Al Shands/Great Meadows

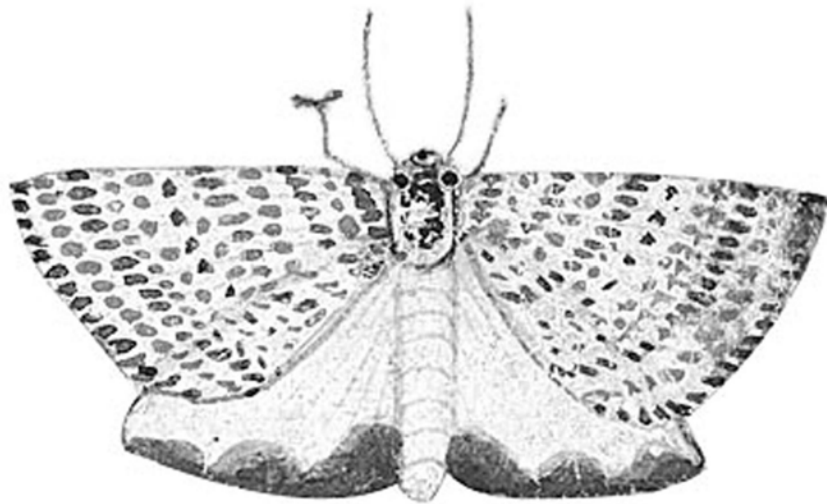
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AWARDS

2023 Elizabeth Greenshields Grant
2014 Vermont Studio Center Grant
2012-2009 University of Iowa Quarter-time Teaching Assistantship
2012-2011 Mildred Pelzer Lynch Fellowship, University of Iowa
2009 Iowa Quarter-time Fellowship

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

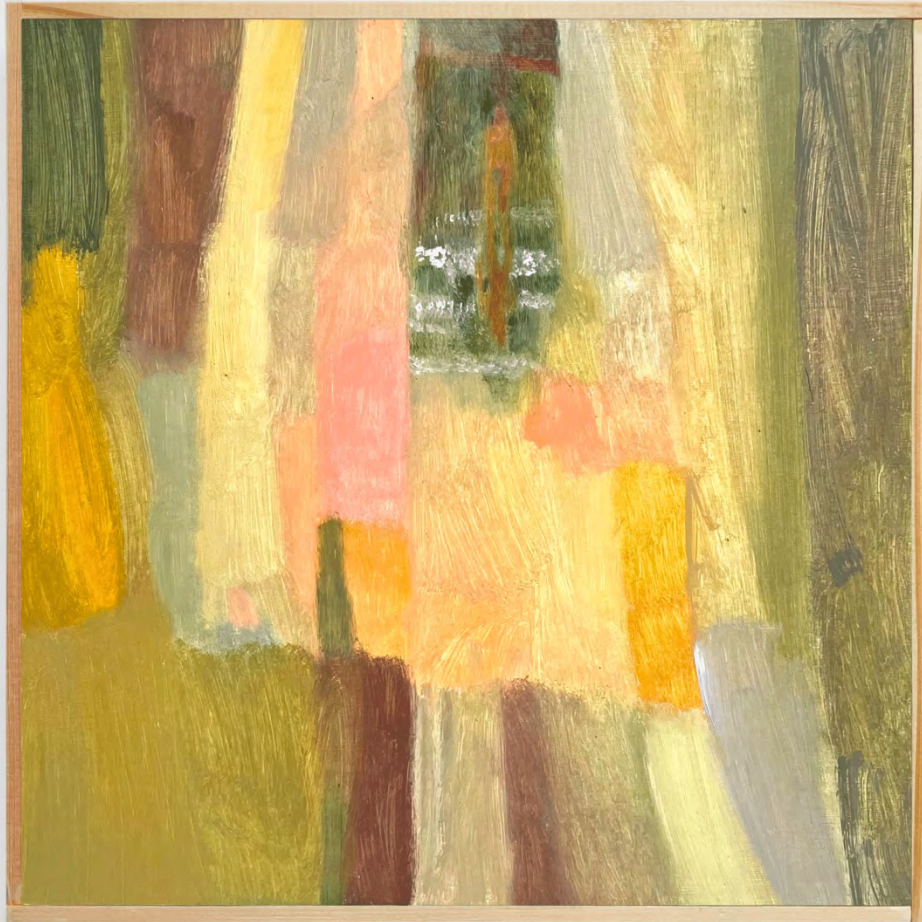
2023 Artist Lecture: *Nurturing Independence Through Artistic Development* // NIAD Art Center
2012 Guest Lecturer/Studio visits, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, ALS



ELLEN SIEBERS

Ellen Siebers was born in 1986, she lives and works in Hudson, New York.

Siebers' paintings relate poetically swirling experiences and observations of ordinary moments, thoughts, and visions. An omnipresent eclosion of beauty is explored through her square canvases; this fascination for the ordinary is part of our actual exploration of the Assignificant in the Revue Eclipse.



Ellen Siebers, Warm April, 2023, oil on shaped birch panel, 12" x 12"

1. Could you tell us more about artists that inspired your artistic path?

If I go way back, the first artists I remember reacting strongest to are Vermeer, Matisse, and Manet (I had very limited exposure to a wide range of work since I grew up in Wisconsin and didn't go to a large museum for the first time until college. My high school art education was very much just focused on the male/European camp). Then a bit later Agnes Martin made the biggest impact, and she is still my hero. I have an Agnes Martin tattoo on my wrist.

2. Are there writers, philosophers, or musicians that influenced you as well?

Anything written by Mary Oliver, Daybook by Anne Truitt, On Beauty and Being Just by Elaine Scarry, Annie Dillard, Peter Schjeldahl, Charles Simic, Elizabeth Bishop, and Tom Petty.

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Ellen Siebers, Blue Sleep, oil on shaped birch panel, 2023, 12" x 12"



Ellen Siebers, Snake Gourd, oil on shaped birch panel, 2020, 11" x 11"

3. How does the idea of a painting come to your mind?

Sometimes the ideas come slowly and marinate over the course of weeks, and sometimes they hit like a lightning bolt when I see something striking that resonates. However, most of my solid ideas totally dissolve once I start to actually paint. The good paintings then come from a subconscious place. Since I don't have linear thoughts while I am painting, the things I have been thinking about and digesting then arrive in painting language. This whole process is pretty mysterious to me since I cannot predict what I will do in a painting session. My best-preconceived ideas are usually where paintings go to die, and I kind of love that even after all this time I never know where a painting will wind up. It makes me want to work a ton since I never know when I might make a good painting.

4. The first impression that we had while discovering your works, was this omnipresent eclosion, as if fertility was explored in its different facets. How would you relate to that?

I love that. I think that relates directly to what I just mentioned about the mysterious cross-fertilization between deeply felt ideas and the act of painting. The common desire to replicate a beautiful object, moment, or environment is as fertile as it gets in my mind. It fuels everything.



Ellen Siebers, Geraniums at dawn in January, oil on shaped birch panel, 2023, 8" x 8"



Ellen Siebers, From the Meadow, oil on shaped birch panel, 2022, 12" x 12"

5. Different types of flowers are one of the major figures punctuating your artworks, often with a close focus, why are they so important to you ? Does it convey any symbolic meaning?

They are important to me because I think the experience of observing and duplicating beauty is a hopeful act. For me, all the little glimmers of beautiful things throughout the day are what makes it all worth it, so they don't necessarily have specific symbolic meaning. I take them for their immediate value and impact upon my daily life. Their value is inherent and accessible.

6. Figuration is present in most of your works. Still, it seems it is employed in an abstract way, as if the figures were an opportunity to express visual entities in a colorful composition. How do you apprehend the porosity between figuration and abstraction in your works?

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I think of my experience in two different camps – there is the part of me that is an observer/consumer and the part of me that is a sponge. They inform each other. When I sit back and take in a scene, there is a part of me that is engaged in specificity, and then there is a part of me that is taking in color, vibrancy, temperature, and motion (that’s the part of myself I think as a sponge). The paintings often contain both parts of myself, the sponge being the abstractions deeply felt as an observer while the more realized parts related to more specific thoughts. I love the idea of porosity between the different experiences/entities – I want the viewer to be able to flow throughout the painting and experience it all in equal regard.



Ellen Siebers, April, oil on beveled birch panel, 2021, 12" x 12"



Ellen Siebers, Sun Ray Quilt, oil on shaped birch panel, 2022, 12" x 12"

7. An extremely original visual motif in your compositions is the creation of small vignettes that strikes out of the general theme of the paintings, as if it was a theater in the general theater of the depicted scene. Could you tell us more about this recurrency?

I touched on this a bit – the tension between being an observer and being a sponge, or a vulnerable participant in the world of vibrancy and beauty – and the desire to fit that all in one picture plane. It definitely is theatrical, but for me there is no linear narrative. It is more about the loose, swirling experiences of small moments of beauty in daily life seen through an art historical lens.

8. Talking about these vignettes, they often tend to refer to classical paintings of the XIXth and XXth century, is it really the case? What would be the meaning of such a dialog with these historical references?

Sometimes the vignettes are direct references, and sometimes they are not, but even if they aren't a direct references they do specifically reference the history of painting as you mentioned. I have a deep love of these subjects and I look at the world through the lens of art history. And as a woman, I delight in the idea of the gaze being my own, not the typical male gaze of female figures in art history. I think of myself as a figure within the painting, and like to show what the figure is experiencing so it isn't just an expression of a figure being observed but a visual of an entire bodily experience. The vulnerability of the figures echoes my own, but it is also an extended love letter to the history of painting.



Ellen Siebers, December's Orange Peels, oil on birch panel with artists frame, 2022, 9.5" x 9.5"



Ellen Siebers, Lemons in September, oil on shaped birch panel, 2022, 11" x 11"

9. Your palette is very rich, you tend to refuse to limit yourself to a narrow chromatic range. Sometimes there are strong color contrasts, while in other paintings it is more reduced; how do you apprehend your colors?

I consider myself to be an observational painter, so my work tends to be informed by the ever-changing palette of the upstate New York landscape. I use whatever colors I am experiencing, so in the summer, when I am gardening, the palette is more diverse than in the wintertime. I use whatever I see and experience. I would never limit myself since the world I live in is unlimited.

10. Is there an intent or a reference related to the square use for most of your canvases?

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In the past I chose the square because of its stability, but also that it is equal parts object and portal. Historically the square gestured more toward the painting as an object. I am now using both rectangles and squares, which is the first time I have painted in a rectangular format in over ten years. It feels good to be able to explore the entire range now. Sometimes the subject calls for more verticality/a reference to the idea of a window.



Ellen Siebers, Friendship, oil on shaped birch panel, 2022, 12" x 12"



Ellen Siebers, Friendship II, oil on shaped birch panel, 2022, 12" x 12"

11. Tell us about a typical day of your work?

I usually take my dog for a walk, take some time to garden/read, and then will spend the rest of the day in the studio. I am fortunate to be able to paint full-time, so some days I need to paint all day and some days I spend looking/researching.

12. Do you have any future or current projects to share with us?

I am in a really special group show at Parrasch Heijnen in LA until early June alongside some of my heroes like Jennifer Bartlett, Ed Roucha, and Forrest Bess. Some other projects are in the works for later this year. This summer I plan on taking a break from showing to just focus in the studio.

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Ellen Siebers, Late September Sunflower, oil on shaped birch panel, 2020, 11" x 11"



Ellen Siebers, Good April, oil on shaped birch panel, 2021, 8" x 8"



Ellen Siebers, Pines, oil on shaped birch panel, 2022, 12" x 12"

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TWO COATS OF PAINT

Award-winning blogazine, primarily about painting

Ellen Siebers: The visceral pull of her brush

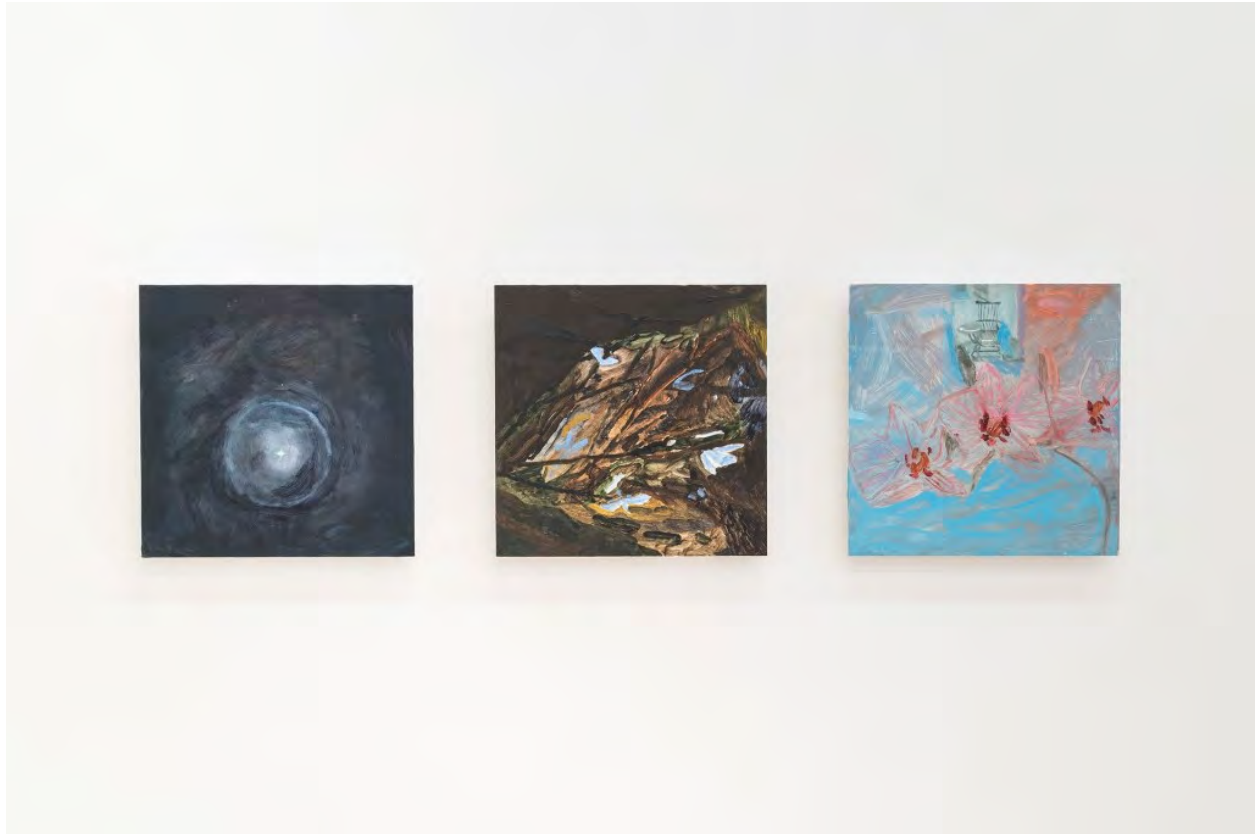
April 25, 2022 3:39pm



Ellen Siebers, Stargazers, 2021, oil on beveled birch panel, 12×12 inches

Contributed by Patrick Neal / For her solo show, currently on view at March Gallery in the East Village, [Ellen Siebers](#) has created small paintings in oil on beveled birch panel that are poetic in their open-endedness and straightforward in their embrace of beauty. Many incorporate the innovation of

overlapping frames. Tight rectangles containing figural scenes are placed on top of naturalistic motifs evoked in loose, washy strokes. The combination of images depicting people and domestic items with those capturing the natural world surrounding them sets up relationships within and among the paintings that have intriguing associative power. Enhancing this effect, which induces a pastoral state of reverie in the viewer, is Siebers' expressive brushwork.



Ellen Siebers, "A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends," installation view (Photo by Cary Whittier)

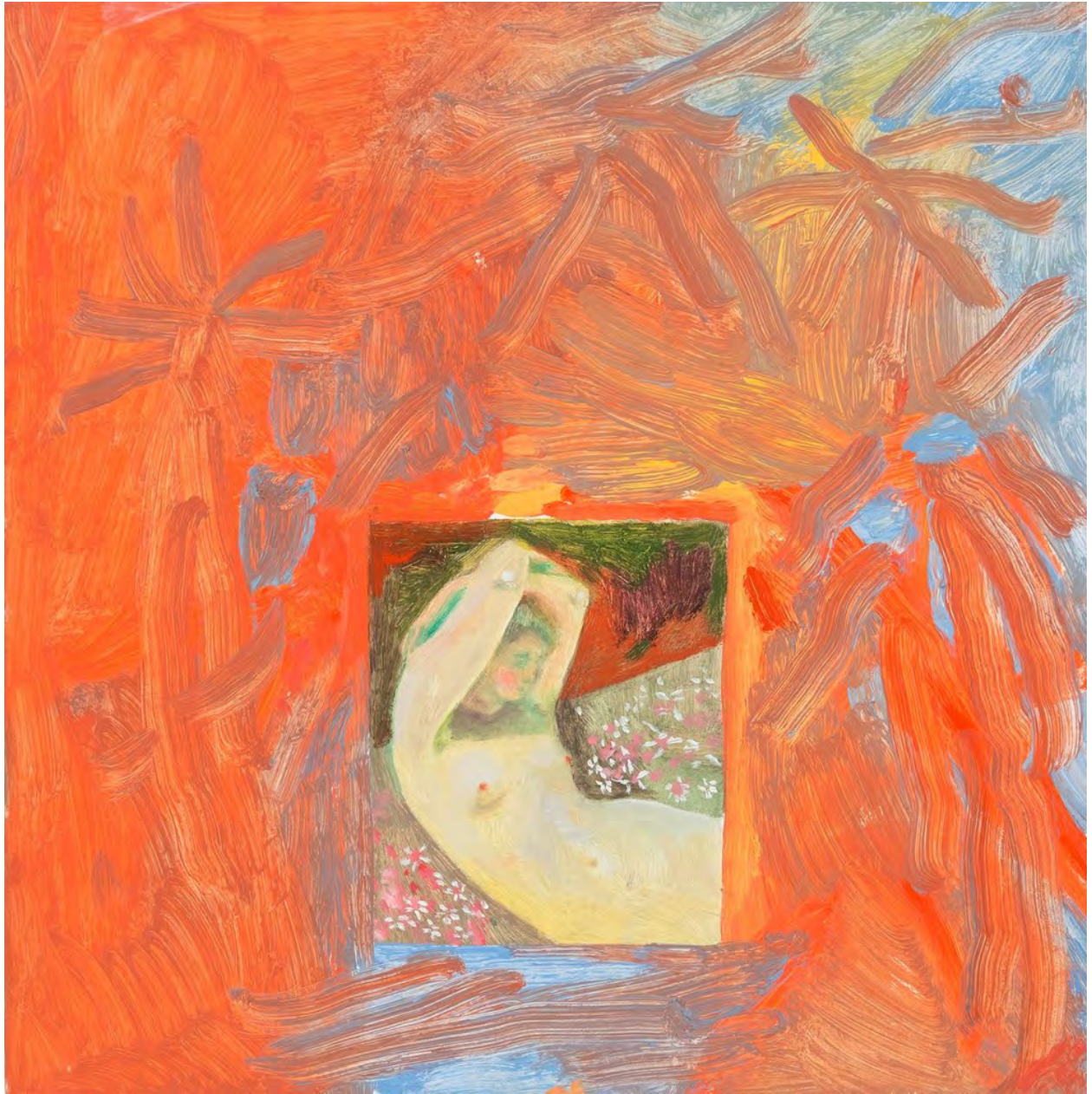
Many of the works are grounded in images of flowers, including daffodils and orchids, that encompass the field of the panel, their petals and stems rendered schematically like crystals and tessellations. The background strokes that comprise the outer areas of the paintings are unabashedly gestural. Siebers has an assured hand when delineating motifs like the spokes of flowers or the gaseous cloud formations of murky evenings. The smaller scenes framed within, like snapshots or map insets, are tighter and more detailed. Many depict nude women reclining, bathing or posing, paying homage to past artists. These scenes are limned with shadows or borders reminiscent of Polaroids in scrapbooks or clippings pinned to bulletin boards. In some cases, they seem like intimate scenes viewed through peepholes or windows. In a painting like *Vuillard's Chair*, Siebers zeroes in on details from these smaller vignettes while amplifying areas of sensual painterliness in the larger areas. We languish in the visceral pull of her brush, whether the oily, viscous strokes of *Daydream* or the dry, scratchy resistance of paint laid over wood in *The Sunshine*.



Ellen Siebers, Vuillard's Chair, 2021, oil on beveled birch panel, 10 x 10 inches

The exhibition's title, "A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends," comes from a line spoken by Hamlet, suggesting that spiritual intervention is formative to an individual's fate. Indeed, an effusive wonderment emanates from Siebers' work – the awesomeness of staring up at the cosmos or observing the strange forms that comprise nature. Themes emerge such as the months of the year, twins or mirrored doubles, bathing and water, sleeping and dreaming, the stars and sky, animals and insects, and windows and slats. References to other artists, particularly [Félix Vallotton](#) and [les Nabis](#), abound. Several paintings of the night sky are dotted with stars, clouds, moons and insects. Siebers' paint handling is unfussy and the color combinations are subtle and evocative: mint greens, sky blues, margarines, tangerines, and charred reds and greys. The beveled sides of the birch-board panels recede inward behind the front picture plane, effecting a sense of floating.

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Ellen Siebers, Daydream, 2021, oil on beveled birch panel, 10 x 10 inches



Ellen Siebers, The Sunshine, 2022, oil on beveled birch panel, 8 x 8 inches

For painters and writers, circling around a subject and sketching out thoughts and images helps generate an array of meaningful impressions that can be crafted into definitive statements. Siebers' works remind us that, if the scope of an artist's interests is wide, divergent themes will present themselves and re-emerge in succeeding bodies of work, much like a poem layered with tangents of seemingly disjointed material. There is great ease and flow in her work, and the show is hung to reinforce her visual and mental associations. Small clusters of same-size works hang together and speak to each other as if part of a bigger story, prompting viewers to look for narratives. The paintings *Love Letters 1* and *Love Letters 2* are pleasingly spare in mood and tone. Brushed in peach and umber colors, they suggest the light and shadows of the outside world dancing on the walls of an inner chamber. Other titles, like *I want to night swim in May* and *Orchid's Chair*, have an oblique quality that elicits a reflective state of mind more than any contemplation of the image actually pictured.

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Ellen Siebers, Love Letter I, 2021, oil on beveled birch panel, 15 x 15 inches



Ellen Siebers, *Love Letter II*, 2021, oil on beveled birch panel, 15 x 15 inches

The press release for the show discusses a reclamation of the virtues of beauty, wresting it from the didactic grip of “patriarchal powers.” I would add that previous assessments of formalism – a key component of beauty – as insufficient, exclusionary, and regressive don’t hold water anymore, as beauty has re-asserted itself in our metamodern era, in which revisiting well-charted territories is igniting new possibilities and hope is replacing cynicism. Siebers’ work manifests beauty through the inextricable inseparability of things both “cerebral and physical” – the bond unifying all things. This is not unlike the concept sometimes called [Nondualism](#), which puts a premium on the sensorial here-and-now of a limitless present. Painters like [Jordan Wolfson](#) in his book *Painting and Consciousness*, and [Nigel Wentworth](#) in his book *Infusion*, have explored non-duality in relation to their own painting, searching for answers to existential as well as aesthetic questions.

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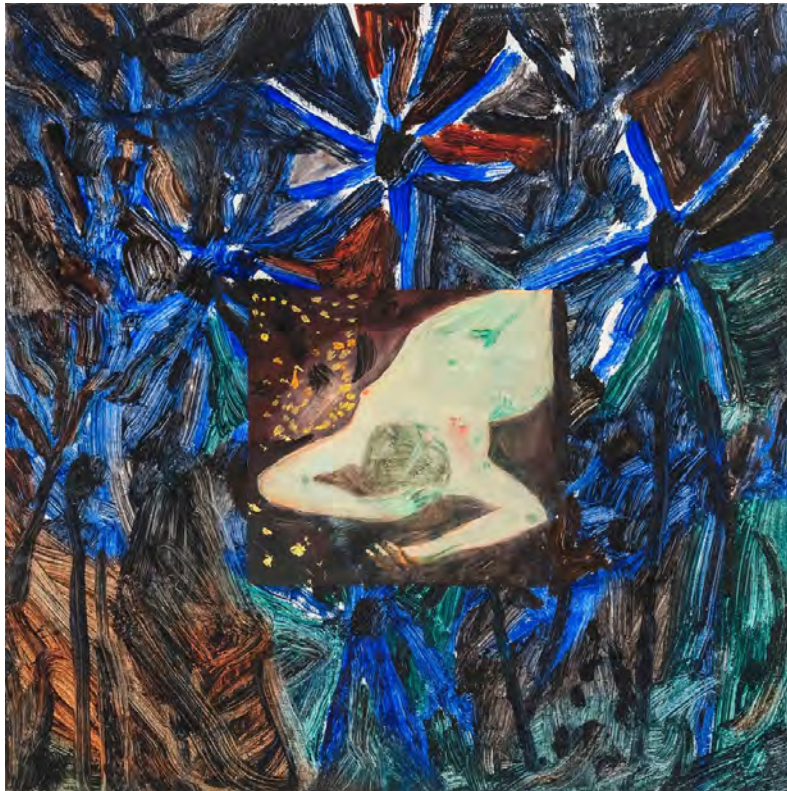


Ellen Siebers, Orchid's Chair, 2021, Oil on beveled birch panel, 10 x 10 inches

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Ellen Siebers, "A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends," installation view (Photo by Cary Whittier)



Ellen Siebers, December Daydream, 2022, oil on beveled birch panel, 10 x 10 inches

The gaps between groupings of Siebers' paintings might metaphorically reflect her art practice, suggesting the way an artist can benefit between the completion of an artwork and the beginning of the next piece by looking at other people's art as well as reading books, blogs and journals to generate new

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ideas, unlock memories and gain inspiration. Siebers' compositions possess unique details and abstract thickets that can also be found in paintings by [Mark Milroy](#) and [Claire Stankus](#), and she shares their penchant and talent for transforming everyday encounters into a kind of worldly magic. A painterly mark carries the body of the artist who created it, ensuring an entry point for future viewers to empathize with her vision. In this way, artworks resonate through time, alive in an eternal moment.



Ellen Siebers, "A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends," installation view (Photo by Cary Whittier)

["Ellen Siebers: A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends,"](#) March Gallery, 62-64 Avenue A, East Village, New York, NY. Through May 28, 2022.

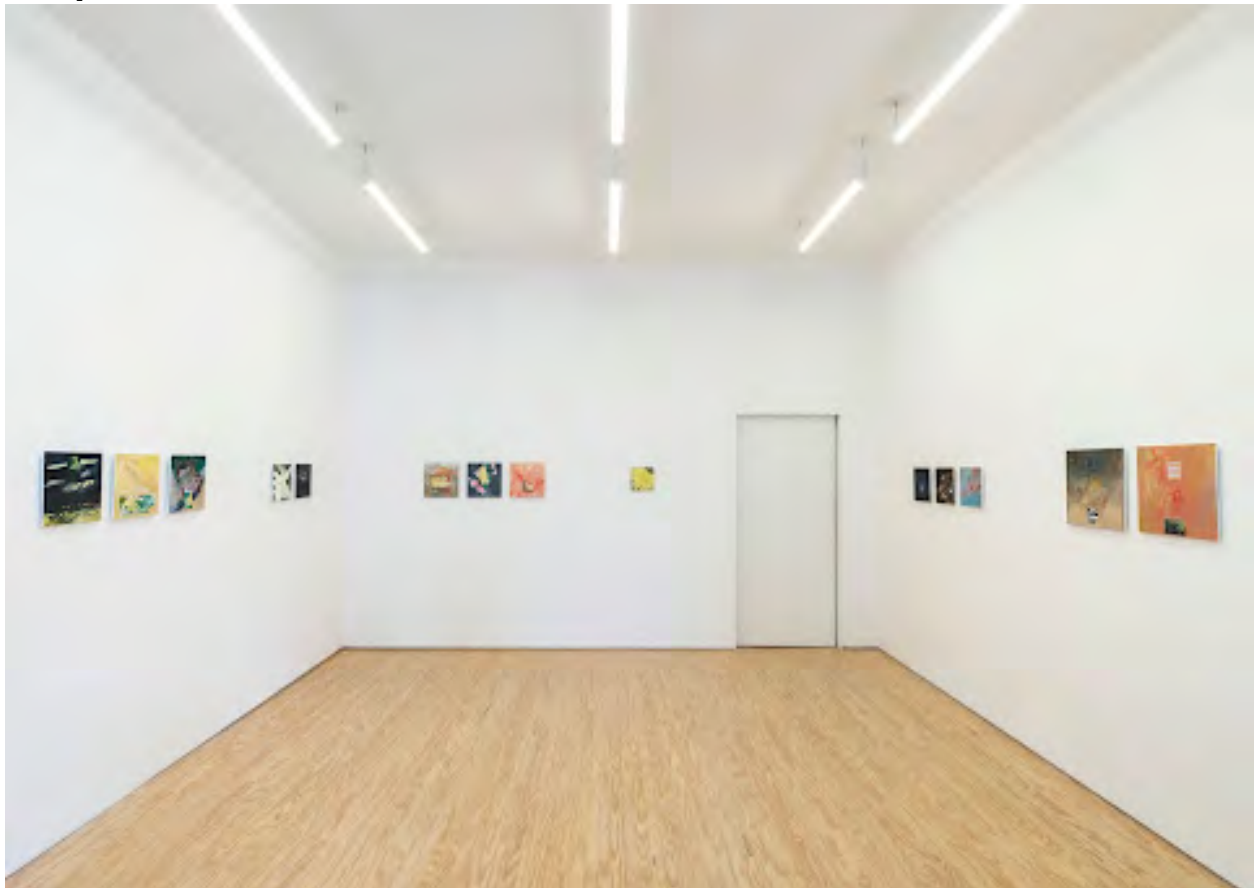
About the author: [Patrick Neal](#), a regular contributor to *Two Coats of Paint*, is a painter, freelance art writer, and longtime resident of Long Island City. His current solo exhibition, *Atmosphere: Patrick Neal New Work*, is on view at Joyce Goldstein Gallery in Chatham, NY through May 7. He will be exhibiting new photographic prints at The Local NYC, Long Island City, NY, from November 1 through December 31, 2022.

Tags: [Divinity](#), [Ellen Siebers](#), [March Gallery](#), [Patrick Neal](#), [Shapes](#)

EV Grieve

Thursday, May 12, 2022

The Gallery Watch Q&A: Ellen Siebers on 'A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends'



*Interview by Clare Gemima
Photos courtesy of March gallery; interior shots by Cary Whittier*

"A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends" showcases work that has culminated from the experiential and research-rich studio practice of [Ellen Siebers](#), a painter based in Hudson, N.Y.

In response to a curator-led discussion at [March gallery](#), I reached out to Siebers to understand more about her process, art-historic influences and thoughts on the gallery's simultaneous show, "[I See This Echoing](#)" by John Brooks.

Both exhibits run until May 28 at March gallery, 62-64 Avenue A between Fourth Street and Fifth Street.

In a quote of yours, you claim the mind's eye is a powerful presence in the digestion of daily experience. What is your understanding of the term "mind's eye," and can you describe how the oil paintings in "A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends" encompass or visualize this concept?

I understand the mind's eye as an ever-changing recollection of every kind of perception, which comes together to serve as the foundation of subjective experience. If I ask someone to imagine an apple, most of us are able to do so, but the actual form of that image in the mind is really wild when you focus on it.

Since one can imagine what it looks like doesn't mean it is something so clear that they could make a drawing from it – it is a kind of conglomeration of equal parts: past, experience and sensation. That, for me, is often what I am trying to record in paint – the sensation of an experience that is a mixture of specifics and abstraction.

What conversations do you believe "A Divinity That Shapes Our Ends" and John Brooks' show, "I See This Echoing," are engaging in? In your opinion, what similarities or differences are fluid or more jarring between the two?

I think we are both really interested in the humanity and vulnerability of our figurative subjects and approach the intimacy of a nude figure in a similarly sensitive way. I know we are both engaging in some similar discussions of beauty and think of the concept of beauty as intellectual work.

I personally love the experience of walking into his exhibition after being in mine since I feel immersed and embraced by the scale and the larger collections of marks. It feels so buoyant.

During a conversation in the gallery, the idea that certain paintings were hanging in groups of three or four were said to be assimilations of what you are currently doing in your studio. Can you explain this in more detail?

In the studio, I am always thinking about things in small groups. I think the pacing of a group of paintings relates to poetry, and I love how paintings can work as any kind of punctuation. Grouping the work ultimately helps me see each more clearly as an individual. The groupings point out each of the particularities of the work while at the same time creating a larger environment for the viewer to live.

Throughout the show, compositions most commonly portray a cropped figurative foreground, shown caught or captured in the surrounds of landscape, abstracted flora, and sometimes monotonal washes. What considerations do you take to foster the relationship between your painted backgrounds and female characters?

The relationships between the figures and surrounding forms are made from a pretty emotional and intuitive place. It has to do with articulating the feelings that I imagine the figure would feel in the landscape through the language of abstraction – trying to capture what the sunlight might feel like on one's face or what the cool water would feel like on one's feet...things like that.

Both atmospheric color and painterly gesture are bodily experiences as well. And that's what I fell in love with first about painting – the ability to record the nonverbal sensory experiences of beauty.

Your work's titles pay homage to Hilma af Klint, Arthur Bowen Davies and Felix Vallotton. What sources of inspiration do these artists offer you in your creative process?

The particular mysticism present in both Hilma af Klint and Arthur Bowen Davies' work gives me so much energy and excitement. I am not a religious person but feel so much magic and beauty every day that I cannot begin to understand, and surrendering to the raw emotion of that is something I draw out of both of their work in different ways. It is all so full of life. Vallotton, for me, is all about sensuality. His "[Étude de fesses](#)" cannot be beat.

What other, more contemporary practitioners do you gravitate towards or appreciate at the moment? I am personally reminded of Ambera Wellmann and Clare Grill's work when I look at your paintings.

parrasch heijnen

They are both great painters! I am always inspired by my friend Peter Shear's paintings; they are so joyful to me. There's an abundance of spectacular paintings going on right now. Just to name a few of my favorites working now: Ted Gahl, Ashley Garrett, Aubrey Levinthal, Maja Ruznic, Danielle McKinney, Aaron Michael Skolnick... I could go on forever. And never forget the queen, Lois Dodd.

How does operating out of a studio in Hudson influence your painting practice?

It has a lot of influence which comes down to the abundance of natural beauty and the gift of time. I have so much more time to dedicate to the studio since moving to Hudson, especially with having my studio space on the same property as my home. I love to garden, so having a yard and the ability to spend so much time with that influences me a lot. Observing all of the gentle changes between seasons never gets old.

As a person who constantly quotes the surrounding environment, the Hudson Valley just has so much magic to give. It is also home to such a supportive group of fellow artists.



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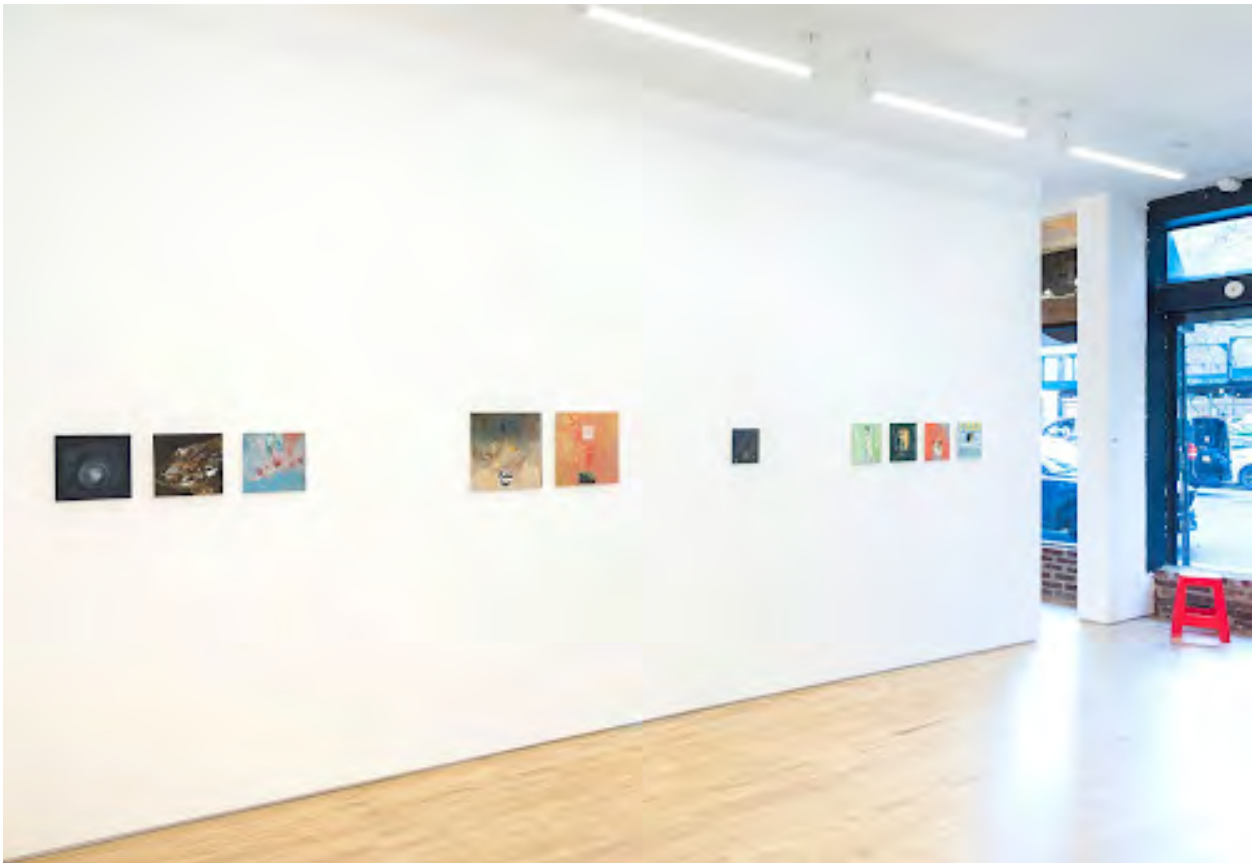
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HYPERALLERGIC

Alien Forms: ‘Cosmicomics’ at Frosch&Portmann

Thomas Micchelli
July 25, 2015



Ye Qin Zhu, “Without colors” (2014), dried orange, paraffin wax, crayon, a painting scrap, 7 x 5 x 2 inches (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

Italo Calvino’s *Cosmicomics*, first published in 1968, is a collection of twelve tales — most of them narrated by an ancient, improbable being by the name of Qfwfq — that blend science fiction with fantasy and indulge in the mind-expanding ethos of the times.

parrasch heijnen

Cosmicomics, a group show at Frosch&Portmann on the Lower East Side, may or may not have much to do with the book, but its phantasmagoric imagery, juiced-up color, material inventiveness and abrupt shifts in scale make the title a good fit nonetheless.

Calvino, like his colleagues in the Oulipo group of experimental writers, reveled in formalist games, as in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* (1979), a novel he composed in the form of opening chapters from fictitious books. The conceit behind *Cosmicomics* is that each chapter begins with a short, factual (or fancifully scientific) topic, such as the sun's orbit around the galaxy or the exact moment of the Big Bang, and the story that follows becomes a riff on that.



Ellen Siebers, "Untitled" (2015), oil/marble, ground/birch panel, 18 x 18 inches

This sort of gamesmanship is not clearly in evidence in the work in *Cosmicomics*, the exhibition; rather, the curator, Vicki Sher (who is also one of the artists), draws upon the less cerebral aspects of Calvino's style, as she writes in her curatorial statement:

The artists in this show are not particularly interested in science, science fiction, or astronomy—or maybe they are, it was never discussed, but they have been chosen for a common sensibility. Their work shares an interest in human emotion, otherworldly beauty, and a sense of humor. Calvino's voice, candid and humble, sentimental and romantic, playful and funny, is alive in these drawings, paintings and sculpture that use concrete experience as a jumping-off point for amused imaginative play.



Katherine Bradford, "Black Pink Superhero" (2015), gouache on handmade paper, 14 x 11 inches

The result is a selection of work that is by and large as buoyant and trippy as Katherine Bradford's "Black Pink Superhero" (2015), a black-caped, black-booted character in a pink leotard, catapulted into a pale blue sky. A border of scarlet gouache runs along the

image's bottom edge, which has the effect of solidifying the piece's handmade paper support into a sculptural object.

Blurring the distinctions between two- and three-dimensional artworks is a recurrent motif of the exhibition. Ellen Siebers' untitled Minimalist abstraction from 2015 is an 18 x 18-inch gray square on a birch panel, with a blade-like buildup of paint (mixed with marble) that juts in from the left edge toward the center. The work is a painting, a drawing (the contours of the blade trace a filament-thin line around its shape) and a bas-relief, several identities residing in one.

David Finn's powerful "Weight" from 2013, a work in charcoal and shoe-polish-brown acrylic on a sheet of Tyvek (the ubiquitous polyethylene water barrier wrapped around new construction) that has been afflicted with innumerable folds and wrinkles. The texture of the surface disruptions lends the image — a network of swelling biomorphic shapes that looks like a space alien standing at attention — a three-dimensional presence, as the scattered light glancing off its glossy surface adds a layer of evanescence to the painting's willfully awkward forms and brackish color.



David Finn, "Weight" (2013), acrylic and charcoal on Tyvek, 40 x 30 inches

Daniel Wiener's multi-colored works in Apoxie-Sculpt combine elements of sculpture, painting and process art. His wall-mounted, mask-like "We Go To Their Faltering" (2014) is an amalgam of colored bands (white, green, orange, purple and ecru) that are fashioned into a puckered surface, which is thrust forward from an arching, mostly black shape behind it, and adorned with fanged protrusions along the bottom edge. Its sci-fi/horror vibe invokes the kind of monstrous life forms that have been imagined floating around the cosmos, as well as the monsters floating around the deepest levels of the ocean, where life on Earth most likely began.

The hybridity continues with Jay Henderson's "Disk" (2009–14), a roughly textured tondo made from hot glue, aluminum, wood and acrylic, whose silvery iciness brings to mind the New Horizons photos of Pluto, and "Roof" (2008–15), made from hot glue, found plastics, wood and paint. Resembling a cross between a pig and a scaled-down hut, it includes a hidden electric bulb that sets its translucent shell aglow with shades of blue, white, yellow and salmon-pink, fusing sculpture and painting with architecture and light art.



Daniel Wiener, "We Go To Their Faltering" (2014), apoxie-Sculpt, 11 x 11 x 5 inches

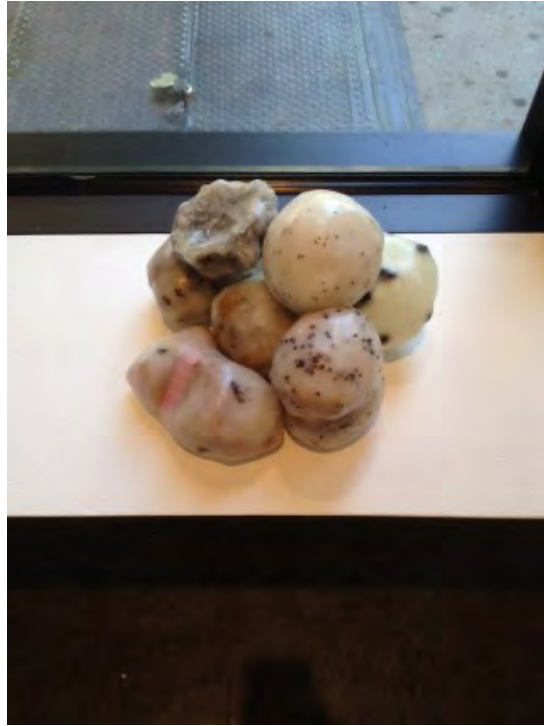
There are also according-to-Hoyle paintings and sculptures in the show, works that don't necessarily cross boundaries but hold their own in their chosen categories. They include curator Sher's loosely geometric abstraction in black ink, white gesso, and pink and green acrylic ("Little Prince," 2015), and Grant Huang's self-descriptive, whimsically surrealist "Two Cats, White Melon, Moon" (2015).



Sasha Pichushkin, "Untitled" (2014), oil on canvas, 3.5 x 3.1 inches

The untitled purple-and-red abstraction from 2014 by Sasha Pichushkin, a self-taught painter born in Orel, Russia, is tiny — only 3.5 inches across and 3.1 inches high — but it packs a punch. The textures of the purple strokes of paint are so dense and knotty that they seem to peel off the red field behind it. On the same wall, a similarly sized abstraction (3.5 x 3.5 inches) hangs beside a larger one (15.7 x 11.8 inches). Both are untitled and were made this year, and each feature downward-thrusting botanical forms resembling cherries on a stem. The smaller canvas is in deep purple and green on white, with smudges of pink, and the larger one is uniformly dark, with shadowy blues, blacks

and grays over a field of umber, which is relieved by a rust-colored, quasi-diamond shape sliced into the lower right corner. They make a formidable pair.



Ye Qin Zhu, "All at one point" (2015), paraffin wax, dried grapefruit peel, sawdust, houseflies, fruit flies, spiders, roly polies, horntails, wasps, wasp nest, rubber band, chrysanthemum, cooked potato, dimensions variable, 7 x 7 x 5 inches

The sculptures of Ye Qin Zhu, who was born in Toishan, China, and currently lives and works in Queens, are laid out on a shelf along the sill of the gallery's front window. They are evocatively lumpen forms that bring to mind protozoa, fungi, geodes and coral. The artist's technique is straightforward — covering items from everyday life in wax, including cut-up strips from old paintings, a piece of black crochet, sawdust, chrysanthemums, houseflies and wasps, a cooked potato and a dried orange, and then using them to build layer upon layer of color and texture — a multifarious approach to Jasper John's dictum to take an object, do something to it, and then do something else to it. These are remarkably assured and eerily beautiful works that embrace the embalming nature of the wax to create oozing, wriggling, bulging, eruptive forms, a kind of alpha and omega, recycling life out of death. Calvino would be pleased.