



Danielle Fretwell

SHALLOW INVITATIONS

1 March - 13 April, 2024
27 Warren Street
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Alice Amati is delighted to announce the first solo exhibition of paintings by American artist Danielle Fretwell, opening with a private view on the 29th of February and running until the 13th of April.

Obscured still lifes and veiled canvases beg patience and proximity in “Shallow Invitations.” With the title, Fretwell chooses “shallow” to point to the objects of superficial value she has selected as subject matter, as well as the lack of depth in the work’s pictorial space. Depth is found elsewhere — in Fretwell’s process and the dichotomies uncovered therein. A dance between speed and slowness, concealment and disclosure, and spontaneity and control defines the work. Within this dance, Fretwell explores themes of deception and uncertainty and asks us to question what it means to get to the ‘truth’ both in painting and in the world we currently live in.

A floral arrangement flickers behind washes of color and dabs of smudged paint in *Before Bloom #2*. A tabletop scene is dramatically cropped in *Unraveling*. In the piece, *In Close Proximity*, an entire composition is shrouded in texture, then enclosed in chain link fencing. Abstracted veils are a defining feature of Fretwell’s work and are reminiscent of the screens through which we find information. In her work and in life, Fretwell urges that we use caution when consuming this information, encouraging us to ask: How can we trust what is being presented? She waits to see if we will extend our attention, come close, and evaluate the canvas. When we do, we are rewarded with what she has chosen to reveal: generous details such as trompé-l’œil stitchwork or the juicy highlights of a blackberry. This unveiling becomes an act of sincerity. Despite being surrounded by manipulated information, the truth exists beneath the surface — we just need to be patient enough to find it.

Several works are void of a nameable image. Fretwell wants the viewer to question what, if anything, is being covered up. Perhaps there was nothing there to begin with; perhaps the veil is enough. Texture expands off the canvas; an impression of wrinkled fabric creates an intricate topography of ridges and folds. These pieces are painted on and off the wall. While laid on the floor, Fretwell approaches the unstretched canvas with some pre-arranged variables (color choice, designated sections taped off for printing, a simple geometric composition), but the result is left largely up to chance. While challenging the viewer to slow down with her work, Fretwell is exercising her own control over the narrative. But in the painting of these ‘veils,’ she submits control to the materials, and allows the viewer to join her in that risk.

Table settings and bouquets have been abandoned, left like the stale emptiness of a winterized summer home, or a deserted photography studio: a quiet slide to dereliction. Fretwell intervenes by slowly exposing these objects — the slip cover is lifted an inch, the curtains are slightly drawn, allowing in a little light. In that exposure, we relish in the artist’s mirage of truth: complex mark-making, subtle shifts of shadow, and skillfully depicted folds and seams. These canvases of traditional and inventive processes satiate an appetite for oil painting while testing the viewer’s perception. At first a shallow invitation, this body of work has layers of process and metaphor that, when peeled back through slow looking, mirror our constant engagement with unreliable information.

Text by Joni Sullivan



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Danielle Fretwell (b.1996) lives and works in Boston, USA. Fretwell received her BFA from Endicott College in 2018, and her MFA from Boston University in 2021. Recent exhibitions include: 'Infinite Loop', Alice Amati Gallery, London, (2023); 'Human Nature', Gallery 263, Cambridge, MA, (2022); 'Objectivity', Gallery 263, Cambridge, MA, (2021); 'No Matter How Delicate', Heftler Visiting Artist Gallery, Beverly, MA, (2021); 'Characters, All', Tiger Strikes Astroid, Brooklyn, (2021); 'IYKYK: Are You Ready For The Future?', Pianocraft Gallery, Boston MA, (2021); 'BU MFA Painting 2021 Thesis Show', Stone Gallery, Boston, MA, (2021); 'Air Dry', Commonwealth Gallery at Boston University, Boston, MA, (2021). She was awarded the 'MyMA Artist Grant' in 2023, and in 2021 was an artist in residence at The Studios at MASS MoCA in North Adams, MA.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Alice Amati is a contemporary art gallery established in Fitzrovia in June 2023. The gallery is committed to fostering artists at the early stages of their career by often providing the opportunity for their first solo show in the city and a supportive context for artistic explorations and career development. Concerned with encouraging transnational dialogues around topical questions within society and art, Alice Amati brings together British and International artists through a challenging, experimental and rigorous exhibitions programme. Joining a cohort of young and established galleries in the burgeoning artistic scene of Fitzrovia, Alice Amati operates as a platform for new voices in the contemporary global artistic scene with a strong commitment to research, collaboration and diverse practices.

For more information, sales enquiries, interview and image requests please contact: info@aliceamati.com