

NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK | MARFA

JANSSON STEGNER

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Jansson Stegner is a figurative painter most markedly known for his mannerist depiction of the human form. Although often his staging and handling of paint is reminiscent of traditional European portraiture and 19th-century genre painting, his work is a distinctively modern-day, albeit idealized, depiction of contemporary life. The figure is Stegner's currency - and with an understanding of the established history of Western painting's fixation on the female form – he ascribes exaggerated physiques and poses to the figure, exploring the inversion of gender roles within aspects of authority, dominance, submission and beauty. Stegner's practice is equally as much a critique of norms of sexuality and attractiveness, as it is a revelation on the psychological structure and process by which beauty is ordered, sustained and perpetuated. Stegner's women have elongated necks, endless thighs and cinched waists against a background littered with object symbolism - Stegner's men also receive the same treatment within their composite tableaux, with elongated forms instead of counterpoint of hyper-masculinity. Stegner's women can be sardonically read as coquette-ish fantasy, but in truth, his women, like his men, are saturated with palpable power, style and intelligence: their eyes match the viewers gaze, their pliable, long limbs heroic and muscular, and their sexuality is unequivocally their own. Stegner plays with our perception of the human form and narrative tableaux by emulating or subverting art historical canons and subjects under a weighty, contemporary gaze.

Jansson Stegner (b. 1972, Denver; lives and works in California) received his MFA from the University of Albany, New York. Stegner has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions with Sorry We're Closed, Brussels; Bellwether Gallery, New York; Mike Weiss Gallery, New York, and most recently, Almine Rech Gallery, New York. Stegner was the recipient of the 2010 Art Brussels: Collectors' Choice Award and was the 2015 Deutsche Bank NYFA Fellow. Stegner is represented by Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles and Sorry We're Closed, Brussels.

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SELECTED WORKS

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Jansson Stegner
Anna, 2022
Oil on canvas
30 x 24 in
76.2 x 61 cm

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Jansson Stegner
Watermelon, 2021
Oil on linen
48 x 36 in
121.9 x 91.4 cm

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Jansson Stegner
The Backyard, 2021
Oil on linen
60 x 38 in
152.4 x 96.5 cm

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Jansson Stegner
Good Times, 2021
Oil on linen
38 x 72 in
96.5 x 182.9 cm

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Jansson Stegner
Famous Ancestor, 2021
Oil on linen
78 x 60 in
198.1 x 152.4 cm

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Jansson Stegner
The Birdwatchers, 2021
Oil on canvas
70 1/4 x 52 1/4 in
178.4 x 132.7 cm

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Jansson Stegner *The Birdwatchers*, 2021, detail

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Jansson Stegner
Along El Sueño Road, 2021
Oil on canvas
60 1/4 x 36 1/4 in
153 x 92.1 cm

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Jansson Stegner, *Along El Sueño Road*, 2021, detail

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Jansson Stegner

Study for 'Arena', 2021

Ink and graphite on paper

14 x 11 in - 35.6 x 27.9 cm (unframed)

15 1/2 x 13 x 1 1/2 in - 39.4 x 33 x 3.8 cm (framed)

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Jansson Stegner
Smoothie Woman, 2021

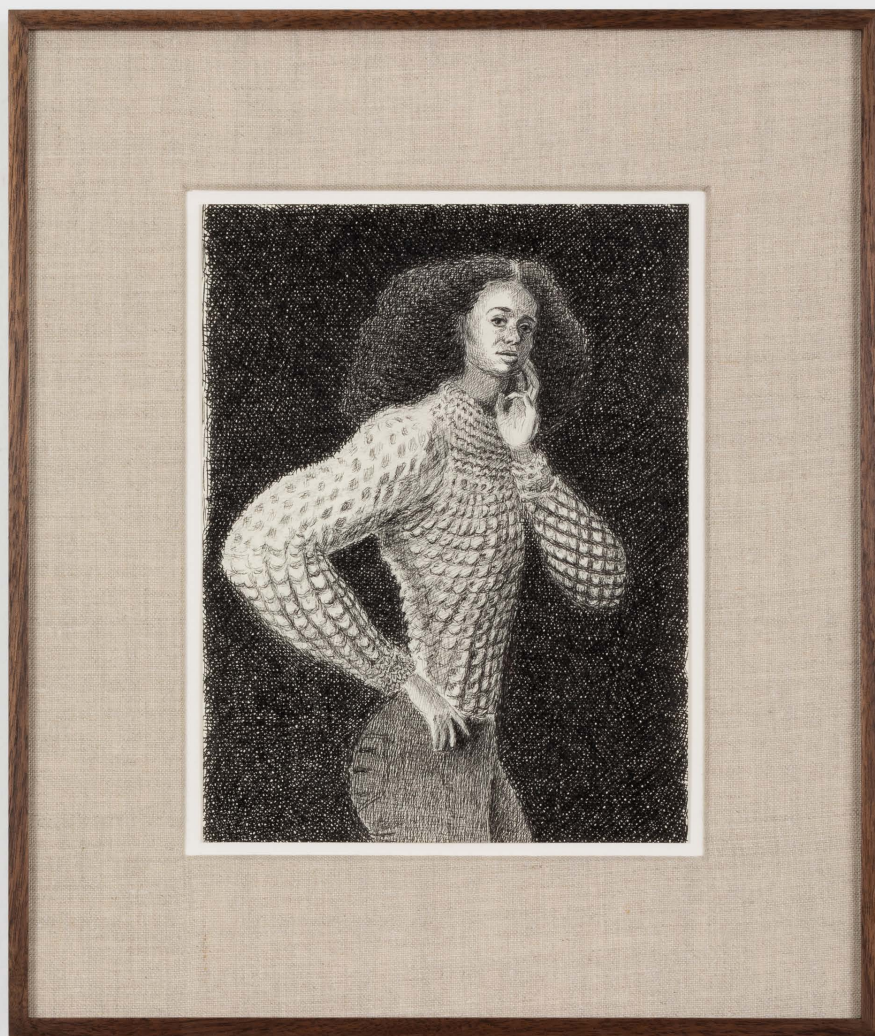
Graphite on paper

8 x 7 in - 20.3 x 17.8 cm (unframed)

14 5/8 x 13 1/4 in - 37 x 33.5 cm (framed)

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Jansson Stegner
Study for Emaani II, 2021
Ink on paper
10 x 7 1/2 in
25.4 x 19.1 cm

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Jansson Stegner
Archer, 2020
Oil on linen
84 x 47 in
213.4 x 119.4 cm

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Jansson Stegner

Untitled, 2019

Oil on canvas

50 x 70 in

127 x 177.8 cm

(JAS19.003)

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Jansson Stegner
Eagle Hunter, 2019
Oil on linen
76 x 51 in
193 x 129.5 cm

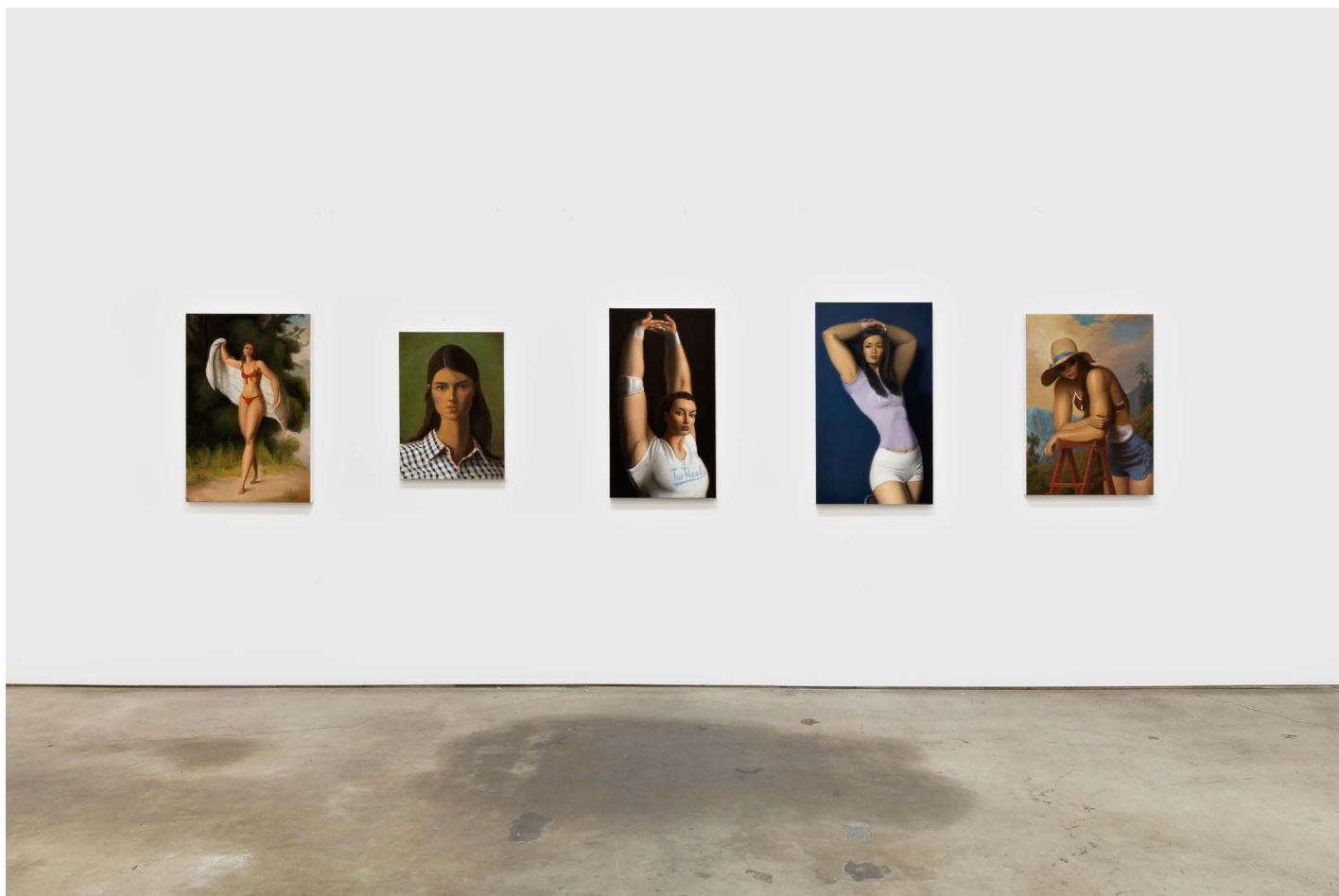
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INSTALLATION VIEWS

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Installation view of Jansson Stegner's
New Paintings
(December 7 - 14 2020)
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

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Installation view of Jansson Stegner's
Paintings
(January 20 - March 3 2018)
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

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Installation view of Jansson Stegner's
Paintings
(January 20 - March 3 2018)
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

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Installation view of Jansson Stegner's
Paintings
(January 20 - March 3 2018)
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

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Installation view of Jansson Stegner's
Paintings
(January 20 - March 3 2018)
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

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Installation view of Jansson Stegner's
Commissioned Portraits
(November 19 - January 15 2016)
Sorry We're Closed, Brussels, BE

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Installation view of Jansson Stegner's
Commissioned Portraits
(November 19 - January 15 2016)
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PRESS

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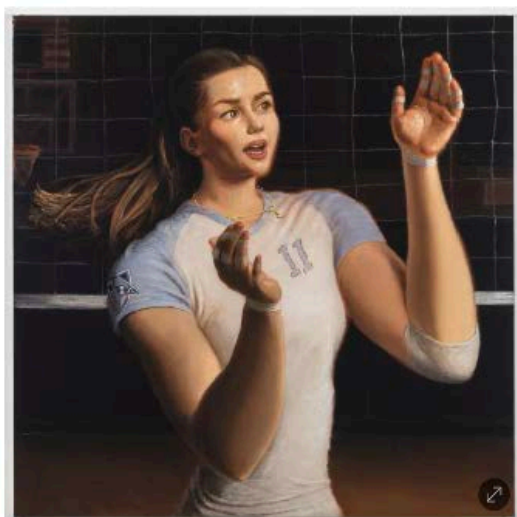
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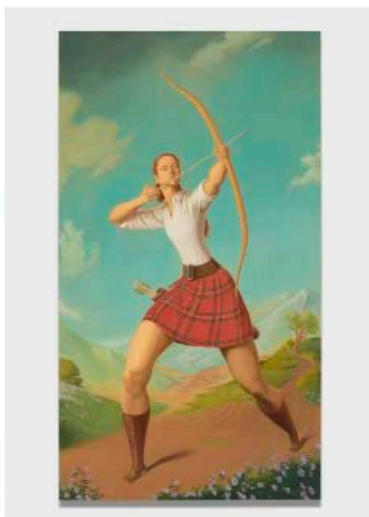
July 2021

8 Contemporary Artists Taking Fresh Approaches to Sports

By Laura Bannister



Jansson Stegner
Team Spirit, 2018
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Jansson Stegner
Archer, 2020
Almine Rech

Since ancient times, artists and craftspeople have wrought not-quite facsimiles of the human form. They've idealized, warped, and parodied the figure's proportions, erecting pedestals to memorialize its physical prowess. It's little wonder why this practice persists: Our bodies are loaded, perplexing things that are ripe source material for image-makers. They are the flesh we carry around with us every day, stretching and sagging, taut and preened, the muscles that propel us through space and time, the limbs connecting us to land and sea, or to other bodies. With the Tokyo Summer Olympics fast approaching, we're touring a smattering of contemporary artists who deal with human bodies and sport. Their output isn't singularly attuned to athletes—with forms lithe and fibrous, brawny and perspiring, faces belying some internal reality—but the bodies and (sometimes violent) gazes of spectators, which are also fixed in suspended alertness, are subject to extremes.

JANSSON STEGNER

In photo-editing apps, it is easy to manipulate bodies—to smooth skin, taper noses, renegotiate waistlines or thighs with fingertips, until our likeness has succumbed to some predetermined ideal. Jansson Stegner's mannerist figurations distort sporting women in the same way, exaggerating body parts to comic effect—though the joke is never on them. Riffing on Western painting tropes, his active, slightly off depictions of strapping huntresses, archers, and volleyball players are endearing, tense, and wonderfully strange, demanding our attention. "For me," Stegner has said, "the most important thing is some kind of psychological resonance between the figure and the viewer."

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METAL

January 2021

Jansson Stegner - Injecting

By Laura Delmage



Eagle Hunter, 2020. Oil on linen, 193 x 129.5 cm, 76 x 51 in. © Jansson Stegner - Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech - Photo Matt Kroening.

Portrait artist Jansson Stegner combines the kitsch with the classical in his colossal portraits of imagined persons. He cites his art history tutorship in references to old masters like El Greco in his use of light and darkness to evoke drama, and Egon Schiele in his penchant for body distortion and intimate, often extremely sexually suggestive poses. The staged artifice of his work is well and truly indicative of this era; a time obsessed with the self and self-image as reflected in popular culture. We discuss the reception of his work as often controversial, and the reasons for his repetitious return to depicting swollen and elongated figures he injects into the formal picture plane.

I am also an art history graduate! You have been very vocal about how old masters inform your practice, but I was wondering if you believe that art history knowledge hinders your practice in any way?

I tend to think that knowledge of any kind doesn't hinder an artist's practice. You use the knowledge that is useful to you and ignore that that is not helpful. I have always felt that all the art knowledge that I have expands my abilities rather than limits it.

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Lucia, 2020. Oil on linen, 137.2 x 101.6 cm, 54 x 40 in. © Jansson Stegner - Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech - Photo Mart Kroening

Your paintings represent fictitious individuals, where is it that you primarily glean inspiration for your portraits?

Often, I will use faces that I find on the internet. I pick ones that have some kind of immediate emotional resonance to me. The bodies I build from live models in my studio. Lately, I have been moving toward the practice of making my work more like a traditional portrait by using a single person as the source for the entire figure, rather than taking a face from one figure, the body from another, the hair from a third, etc. This simplifies things, obviously. I think I am getting better at transforming a single figure into the being I am trying create, and I need to search around less for bits and pieces to construct the figure from.

You expressed that your “Paintings are the opposite of portraits. They are not a reflection of reality, but a suggestion of what reality could be.” This reminds me of Oscar Wilde’s argument that life imitates art – what do you think of this theory?

It seems to me to be pretty clear. Life and art are in dialogue. They imitate and respond to each other all the time.

While the influence of old masters such as Egon Schiele and El Greco are immediately apparent in your work, many of your pieces also defy art-historical conventions in the representation of women in traditionally male roles (for example in sport or police service). What inspired you to portray women in that way? Was challenging gender roles your intention?

The subjects I choose to paint come from my own fascinations. I was watching women’s volleyball on TV back in 2008 or so and was struck by the athletes playing the game. Tall, powerful, fierce competitors. But also young and beautiful. The combination of these characteristics was fascinating and exciting to me and has been a part of my work since. I like seeing traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics blended in all of my figures, male or female. I can’t fully explain why that is, but I never have consciously planned to ‘challenge gender roles’ in my work.

What would you say in response to those who believe your work panders to the male gaze?

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I would encourage them to look at it longer. I don't think the distortions of form that I make in my female figures always makes them more appealing to men. If anything they may be more appealing to women who might like to see the female form depicted in a way that expresses her strength and power. My anecdotal experience is that I get more praise from women than men – more criticism too, though. So, who knows?

Why is it do you think that your paintings of women seem to get the most attention?

For one thing, I paint more of them. Also, I think that they easily fit into a lot of conversations about gender roles that are happening right now.

Pop culture references are rife in your work. Would you say that your paintings are caricature? And as caricature is entwined with political agenda, would you say that this goes for your work too?

My earliest interests in art were all from pop culture. Comic books, album covers and vintage cartoons from the '30s and '40s; especially the richly painted backgrounds in Disney movies and Tom and Jerry. The bright simple colours of advertising design and packaging also made a big impact on me. The older I get, the more I have realized how important these things were in shaping my aesthetic interests.

I don't think of my work as caricature or as having a political agenda. But I have strong feelings on political issues and it makes sense that those feelings might seep into my work, but I rarely consciously include them.

Would you describe your works as feminist? It seems as though critics have taken somewhat polarising stances in relation to your portraits; some praising it for its subversion of gender roles and others condemning it for fetishisation.

I don't tend to affix any political labels to my work. I want my work to be more complex than just propaganda. I do, however; consider myself a feminist. My parents raised me that way. I like strong women and am not scared of their power and that is reflected in my work.

All your figures seem to have the same body, only differing in facial features/skin tone etc; why are elongated limbs, thick thighs and arms, aspects you're drawn to?

The body type you're referring to is an attempt to blend several different attributes into one form. Strength, grace, beauty, femininity and masculinity. It is a sort of ideal type to me.

Your figures are adorned in clothing so tight it appears to be part of their bodies. Could this be a nod to how capitalism causes individuals to become their profession?

No, it has more to do with the way I simplify forms and remove unnecessary details. Simplifying forms magnifies their sculptural and psychological impact for me.

Power structures seem to be a recurring theme in your work, why is it that you return to these themes?

Strength and power have been a fascination of mine for as long as I can remember. I read superhero comics as a kid and obsess over politics as an adult. I think it has to do with the desire to exert one's will on the world and the frustration with the things that prevent one from doing that.

In your series of portraits of fictitious and highly sensual police officers, you address power structures. Considering this, I'd be interested to hear what you think about the international protests concerning police brutality towards Black people.

Minneapolis is the town I grew up in, and it was deeply sad to me to see that community torn apart by George Floyd's murder. The protests are important and necessary. Hopefully, some meaningful change will come out of them. My police officer paintings were intended to suggest an alternate vision of state power that wasn't awash

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in violence and hyper-masculine energy. I wanted those paintings to reflect a subtler, perhaps feminine, idea of strength. That example seems less like an idle fantasy and more like a necessity these days.

Are you working on anything new at the moment?

I am working on two shows with the Nino Mier Gallery to take place in the next year. The first is a small show of modest-sized paintings of women and the second show will be bigger and of broader scope. Men and women in a wide array of environments and narratives..



The Locker Room, 2015

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RALPH LAUREN

November 2020

A Fine Art

By Maxwell Williams



Dybbil and Ruben II, 2015; Archer, 2020; Duke, 2016

You wouldn't mistake a Jansson Stegner painting for those of 20th-century artists Balthus or Alice Neel, or Spanish Renaissance pioneer El Greco for that matter. Stegner's lush portraits of powerful women and delicate men have too many contemporary signals, surreal forms, gender role reversals, and modern clothes. But you can imagine that these are the works those aforementioned artists would be painting were they alive today: master-quality portraits that bring their subjects to crackling life, infinitely memorable and somewhat disquieting.

"The artists that I've always loved the most have typically been ones who died before I was born," says Stegner, on a phone call from his garage studio in Santa Barbara, where he moved about a year ago from New York. He further invokes Otto Dix and Egon Schiele as influences, and if you put those painters side by side with Stegner, you can certainly see the lineage.

"When I was younger, I felt pressure from professors or other students to discard the past and focus on something more radical," Stegner says. "But at the end of the day, I love a certain kind of painting that is often associated with the past. I just want to engage in that tradition but also make it relevant for today, in a way that reflects my life and my interests."

Which explains why the subjects in Stegner's portraits—mysterious and engaging to their core—look the way they do: long-limbed dandies reclining in suits or beautiful young women with bulging muscles bursting from collegial outfits. In one, a woman in a tartan skirt aims a bow and arrow at a target off painting (Archer, 2020). In another, a raven-haired woman rests cross-legged on the floor, staring straight at the viewer while wearing a University of Michigan Spartans T-shirt (Spartan, 2020). Both women have limbs that reveal a surreal

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musculature—burly, Thor-like biceps and legs. Both women's faces are unreadable and furtive.

Los Angeles-based art writer and novelist Arty Nelson has been closely following Stegner's work ever since gallerist Nino Mier put together an exhibition of his works in 2018. "He traffics in that Mona Lisa smile in a way where I think there's always this cryptic, obscured quality—you don't quite exactly know what's going on with the subjects in his pieces," says Nelson, who will be writing the introduction to the catalog that will accompany Stegner's late-2021 show at Nino Mier Gallery.

The unnerving quality of the subjects' expressions in question is intentional for Stegner, who endeavors to ensnare the viewer in an emotional entanglement with the painting. "I don't want the figures to feel like empty mannequins," he says.

For Stegner, just as important is how the subjects subvert expectations within the paintings. During the 2008 Olympics, Stegner found himself entranced by a women's volleyball match. Here were these women, many of them taller than 6 feet and powerful and striking. "They're spiking the ball with this fierce athleticism and competitiveness," he recalls. "And then they did close-ups of the athletes' faces, and they looked like the girl next door, with very typical feminine faces. I knew that it was something that I wanted to explore on canvas."

The men in Stegner's paintings challenge gender roles and power in the reverse direction. In the early 2010s, Stegner found himself doing a series of commissions of well-to-do European men, and he began portraying them in ways that were less traditionally masculine—po-faced with waifish bodies and waspy waists, reclining in swank settings and dapper ensembles even as they appear with rifles ready for a hunt. "I've always been fascinated by the male and female idealized type," Stegner explains. "It seemed like an interesting idea to try and blend those two ideals and see what would happen."

Stegner grew up in Minneapolis devouring sci-fi and fantasy comics like 2000 AD and Conan the Barbarian—the latter whose hero's body bears resemblance to the buff-armed athletes in his work. "Comic books are full of weird and strange distortions of the human form, different kinds of bodies, and all kinds of crazy science fiction things, so I'm interested in that kind of weirdness, too," Stegner says. And so Stegner drew all throughout his youth, leading him to study art at the University of Wisconsin. After graduating, he tried to make it as a painter in the Midwest in

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the late-'90s but soon realized he needed to be in New York. He devised a plan to enter an MFA program at the University of Albany as a stepping-stone to moving to the city in the early 2000s. In New York, his career had some ups and downs—collector Charles Saatchi took note and purchased several works in 2013, and he had a handful of solo shows at various galleries, including several at the Brussels-based gallery Sorry We're Closed—but it wasn't until Nino Mier in Los Angeles (and a subsequent show at Almine Rech in New York) took him on as an artist did he gain today's level of recognition.

This all coincided with Stegner's move to Santa Barbara with his wife and two children. And the new environs have started to seep into the backgrounds of his paintings. "Being in California now, and being so close to the beautiful natural environment—that visual element is entering my work, I can already see," he says, describing the process of setting up a work that involves taking photos of a model—often found on Craigslist—until they settle on a pose that evokes emotion from Stegner.

"It's so rare to see somebody that paints like artists used to," says Mier. "[Stegner] really takes his time with a painting. He may as well have been born 300 years ago. It's just the quality of the surface, the choice of colors, the use of the varnish on top. It feels like you're living with a masterpiece."

A masterpiece with a healthy dose of preternatural oddness that makes it hard to look away. "I definitely want there to be some kind of strangeness that you can't quite put your finger on," Stegner explains. "I just feel like life is a mixture of normalcy and weirdness, and I like to make paintings that remind you about that a little bit. I like to knock people out of what their normal expectations are."

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JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture

March 2020

In Conversation with Jansson Stegner

By Sasha Bogojev



Muscular men, poised for action and blushing, acquiescent women have historically populated the world of portraiture, each mirroring a prevailing male perception of the human form. This premise has been both template and challenge for the painterly practice of Jansson Stegner.

Given classical legacy and the tradition of painting, It's no easy task to develop a modern, personal visual language while rendering portraiture realistically. Yet, with the self-titled "Unrealism" and "Weird Figuration", the NYC-based Stegner has taken liberties with the human form to create a highly stylized aesthetic in his figurative art. Influenced by the likes of El Greco, Ingres, Ensor, Schiele, Dix, Balthus, and Alice Neel, who each invented their own unique perception of the human form, Stegner's work is grounded in realism without being confined by its rules. The results of such explorations are a preponderance of exceptionally tall, powerful and muscular female subjects, proudly bearing exaggerated features. Dressed in everyday attire, often juiced with suggestive detail, they challenge traditional notions of gender roles and norms, but presented in the old-fashioned guise of classical oil on linen painting.

For his first exhibition with Almine Rech, a long-overdue comeback to NYC which opens tonight, March 3rd, Jansson Stegner painted a series of mostly large scale new paintings that further explore this singular concept. We got in touch with the artist only a few days before the opening and got to talk a bit about this new body of work and discuss slight changes in his creative approach.

Sasha Bogojev: According to the website, your paintings are "the opposite of portraits." Can you elaborate, and how does that appear in these new works?

Jansson Stegner: A portrait tends to be an image where the artist allows the character, physiognomy, and

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personality of the sitter to lead the artist toward the final product. In most of my work, I take different pieces from different sources to construct the figure. Maybe the pose from one model, the face from a second and the hair from a third. So the final product is not a reflection of an individual, but more of a constructed person composed of many attributes. This sometimes helps when I am trying to paint a character that may not exist in reality.

However, a few paintings in this show move away from this practice and are actually more like traditional portraits. The works titled by the sitter's name (Lucia, Emaani, etc.) are real, whole people—not a constructed amalgamation. Though they're still subject to my exaggerations and distortions of form, I allow more of the sitter's personality to come through. I am hoping to explore this path a bit more in the future.

Why are your works more like traditional portraits, and how does that affect the outcome?

The reason I started working with a more traditional portraiture process is that it's simpler. Anything that streamlines the painting process is worth trying. And in trying it, I have become more open to the idea of allowing the sitter's personality to help shape the image.

Apart from that and the large scale of new works, does anything else about this particular body of work separate it from previous presentations?

In previous shows, I included paintings of both male and female figures, but for this show, I decided to focus entirely on female subjects.

Why focus this show entirely on females?

I have always tended to paint more women than men. This show just happens to be all women. I have been painting athletic women on and off for many years, and for this show, I just felt like taking a deep dive into a subject that has long been fascinating and exciting to me.

When did you start applying the archetypal hyper-muscular male depiction to female characters, and does that approach work the other way around?

Painting athletic women has been a significant part of my work for the past twelve years. I was originally inspired while watching Olympic women's volleyball on television, where many of the players I saw were tall, muscularly built and physically powerful. I am fascinated by the ways in which strength, power, and beauty can be blended within female form, and I've returned to this subject again and again over the years.

I treat male figures in a similar, but opposite, manner. I tend to de-emphasize traditionally masculine attributes, like strength and ruggedness. The men I paint are usually lean and lithe, elegant and gentle. They seem comfortable with being beautiful. I find it more interesting to portray both male and female figures in ways that are somewhat outside the expected norm.

How difficult is it to work with distorted proportions but stay in the realm of Realism, or how difficult is it to work in a comic-like manner but stay within the fine art realm?

Sometimes it's hard, sometimes easy. But that balance is kind of the whole game. To make a painting interesting, you need to blend familiarity with unfamiliarity or strangeness with normalcy. Too much normalcy and it's boring. Too much strangeness and it's unrelatable. The greatest psychic tension occurs when those two elements are in an odd balance that heightens them both. You just have to keep playing until the balance is reached.

Was the work ever confused for the Female Muscle Fetish? How do you avoid sexualizing your subjects?

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The women I paint are not devoid of sexuality, but I usually don't want sex to be the primary focus in a painting. So I won't allow sexuality to overwhelm other elements of the work (the expressive exaggeration and distortions of the human form, the pose, the composition, etc.) and become the main focus. I aim to arrange each painting so that if sex is an element in the work at all, it is in the background, not front and center.

The images have a vintage feel but also an ambiguous sense of time and place. How important is this for you, and why do you create them this way?

I like to compose paintings with a dynamic movement that guides the viewer's eye around the canvas and directs focus toward the most psychologically important parts. This is a very traditional compositional strategy and may contribute to the vintage feeling. Same with the rich colors I prefer as well as the sculpturally modeled forms.

If a style or approach from the past appeals to me, I will use it. Maybe this makes the work feel a bit unstuck in time. That's fine with me. I don't feel compelled to work in a particular moment of time, because history is inescapable. It has literally shaped everything you know. Why not engage with that?

You've been taking gap years between solo shows. How does it feel to return to an NYC gallery after such a long time?

It feels great to have a solo show in a New York gallery again. Especially a really respected one like Almine Rech. My work is slow to produce, so I need more time than the average artist. between shows. Fortunately, during my long hiatus from New York, I have been able to show quite a bit in Europe, LA and elsewhere.

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artnet® news

March 2020

Editors' Picks: 10 Things Not to Miss in the Virtual Art World This Week

By Sarah Cascone

Each week, we search New York City for the most exciting, and thought-provoking, shows, screenings, and events. In light of the global health situation, we are currently highlighting events and exhibitions available digitally. See our picks from around the world below

JANSSON STEGNER AT ALMINE RECH

What can I say? I'm totally in awe of Jansson Stegner's genuinely weird approach to figuration. The people that populate his world come from the uncanny valley of just-distorted-enough to tickle my brain, full of muscular huntresses captured in gloriously active poses. I wish I could stand in front of these in person to fully appreciate Stegner's masterful approach to remixing Western painting tropes, but I'm very happy to share my computer monitor with these in the meantime.

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March 2020

The Psychological Resonance of Jansson Stegner at Almine Rech

By Noah Becker



Jansson Stegner, Fruit Stand, 2020, Oil on linen, 121.9 x 78.7 cm, 48 x 31 in., courtesy of Almine Rech, New York, NY

The art of Jansson Stegner interests me - I've been a fan of his mannerist figurative works for many years. His work appeals to my own way of making paintings - mostly for his interest in old paintings from history. I could list artists (other than myself), who also share this interest - Christian Rex Van Minnen comes to mind, John Currin, Trevor Guthrie, Robin F. Williams and others... But Jansson Stegner is an artist who has developed a shockingly original style all his own. When I heard about his solo show at Almine Rech in New York City, I wanted to know more.

The following is our conversation about his enigmatic paintings.

Noah Becker: When you make your paintings, are you pre-planning a narrative, or are you working intuitively?

Jansson Stegner: In terms of the narrative?

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Becker: Yes, in terms of how the narrative ends

up in the work. Is it something that you kind of plan in advance, or does it happen intuitively during the production of the work?

Stegner: I'd say it happens more in advance, but I like to have sort of a loose hand with it and let it go as it will, sort of. The main elements in a painting have to be planned out ahead of time. I have to figure out what kind of clothing this person's going to be wearing - what their pose is going to be like. All of that stuff contributes to how the narrative is received. And so that all gets sort of worked out in advance and more or less executed - but then changes always occur along the way. But it never ends up exactly the way that it was planned...

Becker: Right. And what elements do you feel make for a successful painting?

Stegner: For me, I think the most important thing is some kind of psychological resonance between the figure and the viewer. That you feel like you're in their psychological space somehow. And then beyond that it can also include the figure and its environment - so that it communicates something like that to you. Some sort of psychological tension or interest, or like you're actually interacting with another person.

Becker: Once that aspect is accomplished, what happens?

Stegner: After that I want to create a painting that keeps the viewer's visual interests for as long as possible. So they can sit and look at it for 30 minutes and not be bored with it - you know? I find so many paintings you kind of get a big splash from them in the first second, and then within 10 seconds you're ready to look at something else. I want to create something they can have enough visual interest to keep you looking at it and keep you involved with the figure in the painting.

Becker: How do you think about the use of color in your work?

Stegner: Color... that's a tough one. I rely so much on the objects in my paintings for the color arrangement - I don't do extreme improvising with color. Color comes about as the arrangement of the things that I decide to put in the painting. I guess I just ideally have some kind of color scheme that I want to work with and I organize it. It's like a basic plan of two or three colors and I try to use that the best I can to kind of emphasize the narrative or the psychological dimensions of the colors of the figure.

Becker: What are some of your influences in painting? It seems like your work has a connection to art history.

Stegner: I mean the biggest ones to me have always been El Greco, Otto Dix, Balthus, even like early Lucian Freud. And Lucian Freud generally I guess and Edward Hopper... A lot of artists that do work that is sort of grounded in realism without being realism exactly. The big three I think for me would probably be, as I said, El Greco, Dix, and Balthus. But there's like a whole bunch. But yeah, mostly a lot the artists from the past.

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CREATIVE BOOM

March 2020

Jansson Stegner's hyperreal paintings of strong women invert gender roles and challenge identity and power

By Katy Cowan



With elongated bodies and distorted proportions, Jansson Stegner's paintings of strong female characters seem to invert gender roles and get us thinking about identity and power today.

Taking inspiration from Old Master portrait artists, the Santa Barbara artist borrows from two significant genres in figurative painting: the female nude and portraiture. He also looks to surrealism from El Greco and other mannerist painters, which informs his unique style. Another notable inspiration is modern-day athletes and their muscular bodies and mental strength which come from the challenges of demanding sports competitions.

Through each painting, Stegner openly confronts the established norms of sexuality and beauty. For instance, if you look at Rally (2020), a painting of two female volleyball players in action, it alludes to Gustav Courbet's The Wrestlers (1853) that also illustrates two athletes. But Stegner's portrayal brings the focus to gender and power in that role: it's an interesting twist that gets straight to the heart of the series. With elongated bodies and distorted proportions, Jansson Stegner's paintings of strong female characters seem to invert gender roles and get us thinking about identity and power today. Taking inspiration from Old Master portrait artists, the Santa Barbara artist borrows from two significant genres in figurative painting: the female nude and portraiture. He also looks to surrealism from El Greco and other mannerist painters, which informs his unique style. Another notable inspiration is modern-day athletes and their muscular bodies and mental strength which come from the challenges of demanding sports competitions.

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THE CUT

April 2018

Who's Afraid of the Female Nude?

By Michael Slenske & Molly Langmuir



Part I: “I quit doing the figure. I’m only doing abstract art.”

The western art canon is in no small part a parade of famous female nudes, from Praxiteles’s Aphrodite of Knidos from the fourth century B.C. to Manet’s 19th-century prostitutes (notably the recumbent, unamused Olympia) to John Currin’s Playboy-meets-Fragonard women — and almost all of them have been made by white male artists. Of course, as art historian Linda Nochlin famously observed, it was difficult for women to paint nudes when historically they weren’t even allowed to attend figure-drawing classes because of the naked people necessarily present.

While feminist art critics have for decades pointed out the shortcomings of the “male gaze,” the post-#MeToo reckoning with the art world’s systemic sexism, its finger-on-the-scale preference for male genius, has given that critique a newly powerful force. And the question of the moment has become: Is it still an artistically justifiable pursuit for a man to paint a naked woman?

To answer this question, I reached out to a number of prominent male artists known for doing just that (as well as for painting nude men). But most of them — including Currin, Carroll Dunham, Jeff Koons, and the young

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Mexican-American painter Alex Becerra (some of whose nudes are drawn from escort ads) — declined to talk about their work's relationship to the current social climate. Presumably, they worried about unintentionally saying the wrong thing that would then echo endlessly across social media, damaging their reputations. For emerging artists, there is the fear of a possibly career-derailing gestalt fail. "I've been in conversations with other [male artists], and they were just like, 'I quit working with the figure. I'm only doing abstract work, because I don't want to touch it,'" says Marty Schnapf while walking me through his recent solo show "Fissures in the Fold" at Wilding Cran Gallery in Los Angeles. He thinks we could be living through "a new Victorian age" — or at least that's his explanation for the mixed responses he's received for his gender-confusing neo-Cubist nudes, which play out sexualized fantasies in hotel rooms and surrealist swimming-pool dreamscapes, and evoke Joan Semmel's erotic works from the 1970s. "I counted: There's actually more male nudes in my show," Schnapf says, though it wasn't immediately discernible to my eye, which is perhaps the point. One of Schnapf's female artist friends grilled him about the intent of the work, while a few collectors even gasped when confronted with the infinity loop of breasts, Day-Glo mane, and charcoal-blackened genital geometries of his ghost-lit spider dame, Will-o'-the-wisp.

It was 43 years ago that feminist British film theorist Laura Mulvey coined the term male gaze in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema": "The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact." The neo-Expressionist Eric Fischl (while clarifying that "I don't do nude, I do naked. Naked is psychological; it involves a much more complicated set of emotional relationships to physicality, to need, to desire, to pleasure"), believes that it's important to analyze how the male gaze works in making art. But he's also of the opinion that men looking at women is, to some extent, "a genetically engineered reflex for very particular reasons." To try to make it somehow "an unnatural aspect of being a man" doesn't make much sense, he says. "It would be the same as supposing the children of women who paint mothers and children said, 'Stop the motherly gaze; it's inappropriate, invasive, objectifying.' What would the women do? They'd say, 'It's natural for me to look at this aspect of womanhood,' and the children would say, 'No, you're not treating me as though I'm separate and other.'" Fischl laughs.

Brooklyn-based painter Kurt Kauper found out how tricky painting the female nude is earlier this year when his solo show titled "Women," featuring three larger-than-life-size female nudes, debuted at the Almine Rech Gallery. The website Artsy quickly sized up the problem he might encounter in an article called "The Perils of a Man Painting Naked Women in 2018." The perils soon became real when critic Brienne Walsh reviewed the show for Forbes: "Kurt Kauper's 'Women' Attempts to Depict Powerful Female Nudes, and Fails."

I meet with Kauper at Almine Rech, where his trio of nudes — drawn from black, Asian, and white models — stand sentry with their muscled physiques, clinically sculpted vaginas, and vacant eyes, which seem to follow us around the gallery as we talk. It feels like they've been plucked from the basement of retired android hosts on Westworld.

To Walsh, Kauper demonstrated a "white male" viewpoint of art history, "full of gaping holes." She also ruminated on "how disturbing a shorn vagina looks — to me, it implies acquiescence to porn culture, to a patriarchal society that prefers that women not smell, not offend, not grow up beyond little girls." This critique wounded Kauper, who's spent most of his career painting vulnerable-looking men disrobed. "She said I was trying to paint powerful women — I never said that," Kauper protests. "I was trying to put the viewer in an uncomfortable position of not knowing quite where they stand in relationship to these paintings physically, conceptually, and in terms of the genre."

But such arguments may seem naïve in these politically vigilant times. In February, the U.K.'s Manchester Art Gallery removed John William Waterhouse's sexy swamp girls painting Hylas and the Nymphs, to "challenge this Victorian fantasy" of "the female body as either a 'passive decorative form' or a 'femme fatale.'" In New York, there was the viral petition asking that the Metropolitan Museum remove or contextualize the Balthus painting *Thérèse Dreaming*, depicting an adolescent girl leg up, her eyes closed: "The Met is, perhaps unintentionally, supporting voyeurism and the objectification of children." While the museum didn't acquiesce, Balthus's reputation was already on the decline. Industry experts reminded me that, whereas in the boundary-pushing '70s, a Balthus was considered to add a sophisticatedly perverse note to one's collection, in recent years, he's regarded as a little

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skeevy.

In its “Here Are the Absolute Worst Artworks We Saw Around the World in 2017” roundup, ArtNet’s Rachel Corbett singled out Richard Kern’s photos of waiflike girls bent over stairs and/or smoking joints — subject matter he’s been exploring for the better part of three decades. “The onetime documentarian of downtown New York’s drug-fueled depravity was a force for sexual liberation in the 1980s and ’90s ... But times change and in our post-Terry Richardson world, I think we can strive to be a bit more thoughtful about how and why we use the female nude going forward ... In 2018 I’ll be looking out for more from photographers like Deana Lawson, Catherine Opie, Collier Schorr, or A. L. Steiner instead.”

There does seem to be some recalibration toward valuing the female gaze, based on the careers of those four, not to mention the high prices recently paid for nudes by artists like Mickalene Thomas, Jenny Saville, Lisa Yuskavage, and Ghada Amer. But there’s a lot to make up for: Only 27 percent of the 590 major museum exhibitions from 2007 to 2013 were devoted to female artists; only five women were among the top 100 artists by cumulative auction value between 2011 and 2016; and just a third of gallery representation in the U.S. is female.

You can’t force people to collect the “correct” art, of course. In January, L.A.’s Nino Mier Gallery inadvertently performed a kind of experiment, opening simultaneous shows featuring opposite portrayals of the female form: the lithe bikini-, skinny-jean-, and volleyball-uniform-clad glamazons of painter Jansson Stegner and the feminist “Propaganda Pots” (sculptures referencing Eastern Bloc posters about domestic morality, alcoholism, motherhood) by ceramic artist Bari Ziperstein. The former, priced up to \$50,000 each, sold out before the opening; the latter, priced at one-tenth of Stegner’s portraits, earned critical raves but sold at a more leisurely clip. The juxtaposition incited some online protests; as local gallerist Hilde Lynn Helphenstein told me, “Immediately in the wake of #MeToo and #TimesUp, the market made a clear pronouncement that it is still focused on work which is sexually exploitative of female representation.” Yet, is it really a shocker that the pretty paintings of pretty young ladies were snapped up faster than the pots?

And let’s not forget that Picasso’s *Young Girl With a Flower Basket* — a 1905 Rose Period masterpiece (once owned by Gertrude Stein) of a fully naked, flat-chested Parisian girl — is expected to fetch upwards of \$120 million and anchor Christie’s big May auction, “Highlights From the Collection of Peggy and David Rockefeller.” “Most of our buyers, their frame of reference happens to be art history,” says the deputy chairman of Impressionist and Modern art at Christie’s, Conor Jordan. “They want to be sure what they’re buying has an importance within the artist’s career or the broader circle around that artist or movement.” Current issues just aren’t as relevant to them, he says. “That happens in the lower levels of the market, where there’s more supply, more for people to choose from.”

In other words, any thoroughgoing change in which artists are deemed Important will take a while. And cracking down on male-painted female nudes as a means to this end seems pointless, at least to Marilyn Minter, a #MeToo supporter who nonetheless says she’s seen a version of this before, when her “Porn Grids” ran afoul of anti-pornography feminists in the late ’80s and early ’90s. “I was a traitor to feminism, but my side won,” she says. “Now it’s the return of all that.” Her larger point? “There are no safe places: This is the world, it’s pretty awful, and it’s pretty great at the same time. But the minute you try to pin down sexuality, it’s going to spit in your face. It’s totally personal, it’s fluid. Trying to make rules is a waste of energy. Progressives can take each other apart — we do it all the time — when the bigger enemy is these neo-Nazis. That’s where the energy should be, not trying to police fucking paintings.”

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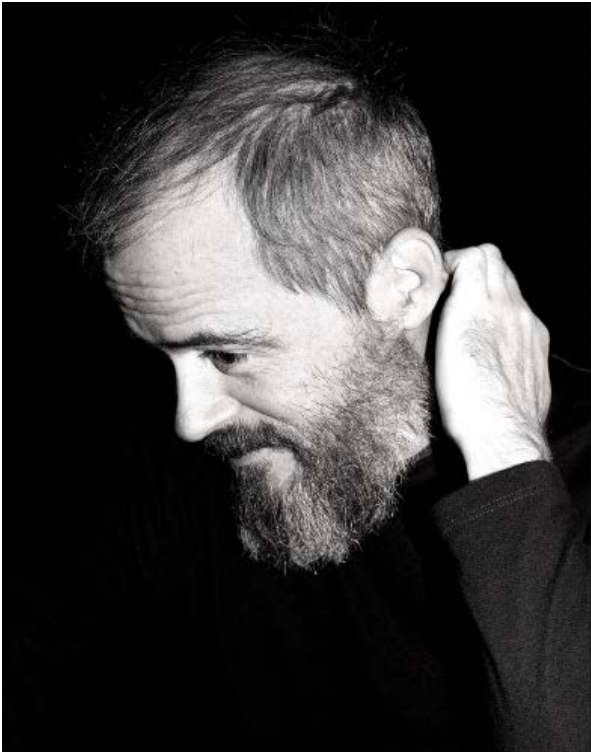
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UNITED

November 2017

“ENGENDER” AT KOHN GALLERY: 8 ARTISTS ON HOW GENDER FUNCTIONS IN THEIR WORK

By Adam Lehrer



Gender is a constantly shifting, mutating, and expanding concept. How do you tackle something constantly in flux, shifting in perceptions and expectations? A few recent exhibitions have seen the art world take on gender, particularly “Trigger: Gender as a Weapon and as a Tool” at the New Museum. The show, while rife with extraordinary works by a number of intriguing young and veteran artists, was ultimately over-curated and included a number of pieces that felt off-theme. “Engender,” Kohn Gallery’s upcoming group exhibition, is a much more intimate entry point into gender-based discourse in contemporary art. Curated by Joshua Friedman, the show features 17 artists who challenge binarized representations of gender as specifically male or female.

Narrowing the exhibition’s focus, Friedman chose artists working with paint to distort gender dynamics. Why? Because unlike video and photography, mediums used as purveyors of gender discourse early in their emergences in the art world, painting as a medium has historically reinforced the gender binary. By working in painting, the artists featured in Kohn’s latest show contend with centuries of art history and infuse it with contemporary notions of gender fluidity. With works by both well-established (Nicole Eisenman, Sadie Laska) and fast-rising emerging artists (Tschabalala Self, Jonathan Lyndon Chase), “Engender” uses the most ancient of fine art forms to ignite pertinent discourse. Artist and writer Adam Lehrer photographed and spoke to eight of the artists included in the show about gender politics and how they manifest in their work.

Queens-based artist Jansson Stegner deals in figurative painting that focuses on subjects who take on both typically feminine and masculine visual signifiers. The women are beautiful but imbued with power through

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powerful musculature or an aggressive police uniform, for example. The men are painted with soft features and slight frames. The product of a comic book-obsessed youth, Stegner's paintings often combine tropes of art history with healthy doses of pop culture silliness in order to dismantle highfalutin notions of the artist's role in society. Unsurprisingly, his biggest influences are painters who worked with figurative representation but nevertheless made strange images (Stegner calls it "weird figuration"): Balthus, Otto Dix, and Alice Neel among them. Stegner is represented by Belgian gallery Sorry, We're Closed.

"I started out just drawing comic books as a teenager. I knew I liked figurative work of some kind, and knew that's what I'd want to deal with in my paintings. Sometimes I'll see something in reality that I'll know I want to take into a different direction. But I tend to trust the unconscious desire. If you want to see something made, that means that both I want to see it and there are probably other people in the universe that want to see it as well. I tend to trust that intuition. I think that a certain segment of my work fits perfectly into this show. I've always blended what I see as masculine and feminine qualities, like a beautiful female form but she will be well-muscled or wearing a police uniform. And my male figures often tend to be softer featured."

"This desire is all about trusting my instincts. I paint images that I feel strong desire towards. I want to see a beautiful and sexy woman with some kind of power marker. The typical fashion model who is emaciated with the far away stare, it repulses me. I'm more interested in a woman who is flexing her sense of power. Fashion is more about attitude or the idea of unattainability and superiority to you. And most men desire women with their fuller bodies, so maybe it's like this unreality that people have detected in my work is actually more in line with the reality of what men are attracted to in female bodies. Who isn't attracted to a powerful woman? It's a more interesting ideal of form to me. Powerful in a physical way and a mental way."

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VOGUE

October 2016

Naked With Clothes On: How It Feels to Be a Life Drawing Model

By Sarah Brown

My (short-lived) muse moment began when the New York Academy of Art called to ask if I would be a guest model at Will Cotton's annual Drawing Party. I've known Will for years—he's one of my favorite painters, and people—and who wouldn't be the slightest bit flattered to be considered a "model," if only for one night?

I immediately said yes, before fully comprehending that it was a life-drawing party, i.e., the models would be nude. A helpful clue I somehow disregarded was that many of the evening's works would later be auctioned at the popular Take Home a Nude event at Sotheby's, which benefits the school.

The New York Academy of Art was established in 1982 by an artsy, intellectual group—Andy Warhol, Tom Wolfe, and others—who sought to promote and preserve figurative art. The goal was to teach traditional skills like drawing and painting, which the founders felt that contemporary artists, no matter their medium, needed, and in some cases, lacked.

Will, one of the Academy's senior critics (along with other luminaries like Eric Fischl, Jenny Saville, and Vincent Desiderio), has been holding these intimate soirees for years. They are casual affairs that in both spirit and practice harken back to the way artists used to operate a century ago in Montmartre. "There's this social aspect, which is completely absent from art-making today," said Will when we met one morning at his studio. Since artists from various disciplines participate, I imagine that in some cases, the flexing of muscles not often used—say, a sculptor or abstract painter suddenly sketching a reclining nude as if back in art school—must send off sparks in exciting, surprising ways. Yes, responded Will, "some have told me that it has fed back into their work, even if it's not figurative work."

Once I confirmed I could remain clothed—in years past, guest model Padma Lakshmi had worn a leotard; Brooke Shields had worn a nude slip. Phew—the rest of what I had signed up for dawned on me. I am (painfully) aware that I have a not-quite-from-this-time face that artists often find "interesting" in some way or another. And it is precisely the "interesting" parts—you know, the strong profile, the things that give you "character"—that had me worried. Would Will and his circle of contemporary art stars immediately zero in on the features, the angles, I most dislike about myself, confirming, objectively, yes, this is how the world sees you, and it is hideous? Because, that's the thing: In this Insta era, as members of this selfie generation, we have become accustomed to capturing and controlling the image. If I don't like it, I delete it. If I do like it, I filter and Photoshop away, to make it even more becoming—my perfect version of me. There would be no way to influence how this group of people interpreted me. What each artist commits to paper,

Will noted, is a function of how he or she sees the world. Many versions of me. All true. I would be exposing my vulnerabilities—and hoping for the best. I would, in fact, be naked, just with clothes on. Speaking of clothes, I flicked through some old favorites in my closet and found a long-forgotten gem tucked in the back: a classic goddess dress in heavy folds of cascading champagne-color silk that, against my very pale skin, had the sheen of candlelight. It draped dramatically in the front, dipping nearly to my navel, and had an elegant cowl detail in the back that made my neck look about as long as a giraffe's. I slipped it on, and the train, with its intricate pleating at the sides, was about a foot too long—clearly I'd never worn it, or bothered to have it hemmed. But that didn't matter. I loved the generous folds of fabric, how they fell like a silken puddle around me on the floor. If I couldn't (or wouldn't) give them nudity, at least I could give them my best approximation of a Greek statue.

The morning of the event, I called former-guest-model Waris Ahluwalia for any helpful recon or last-minute

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wisdom. The handsome and prolific Waris—jewelry designer, actor, model—was an old pro at being studied and admired by rooms full of strangers. “At first, you can’t help but feel a little self-conscious, posing, but then you’re reminded that’s what you’re there for,” he said encouragingly. “It’s an exchange. They’re looking at you, celebrating everything about you, the human form in all its shapes and sizes. It’s not a fashion shoot.” Indeed: Can you imagine if all art, throughout the ages, only focused on slender, tall people with perfectly symmetrical features? How boring the world would be! Waris continued: “You walk down the street and look at a tree and admire its beauty for all of its variations—a crooked branch, gnarled trunk. You glance over at a human being, and immediately you’re judging ears, nose, butt. Why is it different than a tree?” That evening, at a sprawling Meatpacking District photo studio, the other models in attendance—pros who did not have my benefit of a scrap of clothing—and I were positioned in various stances and states of repose on a series of pedestals strewn languorously with fur throws. An intimidating conglomeration of wooden easels encircled us. Before we began our pose, I asked Kate, the pretty brunette behind me, who was an aerialist by day, how she stayed perfectly immobile for 20 or more minutes at a time. “I make to-do lists in my head, and plan my week,” she said cheerfully.

In order to remain completely still, I picked a single point on which to fix my gaze and did not waiver. For the first pose, it was a piece of masking tape stuck to the back of an easel with the number 44 scrawled on it. This was working great until an artist came in late and sat down in front of it. (Luckily, once he got going, he worked with a board on his lap, which meant he bent over enough that I could still focus on my number 44.)

I felt serene, and strangely unself-conscious, standing there beneath the spotlight. I let go, and trusted everyone to see their own version of me. At one point, I felt I could not hold the pose any longer—all five fingers on my right hand were numb from being frozen in place; my left knee, slightly twisted so my hip would be positioned just-so, throbbed; my nose itched—but if I moved, the folds of the dress might change; the position of my chin could shift, casting new shadows. There were no less than 10 people positioned around me, measuring, studying, and scribbling away intently, counting on me to just stay still. So, I did.

Walking around the room, glass of wine in hand, after the session, seeing so many renditions of myself was like looking into 10 different mirrors. Will’s drawing—dreamy and soft, with elegant lines, virtuoso draftsmanship—predictably made my heart soar. Jansson Stegner, a painter known for distorted bodies with mile-long torsos and limbs—“weird figuration,” he calls his style—probably had the worst seat in the house: directly in back of me. But he created one of my favorite portraits of the evening: a delicate sketch, almost classical in nature, of the back of my head and neck that, even without showing my face, was just perfectly, unmistakably me. Jocelyn Hobbie, whose figurative paintings feature exuberant colors and joyous floral-print backgrounds that look like they came straight off the Spring runways, took a few iPhone snaps of me so she could continue the piece in her studio. What resulted several days later was a luminous oil on canvas that made me gasp: me on my very, very best day, like, ever. Inka Essenhigh, a painter lauded for her surreal, undulating dreamscapes, confirmed my worst suspicions about my hated profile, but her drawing reminded me of a Toulouse-Lautrec, which softened the blow.

“You’d have to be confident with your perceived flaws,” Will had said to me of facing the room from that pedestal. It’s his use of the word “perceived” that I keep coming back to: As in, not everyone would consider the things that make one most insecure flaws or deficiencies. Some might view these defining characteristics as a person’s best assets. Becoming comfortable, even proud, of what you don’t like about yourself is easier said than done, but if I take one thing from that evening, along with the honor of being in the sights of so many talented people for even one minute, it will be that.

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Schön!

November 2013

Interview with Jansson Stegner

By Patrick Clark



American figurative painter Jansson Stegner is known for a hyperreal, highly stylised aesthetic. His work offers a clear social commentary and presents subversions of gender and power. Peppering his canvases with hidden references, ranging from Old Master painting to Pop Culture, he features in the current Saatchi exhibition, 'Body Language', where his works present a moral challenge to the viewer. Schön! spoke to Jansson about painting as a medium, about storytelling, subversion and hidden narratives.

How did you come to be a painter?

I grew up reading and drawing comic books. When I grew out of the subject matter of comics I was still in love with image-making. About midway through high school, I started to realise that the images in my parent's Art History books were much more interesting than anything I had been looking at.

Your paintings seem to allude to a lot of historical painting genres such as Mannerism. Could you talk a bit about your influences?

I have always liked paintings that are rooted in Realism without actually being realistic. My favourite painters are the figurative artists who are a bit off. El Greco, Otto Dix, Balthus, Alice Neel. They mess with the traditional rules of figuration to create a heightened psychological experience. An experience that takes the subject out of confines of 'ordinary' Realism. I like weird figurative painters.

Has painting 'run out of energy', or is the complete reverse true?

Painting may die some day, but it isn't dead yet. To me, the nadir of painting was the 1970s. That's when painting

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seemed most likely to die. It was almost suffocated by the ever more puritanical ideology of late modernism. Fortunately, most painters eventually discarded the overweening theory and started to have fun again. Painters today are free to do whatever they want. In that sense, painting is vibrantly alive.

Do you think painting really needs to continually justify itself as a medium?

I don't think painting needs to justify its existence today. I think that humans are a long way away from turning their back on two-dimensional still images. Painting is a technology for making images. In fact, it is still the best technology available for certain kinds of image-making. Painting can do certain things better than photography, Photoshop or anything else, and as long as that remains true, painting's existence remains justified.

I'm interested in the use of 'Unreal' in the previous Saatchi show title: where do your works sit in terms of real and unreal?

As I mentioned earlier, I like painting that is rooted in Realism without being a slave to it. I like to recognise what I'm looking at in a painting, but I also want to see the subject in a new and exciting way that isn't as predictable as optical realism can be. So, 'Unreal' feels like an apt term to describe my work.

You're involved in another group show at Saatchi, 'Body Language'. Which works of yours are in the show? Is the depiction and political potential of the body an important theme in your work?

Starling Heights (2004), Grey Sky (2005), Great Plains (2006), and Sarabande (2006) are on show. I am interested in gender and power and beauty and strength. In my work, I like to take different signifiers of these things and put them together in unusual combinations. I want to come up with new ways to think about power. I think of these cop paintings as an allegorical ideal for new kind of state power.

Would you describe yourself as a narrative painter?

I have been a narrative painter in the past. My work from the early 2000s could easily have been described as narrative, although the narratives may have been very oblique. Today, I think of myself more as a creator of portraits of imaginary people. I think about the kind of person I want to paint then I cobble together bits from different sources to create it.

Your biography on the Saatchi website talks about the elements of 'pop culture dumbness' in your work as a tool. Do you think of camp and pop as subversive devices?

I don't know if they are subversive anymore. Warhol's soup cans are fifty years old. I think of them more as flavours to be added to a dish. Many of my painting strategies come from painters of the distant past. I love the Old Masters, but simply borrowing the Old Master aesthetic today feels tiresome and stuffy. Adding pop and camp elements are ways of spicing up the mix a bit. Blending opposites is a strategy I use both in the content and the aesthetics of my work.

Like Rego, many of your painterly themes are engaged in ambivalent reversals of power structures and, in particular, reversals and undos of gender. What draws you to these themes?

I am interested in the new potential that arises from combining opposites. For example, painting a man in a beautiful and delicate (traditionally feminine) manner and painting a woman in a strong and powerful (traditionally masculine) manner creates new ways of looking at both.

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JANSSON STEGNER

Born 1972 in Denver, CO
Lives and works in Santa Barbara, CA

EDUCATION

2001 The University at Albany, Albany, NY
1995 University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI

SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

2024 CVG Foundation, Beijing, CN (*forthcoming*)
2022 *The Good Land*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
2020 *New Paintings*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
Jansson Stegner, Almine Rech, New York, NY, US
2018 *Paintings*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
2015 *Commission Portraits*, Sorry We're Closed, Brussels, BE
2008 *Sorry We're Closed*, Brussels, BE
2007 Bellwether Gallery, New York, NY, US
2005 *Dig Me No Grave*, Mike Weiss Gallery, New York, NY, US

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

2021 *Salon de Peinture*, Almine Rech, New York, NY, US
2020 *To Paint Is To Love Again*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
2018 *Extra*, The Hole, New York, NY, US
2017 *Engender*, Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
2016 *Hot Dry Men, Cold Wet Women*, Mark Miller Gallery, New York, NY, US
Winter Invitational, Jonathan LeVine Gallery, New York, NY, US
2015 *60 Americans*, Elga Wimmer Gallery, New York, NY, US
2014 *Unrealism*, Fredericks and Freiser Gallery, New York, NY, US
2013 *Body Language*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK

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The Male Nude, Sorry We're Closed at Art Brussels, BE
En Plein Air, Stux Gallery, New York, NY, US

2012 *Breed*, Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, New York, NY, US
Bending the Mirror, Columbus College of Art and Design, Columbus, OH, US

2008 *The Triumph of Painting: Unreal*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
Special Opening, Sorry We're Closed, Brussels, BE

2007 Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels, BE

2006 *Escape from New York*, Curators without Borders, Berlin, DE

2005 *Idols of Perversity*, Bellwether Gallery, New York, NY, US
New Figuration Show, Galerie Christina Wilson, Copenhagen, DK
The Parable Show, Grimm Rosenfeld Gallery, Munich, DE
Entourage, Mike Weiss Gallery, New York, NY, US

2004 *Tango*, Mike Weiss Gallery, New York, NY, US

2003 *Second Seed*, One in the Other, London, UK

2002 *Oil*, Mark Pasek Gallery, New York, NY, US

PUBLICATIONS

2022 *Jansson Stegner*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US

2013 *Body Language*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK

2005 *Jansson Stegner*, Mike Weiss Gallery, New York, NY, US

HONORS AND AWARDS

2015 New York Foundation for the Arts Painting Fellowship
Deutsche Bank NYFA Fellow

2010 Art Brussels: Collectors' Choice Award

2006 New York Foundation for the Arts Painting Fellowship

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2021 *Jansson Stegner: Injecting*, Laura Delmage, Metal Magazine, January 2021

2020 *The Psychological Resonance of Jansson Stegner at Almine Rech*, Noah Becker
Whitehot Magazine, March 17, 2020

*Jansson Stegner's hyperreal paintings of strong women invert gender roles
and challenge identity and power*, Katy Cowan, Creative Boom, March 2020

Must-See Art Guide: New York City, ArtNet News, March 5, 2020

In Conversation with Jansson Stegner, Sasha Bogojev, Juxtapoz, March 2020

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- 2018 *"Who's Afraid of the Female Nude? Paintings of naked women, usually by clothed men, are suddenly sitting very uncomfortably on gallery walls"*, Michael Slenske and Molly Langmuir, The Cut, April 2018
- 2017 *Show & Tell: The Artists of 'Engender' Are Reimagining How Painters Depict Gender*, Henri Neuendorf, Artnet News, November 9, 2017
Take A Peek Inside the Impressive Collection of Stéphanie Busuttill & Sébastien Janssen, Architectural Digest, December 2017
- 2016 *Studio Visit with Jansson Stegner*, Whitehot Magazine, Spring 2016
- 2015 *Jansson Stegner- Portfolio*, Extra Extra Magazine, No. 5, 2015
- 2014 *Jansson Stegner Paintings*, Candy, Winter 2014
- 2013 *Interview: Jansson Stegner*, sayitagainsayitagain, December,
Body Language: An Exhibition Featuring 19 Emerging International Artists Opens at the Saatchi Gallery, artdaily.org, November 20, 2013
Body Language at the Saatchi Gallery: A Mixed Body of Work, The Independent, November 24, 2013
Body Language, Time Out London, November 27, 2013
Interview/Jansson Stegner, schonmagazine.com, November 29, 2013
- 2012 *Artist's Spotlight*, advocate.com, Aug. 18, 2012
- 2011 *Jansson Stegner*, boooooooooom.com, March 4, 2011
Jansson Stegner's Long Stretch, Russ Crest, Beautiful Decay, January 17, 2011
- 2010 *Art à tous les étages*, Le Vie, April 29, 2010
- 2009 *Jeune mais cher*, Le Point, April 23, 2009
Art Brussels, 24th édition: le calme, non la tempête, L'echo, April 20, 2009
- 2007 *Jansson Stegner*, The New Yorker, December 17, 2007
Medium Cool, Tova Carlin, Time Out New York, November 22-28, 2007
Artist Jansson Stegner Paints Guns and Roses, Rachel Wolff, Nymag.Com, December 2007
Watching the Detectives, Ana Finel Honigman, Style.Com, November 15
- 2005 *Don't Miss Idols of Perversity*, Time Out New York, July 2005
Review, Sarah Valdez, Art In America, November 2005
Idols of Perversity, Sophie Fels, Time Out New York, July 2005
- 2000 *Mohawk-Hudson Regional Offers Thoughtful Artworks*, Karen Bjornland, The Daily Gazette, July 26, 2000
Gotta Believe, Stacy Lauren, Metroland, June 22, 2000
A Regional Well Done but not Rare, William Jaeger, Albany Times Union, July
Brush with Intensity, William Jaeger, Albany Times Union, June 25, 2000