

# JACK HANLEY GALLERY

**Heidi Hahn**

*Bent Idle*

12 February - 13 March

Opening Reception:

Friday, 12 February, 6 - 8pm

Jack Hanley Gallery is thrilled to present *Bent Idle*, the gallery's first solo exhibition of paintings by Heidi Hahn. The artist's *Bent Idle* series identifies most closely within the traditional practice of figurative painting. The artist's sumptuous application of paint and seductive layered surfaces draw the viewer into a psychologically intense narrative, in conversation with this tradition, which unfolds across the paintings presented. The works engage the psychological realm of attachment to the female body and how that's processed through both a traditional and a contemporary reading, as the many reclining, sitting or lounging female figures relate distantly to any number of female portraits (often reclining female nudes) painted throughout history.

Hahn's inquiry is directed toward an attachment to narrative-figurative painting, and especially it's complicated relationship with the female body. The cast of characters in *Bent Idle* confronts the viewer with a fuck you to the male gaze. In several works the characters have hidden their faces, and in all instances where the face is present, it is structured with a simplified and cartoon-like, 'happy' or 'sad-face' obfuscation or mask. The structure of these female forms is further explored through Hahn's painting style. The central figures are energized by the flat exterior, which compresses the female characters to seem kinetic in the still format and explosive in their enveloping flatness.

As the figure is simultaneously well-defined through this painting style and made opaque by its treatment, the characters become inextricable from decoration or masquerade. Furthermore, in four of these paintings, *What I Meant to Say is Not For You*, *Spare Me*, *Believe in all at Once*, *Maybe Later* and *Orange You Glad*, parts of the female form (by way of color stretched over the canvas) literally dissipate into or include the information from the background painting, becoming the texture of the background in and of themselves. For as much as these works are about narrative, they are equally concerned with the technical side of painting; color as shape, line as signifier. The forms themselves are created through the overpainting and flattening of the background in solid colors and their dueling properties oscillate fluidly between narrative and abstract paintings.

Hahn equates the psycho-physical experience of these characters to a borrowed remorse or disillusionment with the reality of life, and perhaps sexual maturity, as opposed to the carefree attitude of youth, and especially the complex notion or understanding of what it means to be female over the expanse of time. This engagement comes from both a personal or subjective perspective/experience and the well-documented conundrum with universal tropes of the portrayal of the female body through art over time, where empowerment is still laid bare in sexual states of undress.

*Heidi Hahn (b.1982) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Recent exhibitions include Friend of the Devil at Jack Hanley Gallery, Immediate Female at Judith Charles Gallery, A Thing of Beauty at Geoffrey Young Gallery in Great Barrington, New Paintings By at Jack Hanley Gallery and Shadows from Other Places at Premier Regard in Paris. Hahn received her Bachelor's degree in Fine Art from Cooper Union in 2006, and her Master's degree from Yale University in 2014. Hahn has been awarded residencies at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and the Headlands Center for the Arts among others.*

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