

NOW | ART

SUZANNE UNREIN AT BOLTAX.GALLERY



PASTORAL

Suzanne Unrein has traveled the world and worked for years in all mediums. She recently returned to New York and was a studio project recipient of Gallery Space 122 in the East Village. The paintings she is showing at boltax.gallery are a return to her roots, and arguably a reminder and re-examination of the roots of all artists.

Her new paintings started with a literal look back to the classics of western art. She had begun her artistic life studying and trying to reproduce the work of the old masters—Rubens, Caravaggio, Titian. In the midst of a deep, uninspired slump, Unrein looked back to these painters who first influenced her. She tried to remember and reclaim what had inspired her to paint in the first place, while she tried to pinpoint where she had gone astray from her initial passion. The fearlessly high levels of drama and wild, showy

compositions brought her back to the pure joy of painting.

Most impactful for Unrein was Rubens' "Massacre of the Innocents." Unrein was so moved by her encounter with the painting she says it "rescued her." She ended a months-long sabbatical from painting and took to the canvas with renewed fervor.

Pastoral is the central piece in the show and is an encompassing representation of her work. In a clear reference to Rubens' "The Rape of the Daughter of Leucippus," she takes that image and breaks it down to the most basic elements, and then plays with it. She tries to capture the emotion and movement of the scene without the literal representations of figures. She has changed the color scheme from dark burgundies and browns to pastels and light-hearted pigments. She has altered the feeling of the scene from aggression and violence to something more beautiful, like a dance.

EXHIBITION: Suzanne Unrein *Subtracting Evolution*. Saturday, July 12–Sunday, August 2. boltax.gallery, 21 North Ferry Road, Shelter Island. (631) 749-4062, boltaxgallery.com.

SUZANNE UNREIN SITS AMONG HER MOST RECENT BODY OF WORK AT GALLERY SPACE 122 IN THE EAST VILLAGE.



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DETAIL OPPOSITE



ANTIC HAY

The term “pastoral” is one of the first phrases anyone encounters in an art history class. It conjures up images of nymphs and gods frolicking in lush rolling pastures. Using this term as the title of the painting is provocative and irreverent, since the image depicts no pastoral background. Unrein seems to poke fun at the study of art history. The title “Pastoral” scrutinizes the labeling of classic work. It seems that the labels and classifications are causing the work of the great masters to stagnate. This may be of particular significance to Unrein because she sees the masters as artists who were trailblazers, inspirational, full of emotion and—then and now—relevant.

Viewers of Unrein’s work will most certainly have some sort of relationship with Rubens’ original work since it is such an icon of western art. The abstraction of those originals is sure to inspire discussion about them. Is she breaking them

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down to breath new life into them, or to take them down a notch from their position as “the greats”? Is this a homage to “The Rape...” or a jab at it?

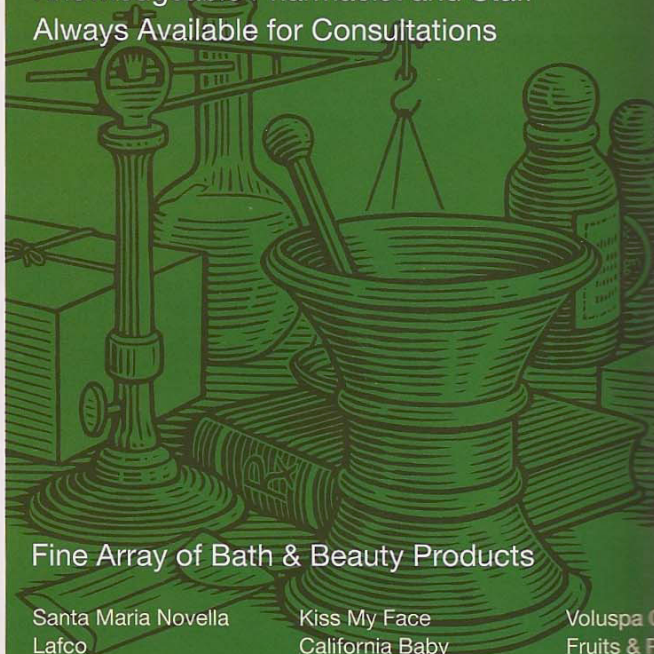
Antic Hay. When Unrein’s passion for painting was rekindled she described herself as a “kid in the sandbox, playing.” That feeling of “fun” is prevalent in this piece. This painting began with Bouguereau’s “Nymph’s and Satyr’s” but Unrein also allowed other paintings to influence it. She takes the characters and lets them wander on her canvas, putting Poussin’s satyrs and Bouguereau’s nymphs together in an embrace. To see these broken down and played with is irreverent and refreshing. Unrein mixes different characters, scenes, and original painters with a sense of humor and a keen interest in the dynamic of the contradiction. Her process of creation is even a contradiction. In the act of breaking them down, of deconstructing them, the paintings seem to be reinvented, to come alive again.



UNREIN'S DEEP PASSION FOR THE MEDIUM IS EVIDENT IN THIS DETAIL. SHE PLAYS WITH COLOR AND MOVEMENT WITHOUT ANY HESITATION. HER BOLD BRUSH STROKES ARE PERFECTLY PLACED, YET SEEM TO BE CASUAL GESTURES; A BALANCING ACT THAT CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH YEARS OF WORK.

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