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Intercessions

At the Joyce Goldstein Gallery
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The press release of this exhibition claims that “Intercessions...is an exhibition of spiritual portraits that act as a conduit between inner and outer worlds.” The intimation that the artwork and the artists in this exhibition serve as mediators, or conduits, to and from an ineffable essence that is yet also grounded in the reality of the human visage strikes me as a fruitful way for me as a critic to begin making remarks describing the artworks in the exhibition itself and the experiential takeaway of the show. Intercessions, in using a term such as “spiritual portraits” in its press release offers a gallery experience that suggests that the visitor will be struck with the power of the auratic presence of the artworks themselves as well with the impact of the artists’ incarnating of this aura through their pictorial activities. Towards that end, Bobbie Moline-Kramer and James Singelis approach the act of image-making as a mediatory device in different ways. . . . James Singelis’s art . . . functions as a mediatory device or structure of the imagination through invocation whose purpose is to engage in a calling-in, a summoning of feelings that are triggered by each portrait as it emerges from his hand and soul. To this very point, Singelis writes

in his artist's notes "...I see each painting ...not [as an] illustration or snapshot of an emotional moment, but rather a history of the interior cross-currents that occur while I paint."

Singelis's aesthetic practice has an uplifting, almost early-Matisse freshness to it as he works expressionistically and intuitively using unusual color combinations. A hazily vaporous glow clings to his work giving it a dreamlike, even tender, evanescent quality that is captivating in ways that are unique to him. Outside of the self-portraits he produces, Singelis makes up the portraits as he goes along. He's challenged by creating an optical zone of recognizability that coalesces into what one would call a human "face" whose features slowly emerge from myriad marks and lines and colored brush marks that end up as participating in the codes of representation, one might say, by default. His free-falling or free-floating into and through the codes of representation are evidentiary indications that Singelis's tendencies lead him to the habit of an eternal return, a perpetual attempt to break free from historic models of image-making again and again. He reverts to a state of mind that attempts to build a human visage from point zero, a starting point of the imaginary that entirely precludes a one-on-one relationship with a sitter. James Singelis's picture-making has a lingering unfinished look, a de facto memento-mori aspect, a pathos intimating his mission as an artist of properly recording or memorializing the facial characteristics of the human entity emerging

from the center of his mind's eye could never be adequately completed.

Moline-Kramer's precise naturalism, on the other hand, while engaging with the codes of mimetic fidelity and fealty towards exactitude that is pushed to the limits attends to spontaneity, somehow, in unexpected surgical-strike ways. As a result, her works resonate with haptic and sensorial impact as she flecks and spikes her otherwise meticulously planned pictorial surfaces to give rise to under-the-radar variegated visual intrusions that tickle the eye and keep it moving. Moline-Kramer's art career began decades ago as a medical illustrator and her rigorous observational training in depicting the body (inside and out) with intense verisimilitude has stayed with her as a residual part of her aesthetic *modus-operandi*. Moline-Kramer makes a point of only engaging in portraying individuals she has observed intimately. Even if she does refer to photographic studies of her subjects in the completion of her artwork, she takes these photos herself. When she is in the presence of her subject for future use, in-studio purposes, she takes careful forensic notes using colored pencils to make sure that the skin tones on paper are precise matches with the living entity. The upshot of this process is that Moline-Kramer's art involves a precise form of meticulously planned naturalism, a type of verisimilitude with affinities to *trompe l'oeil*. Yet there are additional abstract free-standing mark-making elements that are superimposed onto this pictorial precision that paradoxically alludes to a notion of

identity that is fluid and not fixed; a shape-shifting sense of self that is at its core at variance with itself.

Intercessions showcases the inner worlds of Bobbie Moline-Kramer and James Singelis, artists whose works diverge in terms of painterly application and approach to the subject matter of the face. Yet these vitalistic differences joined in the same viewing circumstances at the Joyce Goldstein Gallery create a visual momentum, a psychical vivacity that left this viewer in a deeply satisfying state of exalted, enlightened mystification.

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