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Our collective conscience



Every fall, RJD Gallery in Sag Harbor, New York, hosts a Women Painting Women exhibition that features paintings of females by women artists in a range of styles and narratives. This year's exhibition, titled *Our Collective Conscience*, will be held October 8 through November 13. Included are works by artists such as Candice Bohannon, Jennifer Gennari, Rachel Moseley, Margo Selski, Pamela Wilson, Katie O'Hagan, and Odile Richer.

Richard Demato, owner of the gallery, says, "Each year we look forward to curating and hanging the Women Painting Women exhibition. It provides an insight into the evolving 'Collective Conscience' of contemporary female figurative painters and reflects the subtle, and not so subtle, changes within our own society. Their artistic introspection, paired with a detailed internal struggle, results in the birth of artwork with a clear and timely perspective."

In *L'heure du thé*, which translates from French to *Tea Time*, Richer depicts a woman named Caroline who inquired about posing

for a painting. Caroline was interested in being submerged in water for the photo, such as the female in John Everett Millais' painting *Ophelia*. The model also happened to be going through a divorce at the time, and upon reflection of the work found it to symbolize an act of purification.

"I thought to myself if it was to be liquid, it would be tea, and she should be presented surrounded by teacups," explains Richer, adding that the cups signify her own experiences as a youth living with her grandmother and an informal teatime ritual they had. "So tea has come to embody a shared and comforting experience. I also thought the red mane of hair of this young woman could also evoke the effect of tea diffusing in the water. It's why I painted a strand of hair leaving the pot. I appreciate the distortion created by water and the perspective and pose of the model."

Bohannon's *Fire Cloud* is a work that depicts a young woman on the brink of adulthood. "A young girl sets determined eyes on the dying light of the setting sun, and

behind her the horizon fills with smoke, ash and fire clouds. It is a painting inspired by someone I love who is quickly approaching a seminal moment in her young life—the transition from childhood to adulthood," says the artist. "It is a time where parts of her past are a burden too great to carry into the future, and the future yet too vaguely imagined to set a course for. It is a moment's pause while everything is uncertain except for the fire in her eyes. There is no going back. The past goes up in smoke like the raging forest fire off in the distance—and truly, from such a great distance, there is an almost tranquil beauty to the smoldering ruin, if caught in just such a light as this."

For the exhibition, Wilson will display *The Incurious Came Pirouetting*, which shows a girl surrounded by birds. Often in her works Wilson paints "young girls on their way to womanhood, bravely enduring the pitfalls they encounter in girlhood." She also finds it is important to identify when the gender gap begins and to empower and instill confidence in both girls and boys.



1
Candice Bohannon,
Fire Cloud, oil on canvas,
19 x 32"

2
Odile Richer,
L'heure du thé, oil on
canvas, 24 x 36"

3
Pamela Wilson,
*The Incurious Came
Pirouetting*, oil and 24k
gold leaf on canvas over
birch panel, 24 x 20"

4
Rachel Moseley,
Almost California, oil
on wood, 30 x 24"

5
Jennifer Gennari,
Pulse, oil on linen,
60 x 48"



"I am so enamored of the mindset of certain young girls who are born strong, but are also would-be victims," she says. "They possess both fear and confidence, whimsy and courage, and they wear it all on their faces simultaneously—not sure who to trust or when to shriek. *The Incurious Came Pirouetting* is about one such brave girl, one such wordless gaze and the whole world within it."

Almost California, by Moseley, is from an ongoing series she is painting while living in Las Vegas for her husband's medical residency. The subjects are people she has met in the city; and she has found the works are as much self-portraits as they are

portraits of the models.

"The subject of this painting is the first and maybe only real friend I've made since living here. She's a nomadic, free-spirited artist and loved posing for me. She sort of became my muse...She would come over to pose and sort of stroll through my house stripping off her clothes and talking, smoking cigarettes, shoving handfuls of Cheetos into her mouth, laughing and so comfortable. I'm captivated by her," Moseley explains. "It's almost California because Las Vegas feels so close, but also so far away, and because her friendship and eccentricities almost feel like home to me—sadly, but not unexpectedly, she just moved away."

Gennari's work *Pulse* is about loneliness and the hope of finding someone. "It was inspired by sonar, which is a technique that uses sound propagation. When an animal makes a noise, that pulse is sent out in sound waves into the environment around it. Those waves then bounce back in a form of an echo that let the animal know that something else is there," Gennari says. "The figure used in *Pulse* is in a dark void to represent the loneliness one can feel at moments in life. Her dimly lit figure sends out a pulse in hopes of receiving an echo back to let her know that someone else is there, and soon she will have someone to brave the darkness with." ●