

Keith Mayerson

Derek Eller Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Keith Mayerson.

Good Leaders, Endangered Species, Ships at Sea is a poetic allegory of paintings serving as a hopeful reflection and a warning of our perilous times. Read as a non-linear narrative, the series of images connotes man's hubris and his exploitation of the earth with the wish that spirituality, good leaders, and great artistry will rescue humanity and nature. Read individually, each painting is reflective of the subject matter it portrays, and also deeper allegories, as well as odes to painting and to art history.

A portrait of Barack Obama begins the show; it is the artist's hope that his tenacity, intelligence, and spirit will lead our country out of the elegiac world depicted by the rest of the exhibition. Next, a painting of a snow leopard camouflaged by falling snow prowls through a canyon in Afghanistan, his species' existence on the planet nearly at an end. In another painting, the Dalai Lama is presented giving a prayer after a three-day teaching of the Diamond Cutter Sutra at Radio City Music Hall; lens flares from the artist's source photo are transformed into floating mandalas, as the entire setting emulates the Buddhist tankha painting hanging behind His Holiness. A polar bear, standing on the tip of a disintegrating ice field in the melting arctic is entitled "Cold War".

The project room is given over to a suite of 9-11 themed paintings. The artist, a witness to the history changing events of that day, was compelled after several years of nightmares to memorialize the civilian victims of the tragedy and paint their last moments. Entitled "Compassion" and "Empathy to Those in the Towers," two of the paintings depict the fear, courage, and ultimate humanity of the people who must never be forgotten. The sickening sublime beauty of the day itself, juxtaposed with the evil of the terrorists using commercial airlines as bombs, is represented in the painting "9-11". "Ode to Falling Man" is a painted depiction of a photo that was seen around the world of the anonymous man falling to his death, becoming a symbol of the human agency lost that morning.

Bali Ha'I is a painting of whales and birds cohabitating at a remote feeding ground, reminding us of the otherworldly beauty of nature on Earth. "The Nature of Alexander", an appropriation of the wrap-around book cover of this historical biography by Mary Renault, is a bittersweet homage and a portrait of one of the most renowned homosexual leaders of history.

Based on a source photo taken by the artist, a portrait of the pioneering American surrealist Louise Bourgeois portrays her at her table during one of her famous salons. "Duck Soup (We're Going to War!)", is a picture of the great Marx Brothers in their masterpiece anti-war comedy as their characters hysterically celebrate a decision to go to war while in the background generals and politicians gesticulate frantically in dance (a vision originally created as Hitler, Franco and Mussolini--who banned the film--were rising to power). In a painting honoring Anne Frank, she is seen at her desk from a photo in her diary that would enlighten generations to come both to the atrocities of Hitler, and man's inhumanity to man, as filtered through the mind of a young artist.

The last wall of the exhibition is an homage to three Great Masters, whose humanity, vision, and skill made great leaps for our culture. These selected images create a biblical narrative of the Virgin and Child, Christ's passion, and the Last Judgment. Duccio, in his "Madonna and Child" bridges the gap between medieval times and the Renaissance, bringing warmth, emotion, notions of perspective and humanity to his icon painting. Michelangelo, an appropriation based on his model of the crucifix (recently attributed to him) both created dazzling paintings and sculptures of the sacred and the profane. El Greco, in his surreal masterpiece "the Opening of the Fifth Seal", helped artists in the twentieth century to visually depict new ways of seeing within the world.

Keith Mayerson's paintings embrace a modernist sensibility of projecting subjectivity and emotion onto subject matter, where the unconscious plays a part in the modulation of figurative elements blending into abstraction. His work is conscious of an outside world beyond the picture plane, and hopes to promote a progressive discourse in our culture. Mayerson has been professionally exhibiting his work in the United States and Europe since 1993 and is included in the permanent collection of the Museum of Art, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Museum, and the Cleveland Museum of Art. He currently teaches at the School of Visual Arts, New York University, Brooklyn College, and American University in Washington D.C., and recently curated the critically acclaimed NeoIntegrity exhibition at Derek Eller Gallery. This will be his fourth solo exhibition at the gallery.

Derek Eller Gallery is located at 615 West 27th Street, between 11th and 12th Avenues. Hours are Tuesday - Saturday from 11am - 6pm. For further information or visuals, please contact the gallery at 212.206.6411 or visit www.derekeller.com.