

Annie Lapin at Shulamit Nazarian

Pasture and Painting: Annie Lapin's
Strange Little Beast

Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles
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By Sydney Walters

The paintings of Annie Lapin at Shulamit Nazarian are a frantic patchwork of pieces that negotiate the territory between beast, pasture and the history of painting. The theater of her colors and the drama of lines riveting across the canvas plunges Lapin's work into a tornado of animal mythos. By balancing wild and uncontained with pastoral and contained, she addresses past and present tensions of how animals and nature are mechanisms for human identity.

In "Wolf, Garden, Seduction (heap 2)", two black buckled shoes are stretched out to support the weight of legs compressing under an opaque cloak of velvety black. Giant hands claw this partially rendered gure apart. Its sleeves are an expansion of a speckled yellow and black constellation. Larger orbs of sunshine yellow are spray painted on top of the painting. The effect mirrors phosphenes, the "northern lights" that sometimes illuminate under our eyelids when we tightly close our eyes.

Consistent with the rest of her paintings, Lapin handles the sky and pasture with expert haziness. The effect is analogous to a low-resolution photograph. The areas of landscape ground the painting in a specific space. They nod to the cannon of historic landscape paintings but are disrupted with layers of abstract gestures. Many times, these gestures are woven with traditional components of landscape paintings: animals.



“Catnose Emergent (heap 6)” is perhaps one of Lapin’s most complex compositions. In it, a delicately rendered pink cat nose pushes out amidst overlays of color and a variety of paint handling. A shadowy gure emerges from a smoky black and tan haze. Its eyes are wide and pupil-less as it stares over its shoulder. In this piece, like many others, Lapin creates her own frame for the painting. For Lapin, the boundaries of the canvas are suggestions. With a bold black line she etches a frame that is slightly shorter than the canvas. In doing this, “Catnose Emergent” is reinstated as both portal and surrealist space suspended between and exterior.

While the animals are grazing, mankind is at war with the earth. In “Picket Blanknic (heap 3)”, pastures compress uncomfortably on the gures, restricting their movement to only a thin slice of open space on the canvas. Other images are the pus and vomit of nature expelling the toxins man has put into her such as “a dance in the future”. In “Hi Wind (StepScape 3)” a purple and red expanse of sky and mountains overlook a group of half naked and defeated humans. The gures cling onto one another, their heads turning toward us, away from the menacing sky. Below this pocket of landscape is the contorting back and twisting arm of a woman. Her hair is windswept and the ferocity of the moment is captured in the blood red sky pulsating behind her. This painting is momentous by describing our ancestral past and also a premonition for the future.

Strange Little Beast is an exhibit that carves a ne line between unraveling and control. Lapin meanders through well-trodden subjects of painting: landscape, animal and gure. But the way she moves paint through space embraces order and chaos that challenges perception in a delicious way.

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