

Painter connects the real to the bizarre

Arts Scene

by Heather Solomon

Daniel Horowitz likes to throw his viewers off-balance.

At the same time, he glues them firmly to his oil paintings in an act of “rubber-necking,” making them incapable of looking away from scenes he fantasizes into the bizarre.

A man limps off a beach into the ocean, dragging one of his legs that swelled to resemble the tail of a mermaid.

Another image is of an old-fashioned hospital ward with a row of iron bedsteads. On one of them, elongated arms encircle a mountain of bedclothes. Is it a frightened child hiding or an alien that has swallowed the occupant?

Until Feb. 20 at Joyce Yahouda Gallery, 372 St. Catherine St. W., Suite 516, art lovers can attempt to solve the enigmas in the exhibition, titled *Hypnagogia*, which can be defined as the state of consciousness just before one drifts off to sleep.

Thoughts from the day begin to blur and reconnect in sometimes nightmarish ways. Many of the people and objects in this series are styled in 1940s coifs and clothing, and given a sleek tubular look to resemble that period.

Just to throw the viewer another left hook, Horowitz has made the show into an installation by directly painting onto some of the gallery walls a panorama of Sufi whirling dervishes with billowing robes.

“I spend a lot of time researching period images. I’m browsing for an instance



New York artist Daniel Horowitz presents *Hypnagogia* at Joyce Yahouda Gallery until Feb. 20. HEATHER SOLOMON PHOTO

that I consider to be uncanny enough to then depict in a painting, but I revise the original source material and retell the story with psycho-dynamic ambiguities. Actions are an extension of our thoughts, so in my work, they’re intermingled,” says the 37-year-old New Yorker.

“This is a body of work that I created in Leipzig, Germany, in residency at the Spinnerei Art Centre last summer, working under my hero, Neo Rauch, the painter I admire most.”

The stint at that international program with Rauch, a post-communist surrealist, was a return trip to eastern Europe for Horowitz.

He had worked for a while in Warsaw as an illustrator, his initial career before turning full time to fine arts two years ago. The artist’s colours are a holdover from those days, hued to arrest the eye and grab attention.

“I enjoy going to Europe, not because I find it leisurely, but because it provokes a reaction in me. My father is a Holocaust survivor from Poland. I have no resolution in terms of the history of what happened in World War II and I am somehow looking for answers,” Horowitz says. “A lot of my work has to do with looking for answers – within as much as without.”

An example of making physical what goes on in the mind is his joining at the neck of two wrestlers, their urge to overcome one another’s strength forming them into a monster of brute force. Other paintings are less accessible like the sage holding his prayer book and housing a colony of bees in his beard.

Do they pollinate his ideas, or maybe suggest the honey of his words that are given to Jewish children during their earliest lessons? Or are they maggot-like, crawling over a man whose ilk has so often been murdered?

“I want the viewer to be able to relate to the characters, but each image is completely open to interpretation,” Horowitz says.

While his works are up in Montreal, the artist is back at his Vinegar Hill, Brooklyn, studio, a former storefront that sometimes has the curious walking in off the street.

There he’s at his collage table, cutting up 17th- to 19th-century hunt and animal engravings for a March exhibition at Le Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris, “reconstructing them with new stories, retelling and revising history.” They will be the stuff dreams are made of. ■

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