

Passersby at Owen James Gallery

Owen James Gallery

2015-04-01



In a city teeming with millions, markers of resident and visitor individuality can become, over time, an accretive blur; faces, nationalities, ages, and body types smear together into a general human backdrop of the proto-typical, urban experience. Aspects of this paradox between the particular and the plural are explored within the figurative works on paper of Oslo-based artist **Elin Rødseth**, currently on view at Owen James Gallery (61 Greenpoint Avenue, Suite #315) through April 18th.

The show, entitled *Passersby*, assembles many works from the artists current series of the same name; small photopolymer prints on paper reminiscent of family photos or keepsakes wherein the primary countenances of the subjects are obscured while secondary elements; hair, clothing, and physical postures are foregrounded through the effects of a mediated printing process. Evidence of the artist's hand and gestures soften while the more material qualities of paper and ink seem to register higher in one's noticing. A personal favorite, "Passerby 9" presents a faceless girl before a "Nails" sign, blowing hair disintegrating into a black, crackle field. This "Christina's World"-like image, though small in scale, prods and pulls at your sense of place and familiarity. "Passerby 5" depicts a presumed young girl, hunched over and lacing up her boot. With body angles and composition that gently recall the drawings of Egon Schiele, this work seems to catch a bit of the magic inherent in our everyday repetitions; habitual, meditative, and insouciant. The works in this series evince memory, in that funny way where the crisp specifics of our minds eye can fuzz over and blur when viewed through the lens of time.

The parlour-like installation of these images underscores the read of them as family heirlooms or yearbook snapshots and the feelings of *deja vu* that these works can manifest are both hauntingly pleasant and warmly disquieting.

The show also includes works from Rødseth's *Bystander* series, wherein woodcut and photopolymer interior elements are juxtaposed and re-purposed within the series, like props on a theatrical stage. Last and honorable mention is given to "Men", a singular woodcut monotype wherein a group of faceless male figures shuffle and huddle together, peering out into nothing. The background here is spare (there isn't one) and through composition and placement alone, the viewer can assume a horizon line and ground for the action, only there isn't any. Like a contemporary riff on *Godot*, these men gather and wait and stare outwardly, with themselves as their only reward.

For additional figurative work, sans facial features, in Brooklyn visit *Faceless, Figuring Immediacy + New Nudes* at **Outlet Gallery** (253 Wilson Avenue) which opens April 4th and features the dreamy psychedelic paintings of **Jen Hitchings**, the gem-toned, modernist musings of figurative painter **Gili Levy**, the charged figurations of **Julie Curtiss**, and minimal, humorous takes on the figure by **Dan Flanagan**. (through May 10th).

—*Enrico Gomez*