

THE EYES HAVE IT

by Charlie Finch, 2008

The Valkyrie landed at André Schleichriem Gallery on a recent Saturday evening to bear a new star, Rosa Loy, into the firmament: Rachel Feinstein, riding her hot new show at Boesky; Lisa Yuskavage, who penned Rosa's catalogue essay; Pattie Cronin, just awarded a Tiffany grant; Jane Kaplowitz, who hosted the after-party; and Deborah Kass, gleefully clutching a photo of her iconic creation Double Yentl, autographed that afternoon by both Hillary and Chelsea Clinton at a Sheraton Hotel fundraiser in midtown.

"I like Hillary because she's tough like us," Ms. Kass swooned. As the only female member of the Leipzig School, Rosa Loy is also tough, measured by the powerful women in her exotic new paintings, distinguished, as always, by their shifty, yearning, covetous dewdrop eyes.

You have seen these eyes before, in Chagall's large birds, in erotic miniatures of the Punjab, in Max Beckmann's sadistic shamans. Loy's current work is far more assured, in theme and paint handling, than the stuff at her David Zwirner show two years ago. Her goddesses penetrate nature and each other with operatic lust: a woman in pink cuddles a hound enveloped by a sunlit halo, babes in forest green and ocean blue caress a torpedo with a stethoscope, a Nicole Kidman lookalike rides piggyback on a zaftig femme in a red jumpsuit. Clearly someone's about to explode and there's not a guy in sight.

Rosa is not afraid to blatantly paint-check her influences: languid nymphs sampling a long bolt of orange silk drifting down a hidden staircase are right out of Balthus and the knowing smiles of tableful of women devouring turkeys are a sly dig at John Currin's notorious Thanksgiving tableau. Sinister asides, such as a fetus in a brick of ice, evoke Dalí and Francis Bacon.

If John Currin's women talked back, fashioned their own narratives and then sacrificed Currin in a puff of smoke to a nearby wood nymph, they would be transformed into Rosa Loys. Her narrow mythos is seductive and diabolical, the season of the witch, pictures so sly, that you can't resist. Neo Rauch is arch and wooden by comparison.

Rosa Loy, "Close to Me," May 10-June 7, 2008, at André Schleichriem Contemporary, 600 Washington Street, New York, N.Y. 10014

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