

SARAH MERRY

STATEMENT - Homage: Prayer for Pig Island

This series of paintings celebrates the marriage of several impacting influences. Some of them are more concretely identifiable within the context of art history, namely, Hans Hofmann, Richard Diebenkorn, Clyfford Still and Pierre Bonnard. However, I also observed other visual influences that likely germinated from my childhood, those being Joan Miro (thanks to my sister, Martha) and Dr. Zeuss.

The most robust and propelling influence, ultimately, comes from my mother. Last August, my family and I entered a tunnel from which we would emerge four months later, irrevocably altered. We adorned ourselves with all the bravery and information within outstretched reach and slowly marched into darkness, arm in arm, Mum in the middle, my sister and father flanking us *Petites*. There was only one real warrior, but we waged truly beside her, with her. And in the black days, even then, we still learned about love, lightness, about family and life and friendship. During the weakest time of her life, I saw her stronger than I'd ever imagined my heroine to be. In the newborn hours of a winter morning, we finally came through that reorienting detour. We released her physical presence and wept for a future dependent on remembering and longing.

When I began to paint, unintentionally, yet evidently, a new ground was afoot. White blankets much of the former compositions in these works, like edits of an essay leaving only the vitals. In this pale openness, I could express her piano prowess and artistic sensitivity as well as the intelligent vibrancy of her mind and the expanse of her maternal love and inherent kindness. There is room to breathe, to relate, to heal amidst colours that harken back to summery glee at the French River, joyful freedom on Farnham Avenue and endless hours spent under the piano listening to her magic; my glorious, impervious childhood castles. When I painted, she was present. She is present. She fueled this work.

Curiously, the only way I could approach landscape painting after working in abstraction for 15 years, was to paint them upside down. From start to finish, I removed the memory-cognitive knowledge of the subject and instead saw the particulars of that shape, texture, colour and feeling of the light askew, anew. I looked at the subject from this different perspective to best express it through my nascent visual alphabet.

Perhaps the most exciting development for me in this series is the shift from the anthropomorphic qualities of the abstract shapes that have grown over 20 years to constructions of an architectural nature, cantilevered and adventurous in their earnest stance. Something concrete is sprouting.

Onward.