



JULIE HEFFERNAN

MARK MOORE GALLERY | STATEMENTS

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16

Mark Moore Gallery: *Statements* introduces a featured gallery artist through images and candid interview. From noteworthy early examples to present bodies, the works featured in *Statements* act as an overview of the varying practices and movements implemented by a given artist in tandem with their thoughts and interpretations.

Akin to Magical Realism, Julie Heffernan's lush self-portraiture utilizes a myriad of art historical references to present a sensual interior narrative, a self-allegory whose half-hidden political agenda is the literal background of the paintings. The dark, Grimm fairy tale-like undercurrent transforms her aristocratic, operatic portraits into a contemporary vanitas or memento mori, acting as both a stylized fantasy and a Bosch-like warning.

Heffernan received her MFA from Yale School of Art (CT), and has been exhibiting widely for the past two decades. Selected exhibitions include those at the Kwangju Biennial (Korea), Weatherspoon Art Gallery (NC), Tampa Museum Of Art (FL), Knoxville Museum Of Art (TN), Columbia Museum Of Art (SC), Milwaukee Art Museum (WI), The New Museum (NY), The Norton Museum (FL), The American Academy Of Arts And Letters (NY), Kohler Arts Center (WI), The Palmer Museum Of Art (PA), National Academy Of Art (NY), Mcnay Art Museum (TX), Herter Art Gallery (MA), Mint Museum (NC) and Virginia Museum of Fine Art (VA), Oklahoma City Museum of Art (OK) among numerous others. Her work has been acquired by many of the institutions listed above. Heffernan is also currently a Professor of Art at Montclair State University (New Jersey).



Left: *This Will Have Been Another
Happy Day*, 2010
Oil on canvas, 20 x 20 inches

STATEMENTS

JULIE HEFFERNAN

Interviewed by: Marielos Zeka, Mark Moore Gallery



Your self-portraits can be likened to a performance of sorts, as if we are seeing you act out as an extravagant other or surrogate self. You have used the term “second self”. Can you explain this concept and perhaps inform us of your perspective in regards to the genre of self-portraiture?

We do, in fact, function with two brains: that bicameral mind thing. But for our purposes I would ask you - aren't we always coming up against that self we think of as the more “real” or authentic self than the one we're used to – the one not as easily swayed by others, more wicked and beautiful, less prone to weakness, more in keeping with who we would like ourselves to be? I developed a deeper relationship with that second self when, back in the 90s, I started using a process called image streaming, where, just before sleep, pictures would flood into my head, as if from someone else's movie. I realized these were glimpses into a deeper self, less available to the conscious mind, and I wanted to know that self better. Early on, I was superimposing those images onto the surfaces of various fruits in still life paintings, as though the fruits were shiny brains emitting pictures, and I was calling those paintings “self-portraits,” with the sense that they were like interior portraits, truer than what the mirror reflects back to us.

Later on, when I began to use actual figures I continued to think of

them as manifestations of other selves within me (I never actually painted my portrait as seen in a mirror – I would always use other faces, mostly male.) Through the paintings I could imagine my way into wholly other kinds of characters.

You have many roles within your paintings: subject, architect, wardrobe designer, interior decorator, and landscaper, to name a few. It even seems you create your own set of laws that administrate each scene. For example, it appears some realms are governed by gravity while others are not. Do you see all these biospheres as inter-related, that each painting represents a scene of one giant world or do you see each composition as a whole universe unto itself with its own structure and story to tell?

I've noticed over the years that a tiny image – a thought bubble- in one painting would later grow and expand into the main image of a later painting, as if I were dreaming it up in the first, then realizing its more complex nature in the later work. I think of the process as rather like that of the microbiologist, where, looking through the microscope, I'd see worlds within worlds and, with greater magnification, those other worlds would show their particularities to me. I am rapt as I slowly uncover the details and structural elements that make up that particular world.

As I paint I move things around until the painting takes control, telling me where to put things in relation to a grander whole that slowly reveals itself. There's a point when I step back and can see the grand design, as it were, and it does feel like it's its own universe, in truth – just waiting for me to come along and birth it into being. And everything MUST make sense in that world, in the particular terms that it sets up for itself. Looking at the paintings over time I think they fall in line with each other, like huge stills from a graphic novel, as one painting builds on what was set up in an earlier painting and altogether they create, over time, a huge story.

You have said that you feel the narratives created in your paintings relate to the moving image. Can you explain how film informs your practice and how you relate your compositions to space and time?

Oh I do love that question! In my next lifetime (if I'm so lucky) I want to make movies. Those grand narrative paintings of the 19th century were the movies of their time. (Frederick Church would exhibit his gigantic South American masterpieces behind a red curtain, and people would pay to view them.) I'm interested in how painting can be that again, in its own stilled stopped way. We travel through movies linearly, sequentially, as one image gives way to the next. In painting we travel through the space of the painting, from back to front and back again--round and round, as our eyes are also scanning the surface at the same time. The conflation of space that happens when foreground, middleground and background actively interrelate is something unique to painting, and can I use it to complexify meaning. As the director, production designer, casting director, editor and producer of these painted worlds I want to

make them epic in their way--virtual journeys--so the viewer can travel deeply into the space of the painting, and experience a fully realized place they've never been to before- much like we do in a movie.

Writer A.S. Byatt once wrote about your work, "Heffernan's world is both public and private." This rings true when I think about the seemingly idiosyncratic quality of your storytelling. Private as they appear, each image simultaneously offers the viewer an open field of interpretation, teeming with an abundance of suggestive and yet unpredictable symbolic elements. This quote is also of interest in terms of your recent work, in which it appears your focus has shifted from interior spaces to pastoral scenes. How do you see these dichotomies playing themselves out within your self-portraits?

Paintings are a kind of wilderness. I go to paintings the way I used to go to the American River or to the Nevada Falls trail in Yosemite – to get lost and take myself on a ride at the same time. As I paint I dig deeper and deeper into the spaces in my painting worlds, in the same way that when we hike we keep digging deeper into the space of the wilderness. I spend so much time in the studio that at different times I need different things from it: sometimes I need to swim around outside and other times I need to watch the sofas turn over and the ceilings fall down and show me what's on the other side.

My studio is in the basement of my home so I built myself a water fall and a folly out in the backyard, which I can just barely see from

my painting couch, so that I could have a glimpse of some other kind of space when I need to wash my eyes after staring at the painting too long. It's my imaginary tropical jungle.

You recently had a solo exhibition at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art entitled, *Infinite Works*, which featured your recent paintings as well a selection of past works. Did seeing your work in this way reveal elements of your evolution previously unconsidered? Are there any specific changes evident in your latest body of work particularly in terms of formal qualities?

I've realized lately that over the years my work has gone through a growth process rather like a person's. The early work was like incubating eggs – the fruits like inchoate fetuses, holding life but not responsible for what comes of it. Then figures entered, and they started out bursting with new life – thought bubbles popping out of their skin, showing aspects of their interiority they couldn't be aware of themselves. Adolescence/sexuality came in the form of fecund skirts, bursting with fruit and flowers. And heads in flames.

After that I guess I'd say a sort of maturation phase set in, with figures in jeweled skirts and chandelier headgear—there was a kind of crystallization and internal combustion going on, as the body slowly hardens and, at the same time, the insides heat up. At that point I veered away from the female figure and moved towards painting young men (I have two sons). I was thinking about the soldiers over in Iraq and Afghanistan, and my older son was about to go off to college, and the paintings started to function as mechanisms to offer these boys help with their own worlds, to figure things

out for themselves. I would outfit them with backpacks and tool belts, so they would have some equipment at hand to help them face what was ahead. The boys found themselves up in trees, caretakers of weird rhizomatic organisms they found up there.

And now, in these latest paintings, I'm seeing groups of figures helping each other, or themselves – bandaging a foot or building things. Working together.

Finally, while past bodies of work have dealt with specific topics such as the coming of age of your son or contemporary consumption, do you feel that your current work is also dealing with a particular theme? And how might the trajectory of that theme evolve from this point forward?

I'm desperately concerned about what we'll be facing in the coming years: how we're going to figure out how to survive in an environmentally altered world and whether we can make the big changes we need to make right now for us to be lithe enough to make the bigger changes in the future. Right now I'm using my skills as a painter both to show, metaphorically, what too much waste and fire are doing to the earth, and also to offer up possibilities for other kinds of worlds. The basic nature of painting is constructive, so, for me, optimism trumps negativity. I don't think you can be a pessimist and a painter too. They're mutually exclusive.



Expertly picking up the technical tools and allegorical language of Northern Masters like Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Breughel, Heffernan manages to simultaneously secularize, feminize and pay homage to the artistic traditions they invented.

—John Seed, *The Huffington Post*,
May 2010

Right: *Self Portrait as the Thief Who Was Saved*,
2011-2012
Oil on canvas, 84 x 112 inches (detail)

Opposite Page: *Self Portrait as the Thief Who
Was Saved*, 2011-2012
Oil on canvas, 84 x 112 inches





Left: *Self Portrait as Wunderkabinett*, 2003
Oil on canvas, 82 x 58 inches
Permanent Collection of The Mint Museum, NC

Above: *Study for Shipwreck with Hanging Tree*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 11 x 14 inches

Opposite Page: *Pink Landslide*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 70 x 56 inches





...unlike the artists of old, Heffernan doesn't fill her large canvases with old fables, scenes from the bible, portraits of wealthy patrons or prettified war stories. She lavishes her attentions on herself, and fortunately that self has proven to be a rewarding fascinatingly complex subject. Heffernan creates an alternate universe in each canvas.

—Greg Stacy, *ArtSlant*,
June 2009

Left: *Intrepid Scout Leader*, 2011
Archival pigment print, 23K gold leaf, museum board
and glass jewels, 36 x 26 inches
Edition of 25

Opposite Page: *Tree House*, 2011
Oil on canvas, 64 x 60 inches







Opposite Page: *Study for Self Portrait as Millennium Burial Mound*, 2010
Oil on canvas, 34 x 50 inches
Permanent Collection of the
National Academy Museum, NY

Left: *Self Portrait As Retired Idols*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 56 x 70 inches
Private Collection

Details below and on next page







Skyscraper, 2008-2012. Oil on canvas, 68 x 60 inches (detail)



**In Heffernan's world, the self is forever wandering in the jungle of the imagination,
which has few boundaries and no fixed time.**

– Kit White,
ArtNews, October 2001



Self Portrait Cleaning House, 2012. Oil on canvas, 60 x 68 inches (detail)



Left: *Study for Self Portrait as Fabulous Droppings V*, 2008
Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches

Above: *Study for Red Tent with Warriors*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 18 x 18 inches

Opposite Page: *Study for Unreasonable Growth*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 16 x 20 inches







Throughout these works, the female subject, despite being nearly engulfed by the teeming riches cascading from her waist or piled on her head, is always straight-backed and serene. Looking out from her lavish tableau she seems (like so many of our present-day aristocrats) blithely unconcerned about the corpses at her feet.

– Lyra Liberty Kilston,
Modern Painters,
December 2007 - January 2008

Left: *Self Portrait as Not Dead Yet*, 2007
Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 60 inches (detail)
Private Collection

Opposite Page: *Self Portrait as Raising Cain*, 2007
Oil on canvas, 78 x 56 inches (detail)
Private Collection





Above: *Self Portrait in Red Tent*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 68 x 76 inches (detail)

Right: *Self Portrait in Red Tent*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 68 x 76 inches

Opposite Page: *Self Portrait as Albatross*, 2008
Oil on canvas, 72 x 54 inches
Private Collection







Above: *Self Portrait as John the Baptist*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 74 x 56 inches

Right: *Self Portrait as John the Baptist*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 74 x 56 inches (detail)

Opposite Page: *Study for Tree House*, 2012
Oil on canvas, 16 x 14 inches (detail)



BIO

Julie Heffernan

Born 1956, Peoria, IL

Lives and works in New York, NY

Education

1985 MFA, Painting; Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT

1981 BFA, Painting and Printmaking; UC Santa Cruz, CA

Solo Exhibitions

2013 P · P · O · W Gallery, New York, NY

2012 *Sky's Falling*, Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City, CA
Julie Heffernan: Infinite Work in Progress, Oklahoma City
Museum of Art, Oklahoma, OK

2011 *Boy, O Boy II*, Catherine Clark Gallery, New York, NY
Broken Homes, Megumi Ogita Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
Holding Up, University Art Gallery, California State University,
Stanislaus, CA

2010 Scarfone/Hartley Gallery, University of Tampa, Tampa, FL
Boy, Oh Boy, PPOW Gallery, New York, NY

2009 *What Holds Up*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY

2008 Luxe Art Institute, Encinitas, CA
Catherine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Megumi Ogita, Tokyo, Japan
Lisa Sette Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ

2007 P · P · O · W Gallery, New York, NY

2006 *Everything That Rises*, University Art Museum, University
At Albany, Albany, NY

Traveled to: Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North
Carolina, Greensboro, NC; Columbia Museum of Art,
Columbia, SC

Heaven and Hell, P · P · O · W Gallery, New York, NY

Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2004 Robert Kidd Gallery, Birmingham, MI

John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI

Mint Museum Of Art, Charlotte, NC

Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago, IL

Paul Kopeikin Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2003 P · P · O · W Gallery, New York, NY

Herter Art Gallery, U. Mass, Amherst, MA

Littlejohn Contemporary, New York, NY

2002 Linda Durham Gallery, Galisteo, NM

The Divine Fruit, curated by Deanna Bland James David Brooks
Gallery, Fairmount State College, School Of Fine Arts, Fairmount,
WV (catalogue)

2001 Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago, IL

P · P · O · W and Littlejohn Contemporary, New York, NY (catalogue)

1999 Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago, IL

Alcott Gallery, Hanes Art Center, University Of North Carolina,
Chapel Hill, NC

P · P · O · W and Littlejohn Contemporary, New York, NY

1998 Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago, IL

1997 Littlejohn Contemporary, New York, NY

Allegheny College Gallery, Meadville, PA

Inside Outside, Leedy Voulkos Gallery, Kansas City, MO

Recent Works, Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago, IL

1994 Recent Work, Littlejohn/Sternau Gallery, New York, NY

Inside Out, Sarah Moody Gallery, University Of Alabama,
Tuscaloosa, AL

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2012 *Perfect Storm*, Julie Saul Gallery, NY
The Calendar's Tales: Fantasy, Figuration and Representation, Boston University, 808 Gallery, Boston, MA
- 2011 Pulse LA Art Fair, P P O W Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Put Up or Shut Up, New York Academy of Art, New York, NY
Land of Magic: Artist Explore Make-Believe, Bedford Gallery, Walnut Creek, CA
Memoires du future, la collection Olbrict, La Maison Rouge, Paris, France
Open, Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City, CA
- 2011 *Other as Animal*, Danese, New York, NY
Private(dis)play, New York Academy of Art, New York, NY
- 2009 *The Conundrum of Abundance*, Center for Contemporary Art, Sacramento, CA
Trouble in Paradise: Examining Discord between Nature and Society, The Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ
The Garden at Zam, Gana Art, New York, NY
Imaginary Menagerie, Palo Alto Art Center, Palo Alto, CA
private (dis)play, Center of Creative Arts, St. Louis, MO
Signs of the Apocalypse/Rapture, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
A Dog's Life, Main Gallery, Memphis College of Art, Memphis, TN
Giving Face: Portraits for a New Generation, Nicholas Robinson Gallery, New York, NY
- 2008 183rd Annual: An Invitational Exhibition of Contemporary Art, National Academy, New York, NY
The Figure Revealed, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, MI
ART Chicago, P P O W gallery booth, Chicago, IL
Pulse Contemporary Art Fair, P P O W Gallery booth, Miami, FL
Pulse Contemporary Art Fair, Mark Moore Gallery booth, New York, NY
- 2007 *Girly Show*, Wignall Museum, Cucamonga, CA
- Ultrasonic International II: Translating Transience*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
Breaking Ground, Ground Breaking, Catherine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Old School, Hauser & Wirth, London, England, UK, traveling to: Zwirner & Wirth, New York, NY
The Feminist Figure, Forum Gallery, curated by Marcia G. Yerman, New York, NY
First Annual Contemporary Art Invitational, curated by Katherine Chapin, The Salmagundi Club Of New York, New York, NY
More is More: Maximalist Tendencies in Recent American Painting, curated by Tatiana Flores, Museum Of Fine Arts, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL
- 2006 *Transformative Portraits: Altered Identities in Contemporary Art*, Richard A. And Rissa W. Grossman Gallery, Lafayette College, Easton, PA
Realm Of The Spirit, Mike Weiss Gallery, New York, NY
Lisa Sette Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ
Why the Nude?, The Art Students League Of New York, Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery, New York, NY.
Transitional Objects: Contemporary Still Life, curated by Dede Young, Neuberger Museum, Purchase, NY
- 2005 *Entourage*, Mike Weiss Gallery, New York, NY
Visitors from the East, Billy Shire Fine Arts, Lost Angeles, CA
Social Insecurity: the future ain't what it used to be, Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Then as Now, Sordoni Art Gallery, Wilkes University, PA
High Drama: Eugene Berman and the Theater of the Melancholic Sublime, curated by Michael Duncan, Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA, traveled to: McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX
Long Beach Museum Of Art, Long Beach, CA

Selected Collections

The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC
Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond, VA
The Palmer Museum of Art, University Park, PA
The Progressive Corporation, OH
Wake Forest University Collection of Contemporary Art, NC
Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL
Persis Corporation/Twigg-Smith Collection Twin Farms, VT
Columbia Museum of Art, SC
Knoxville Museum of Art, TN
Weatherspoon Art Gallery, NC
National Academy Museum, NY

Awards and Fellowships

2012 Artist Residency at MacDowell Colony
2008 Thomas Bennett Clarke Prize, National Academy Museum
2004 Thomas R. Proctor Prize, National Academy Museum
2002 American Academy of Arts and Letters, Nominee
1996 New York Foundation for the Arts, Individual Artists Grant
1995 National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Fellowship Grant
Pennsylvania State University, Fund for Research
1994 Pennsylvania State University, College Faculty Research Grant
Hillwood Art Museum (NYSCA), Project Residency Grant
1990 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME,
Painting fellowship
1987 Institute for Art and Urban Resources, P.S. I, New York, NY,
Artist-in-Residence and Studio Grant
1986 Fulbright-Hayes Grant to West Berlin/Annette Kade Grant for
the Creative and Performing Arts
1985 Ely Harwood Schless Memorial, Yale University, New Haven,
CT, Prize for Highest Achievement in Painting

Front cover:

Self Portrait Cleaning House, 2012
Oil on canvas, 60 x 68 inches

Back cover:

Millennium Burial Ground, 2012
Oil on canvas, 68 x 80 inches

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