

Clare Rojas Folk Art Inspired Tableaus Shift Into Abstract

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November 09, 2013

Artlyst



After a years long hiatus artist Clare Rojas, known for her folk art inspired tableaus, is debuting a series of 33 never-before-seen works at Vladimir Restoin Roitfeld's project space on November 11th. Rojas has taken a painterly shift into abstract expressionistic motifs that feature bold colors and lines in large scale works of up to eight feet in height. This will be her first solo exhibition in New York since her last show at Deitch Projects in 2004.

Rojas and her husband Barry McGee are collectively a power fixture in the world of street and public art. This new exhibition at the glossy Upper East Side-located gallery owned by Roitfeld is an intriguing and fitting change of pace for her new body of work that appears to be an organic maturation of her artistic practice.

When Artlyst asked what influenced a new trajectory from narrative works towards more abstract pieces, Rojas shared a very personal and sobering thought:

My work in the past was inspired by and thrived on the idea of combating a negative definition of the feminine spirit, sexuality and empowerment of women in a non-objectifying and exploitive way. My story, my narrative thread, was based on my own experience that ingrained in me the idea that the world is a hateful and hurtful place towards women and girls and that women also participated in their own objectification and exploitation. My urgency to create a safe place, a nurturing spirit guide that I believed would help and protect us during this ongoing civil war for equal human rights was real every minute of everyday.

Meanwhile, in my focus and frustrations of fighting the good fight, I failed to see that suns were setting, birds were indeed singing, oceans were crashing and amazing beautiful abstract imagery was the backdrop everywhere behind the man yelling at the girl friend, behind the pregnant teen strolling her two-year-old in her pajamas. At a certain point, I felt so much pain, and despair that experiencing something other than the narrative became a necessity to my own survival. I wanted my daughter to grow up seeing her mother laugh. So my journey continues as I let go of my story.

In an industry where market sales and branding can pigeonhole an artist into one aspect of their creative expression, letting go and changing up one's investigative approach and work is no easy feat. There are not many artists that step up to this challenge so we look forward to Rojas' brave change of narrative.