

ZACH FEUER GALLERY

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Zach Feuer Gallery
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Exhibition dates: January 11, 2002 to February 16, 2002

Opening reception: Friday, January 11th, 6-8 PM

Holly Coulis and Dana Schutz

LFL Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition by two New York painters, Holly Coulis and Dana Schutz. Below is an abridged conversation that took place between the artists about the exhibition.

Dana Schutz: So, to start off broadly, what are your thoughts on painting and paintings?

Holly Coulis: I used to have this weird relationship with paintings. I had a hard time looking at them because I felt like I was being pushed away. I'm talking about old paintings in museums. Maybe it was the perfect surfaces; they certainly looked perfect to me back then. Anyway, the more I looked, the more "flaws" I saw and they interested me a great deal. I love the places where illusion becomes paint. I like to play with paint, I guess all painters do, but I enjoy when paint starts to playfully interact with the image. I have to ask you that question as well because it seems obvious to me that you have a very real relationship with your paints.

Dana: I also respond to that slippage between material and the image. But when I am really into a painting, I stop thinking that I am using paint to represent things. The paint becomes grass or snot or skin or whatever. I also like the thought of painting as a descriptive or poetic action, like painting as an adjective or an adverb.

Holly: Speaking of imagery, how do you generate your subject matter?

Dana: I like short stories and anecdotes. I get a lot of material from talking to people. The imagery seems idiosyncratic but I feel that the paintings belong to an ongoing narrative. In the studio I am always rearranging them. I like the idea of parts of paintings walking into other paintings.

Holly: Can you say something about the clay sculpture out in the wild?

Dana: Initially, I was interested in painting sculpture because sculpture has to deal with stuff that painting can take advantage of, like gravity. So I started asking friends about sculptures that they made in undergraduate school. I liked the idea of beginner's sculpture because at that level gravity seems stronger than usual - glue never holds, poles fall over and projects fail. And even the successful ones get thrown out in the end. In my experience, beginning sculpture is usually heavily symbolic. I like that, and I am interested in what happens to that symbolism when they are taken outdoors, out of their original context. They just become things. I am interested in the objects as fictional artifacts from a proposed real situation.

Holly: I guess that's a point where our work meets. The idea of creating a fiction from a non-fiction or vice versa. And I also feel a type of empathy that you have with your subject matter that I think I share with mine as well.

Dana: Yeah, I totally see that. It's interesting you're painting Napoleon, such a loaded figure, yet the paintings seem very personal.

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Holly: Well, I guess I'm interested in Napoleon as a kind of larger-than-life figure. Someone whose life has been more epic than most works of fiction. He is such a complex and contentious character. He did these really horrible things, and then sometimes he did really wonderful things. He was a brilliant general, maybe an idealist, and he had such grand dreams. I guess I'm really interested in him on a more personal level. In a sense I have created who I think he might have been, as a person that you might know.

Dana: Some of the paintings seem sad- maybe more serious than some of the others. I am thinking about the painting with the dead soldiers.

Holly: For me that painting is very obviously about death. But I feel like the rest of the work is also about death, seeing as how everyone in them is now dead. I can't help thinking about that when I read about the grandeur involved in the everyday proceedings of these people... beautiful embroidered clothing, 300 horses, silk stockings, decrees and proclamations. I think Napoleon thought he was immortal and it all ended so pitifully with his exile and death. In the end, all of that romance and glamour didn't really amount to much except a type of fairy tale. I suppose, like you, I'm ultimately interested in stories...

Holly Coulis was born in Canada, and has exhibited at Fredericks Freiser Gallery (New York) and Clifford Smith Gallery (Boston).

Dana Schutz is an MFA candidate at Columbia University and has exhibited at PS1 (New York), and Roberts and Tilton (Los Angeles).