

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

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BARNABY FURNAS: *If Wishes Were Fishes...*

November 13 – January 9, 2013

Opening reception: November 13, 6 to 8 pm

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings and graphite drawings by Barnaby Furnas (b.1973, Philadelphia, PA). This will be the artist's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery.

In this new series of paintings, loosely titled "If Wishes Were Fishes," Furnas again tackles epic historic and religious iconography, this time drawing from both the lore of Melville's *Moby Dick*, as well as Jonah's flight from God that lands him in the belly of the whale. On this Furnas says, "What interested me about whaling in the first place was that they (the whales) gave us light - their fat allowed us to bring God's light into the darkness of the night so we could see our fingers and maybe read after the sun went down."

In these new works, Furnas expands upon his diverse and deft cache of painterly techniques, sampling freely from the academic and modern in both subject matter and form. From a technique point of view, two trends emerge from this group of work: one; an emphasis on ground - using thin watercolor-esque applications of paint (staining) on to thickly combed grounds of gesso, and two; the use of hard, taped edges and the blending of wet paint on wet paint. Here, technique follows subject matter: the harsh, sharp, controlled approaches suggest dissection while the softer flowing images lean toward a sense of resolution.

The largest painting in the main gallery, measuring approximately 12 x 16 feet, captures the moment the whale is slain. The "fire in the hole," an explosion of blood through the whale's life-giving blow hole, emits a great plume of dark red blood as he is attacked by his pursuers. Flesh is stripped back to reveal the sky behind while birds flutter and hover in impossible quadrants of the picture. Using various painting slights, the foreground and background are confused, creating surface tensions that reverberate throughout the painting.

In dialogue with this monumental painting, a group of smaller portraits evoke the portioners and flensers, butchers in the act of physically and metaphysically deconstructing the whale. A group of graphite drawings, the first time the artist has used the medium, accompanies these paintings. Echoing the striated texture of the gesso under-painting, the graphite lines pulse along with the action in the drawing.

Finally, a group of paintings depict Jonah entombed in the body of the whale, then released upon seeing the wisdom of God, "His" figure and Jonah's own idealized reflection looming in the sky. In another image, a ghostly skull, spit up, hovers over Jonah's apparitional figure. In a painterly reprieve, a sky brightens blue with Jonah having seen the light, going forth with God's wisdom.

Barnaby Furnas has recently been featured in exhibitions in Buffalo, Albright-Knox Museum, 2011; Brussels, Vanhaerents Art Collection, 2011; Beijing, Ullens Center, 2010; Denver, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, 2009; and Fort Worth, The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 2007.

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