

Melanie Daniel

Lotus Eaters

September 4 - October 11, 2014



Asya Geisberg Gallery is pleased to present "Lotus Eaters", an exhibition of paintings by Canadian-Israeli artist Melanie Daniel. This newest series marks a philosophical shift within Daniel's oeuvre, with a retreat from her previously taut and politically charged milieu into a more languorous hallucinatory landscape. Here, Daniel encodes anxiety based on the turmoil of the Middle East with an increasingly subversive painterly language. While her preceding series "Echo Shield" alluded to an abstracted militarism and surveillance, Daniel's current works initially suggest an idyllic sublimity, only upon closer inspection yielding to a latent content of eerie unease. A post-apocalyptic aura emanates, where quasi-extant lone figures emerge and are in turn disembodied into the murk. The paintings posit a markedly invented language and space, where seemingly peaceful environs slowly suggest a darker edge. A caustic palette, anarchic abstraction, foreign vegetation and tangled marks fight amid a constant flurry of disparate styles. Narratives remain unwritten, as the figure is caught in an oneiric state, disconnected from its environs, unmoored or overburdened with Daniel's whirlwind of cryptic gestures.



Lotus Eater, 2014. Oil on canvas, 26.75" x 26.25".

Daniel's newly softened stance belies the conflict that worms its way insidiously into her world. In the titular "Lotus Eater", an allusion to the mythological island-dwellers struck with a narcotic peacefulness, Daniel hints at our utopic wish for apathy. In "Two Shores Away, Still Sloshing", a survivor aimlessly wades beneath a lush overhang, post-calamity, in a psychedelic-colored sky with a curved horizon, towing his lone possession - a marijuana plant. In "Sky's Low Silver" doppelgangers are present in both the lake-reflecting sky and a second ghostly receding figure. Nuclear halos and neon glows subsume the menace of constant conflict, where the individual is absorbed or almost nullified.

Influenced by the idiosyncratic narratives of Peter Doig, the impending doom found in Daniel Richter's work, and arch-Canadian painters such as Tom Thompson, Daniel's works expose the hope of escaping back to nature or a hard-won peace as impossible ideals. Every moment carries an aftershock, every place fails to provide refuge from the threat.

After studies in Canada, Melanie Daniel completed her BFA and MFA at Bezalel Academy, Israel. Daniel has had numerous exhibitions in Israel and abroad, including solo exhibitions at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Chelouche Gallery, Tel Aviv, Kelowna Art Gallery, BC, and Noga Gallery of Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, among others. Her work is included in collections such as the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Harvard Business School, and the Brandes Family Art Collection. Daniel's 2012 video piece, "Busted" received extensive press including CBC/Radio Canada, and additional press includes Newsweek, Frieze, Haaretz, Artsy, Beautiful Decay, and the Artists Magazine. Daniel is the recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, a New York Foundation for the Arts Grant, the 2009 Rappaport Prize for a Young Israeli Painter, a Creative Capital Grant, and the NARS Foundation Residency in New York City. This is her third solo exhibition at Asya Geisberg Gallery.