

Figurative Art Today

Sometimes things take off. Last year Didi Menendez of PoetsArtists, a community of artists, poets and art collectors, curated an exhibition, *Painting the Figure Now*, at the Wausau Museum of Contemporary Art. This year she has invited guest curators to share the selection process to present “as broad a spectrum as possible of artists currently painting the

figure.” *Painting the Figure Now 2019* will be at the Wausau Museum July 9 through September 28. A version of the exhibition will appear at the Zhou B Art Center in Chicago beginning October 18.

Menendez’s work through PoetsArtists and its internet presence makes it clear that the tradition of portraying the figure continues, rooted in the past and vibrant

in the present.

Geoffrey Laurence is represented in the exhibition by his enigmatic painting *Interior - After Degas*, 2018. Drawing from the past, he comments on the present. Degas’ *Interior* is one of his most mysterious paintings, depicting a man and a partially clothed woman in a dramatically lit room. The painting has sometimes been called *Le Viol (The Rape)*. The painting appears on the wall of Laurence’s setting. He writes, “My paintings are sometimes prophetic of things taking place outside of my own personal experiences. I started this piece a year before the #MeToo movement exploded with its subsequent outing of the abuse of women by powerful men. Having long been fascinated by Degas’ peculiar painting *Interior*, I made homage to it in mine, top right. In my painting we are keenly aware of an event having taken place in the bedroom, possibly sexual and that both the woman and the man are trapped in their differing conceptions of what has just passed between them.”





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Pegah Samaie's *To Love and Obey* is a classically painted nude in oil on aluminum panel. Samaie, who grew up in Tehran, addresses age-old issues in a contemporary manner. The imposed womanliness of fine lace masks the model's face while she confidently displays her body. Samaie writes, "Many people are surprised in our modern age by the harsh lifestyles that continue to confront some women and force them into a deep depression. They are taught to be submissive in cultures dominated by patriarchal governments and households. Painting is my way to express my emotion to the real world. I saw many women suffer emotionally as they are separated from their societies and homes. I want to shed a light on women who tend to be forgotten and left in a deep and dark corner of society."

Guest curators for the exhibition are John Dalton, Victoria Selbach, Lorena Kloosterboer, Barry Blinderman, Jay Menendez and Daniel Maidman. ●

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1
Pegah Samaie,
To Love and Obey, oil
on aluminum, 30 x 20"

2
Agnieszka
Nienartowicz,
Girl in White 3, oil on
canvas, 40 x 27½"

3
Geoffrey Laurence,
Interior – After Degas,
oil on canvas, 32 x 44"

4
Vincent Desiderio,
Nude II, oil on linen,
48 x 64"