


TOUCHSTONEGALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Preview: December 3-4, 11 am – 6 pm
December 5-28, 2014

Opening Reception: Friday, December 5, 6-8:30 pm

Artist in Attendance

PAULA LANTZ OBSERVATIONS



If the new group of paintings by artist Paula Lantz represent her daily observations, then her panorama must be a dazzling display of luxurious colors, endless perspectives, capricious attitudes and deep emotions. In fact, *Observations* is the title of her new nine-piece suite on display at Touchstone Gallery for the month of December.

Observations is part of a continuing body of Lantz's figure paintings. The subjects who populate this series are captured in a moment in time, rendered as pencil sketches and finally painted as they are shown now. Some of the subjects are faceless, because they're turned away from the viewer, or purposefully painted that way. Abstracted skin tones vary from chartreuse to translucent blue to clementine; so they are not only faceless, but *race-less* too. They might be part of a larger family, or not. In fact, because face and race do not come into play, you may focus on how much they have in common rather than what sets them apart.



Lantz's love of color comes from watching the orange and grenadine sunsets of her West Texas childhood; yet color here is much more than merely decorative. "Bold color improvisations," says Lantz, "the texture of the painted surface itself; brush strokes, color lines, drips, collage, are all used to reflect and respond to the drama and mystery in our personal life experiences." For Lantz, color and texture are tools to create psychological portraits.

None of the subjects portrayed here are doing anything remarkable. *Resting Ballet Dancer* is doing just that: viewed from the right rear, she's sitting on the floor, left ankle tucked under right leg; arms behind her back, shoulders hunched, hands flat on the floor supporting her strong back. She's watching another dancer. The viewer doesn't see the other dancer, but you just know that's what she's eyeing because of Lantz's deft skill of painting attitude, character and emotion into the figure, despite its conceptual appearance. Lantz finds inspiration in Mark Rothko when he

claimed not to be merely an abstractionist. "I'm not interested in the relationship of color or anything else" Rothko claimed, "I'm interested in expressing basic emotions: tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on."

The stunning *Couple at a Bar* shows a man and woman perched on high barstools facing each other. The man, clearly relaxed, legs loose and languid; the woman, back arched, she's not as relaxed. She's reaching for him,

901 New York Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20001 202 347 2787 fax 202 347 3339

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but it's a tentative reach. Her coiffure is a kaleidoscope of turmoil, yet her legs are resting over the man's. As Lantz explains, "Reflecting and responding to the nature of the dramas and mysteries in our personal life experiences, my art continues to evolve through the use of abstraction." In *Couple* the abstractions of the man and woman evoke the true multidimensional, and often unknown, nature of individuals in more ways than a true life rendered painting could.

As mentioned earlier Lantz's subjects are not doing remarkable things, yet it's remarkable how she manages to convey spirit, humanness and energy in such abstract paintings. In *The Battery is Dead* two seated women face each other. One is holding something in one hand, presumably the hand-held device to which the title refers. The viewer feels the confusion and disappointment of the women. They are rendered in two different color palettes, suggesting a distance between them further than shown literally on canvas. The striking thing about this work is the anxiety the viewer feels along with the women. Lantz does this strategically. "The abstracted figures are large, simple and gestural and their postures and expressions indicate attitude," she says about the series in general. "Brushstrokes, color lines, unfinished areas, scrubbing: all are used for visual cohesiveness and emotional impact." The feelings of worry, doubt and anxiety not only form the subjects, but also the viewer as the power of the imagery invites them to explore their own emotions.



Lantz's observations are depicted beautifully in complements and contrasts of bold and brilliant color. Although they enrich the eye, they are not merely for decor. Instead the colors in this group of nine paintings are meant to convey the emotion, spirit and temperament of ordinary people doing everyday things. Lantz's skill at portraying humanity, empathy and character through abstract figure painting is extraordinary. Lovers of sumptuous color, abstract painting, and a resplendent display of emotion through art should not overlook Paula Lantz's *Observations* this holiday season.

Paula Lantz's *Observations* will be exhibited at Touchstone Gallery, 901 New York Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20001. from December 3-4 through December 31.

Touchstone Gallery has been an artist-owned gallery since 1976 and is located in modern loft-style ground level space at 901 New York Ave NW in downtown Washington near the Convention Center. It is a short walk from Mt. Vernon Sq., 7th St-Convention Center, and Metro Center metro rail stops and numerous parking garages. Gallery hours: Wednesday-Friday 11-6, Saturday-Sunday 12-5.

For more information contact Ksenia Grishkova, Director, 202-347-2787 or email info@touchstonegallery.com