

FRESTONIAN GALLERY

ANNA FREEMAN BENTLEY

COLLECTED AND COMPOSED

Private View: Wednesday 15th January, 6-9pm | Exhibition Dates: 16th Jan – 22nd Feb 2020

Order and chaos, deliberation and spontaneity: these contrasting concepts form both the sense and the subject of the latest solo exhibition of paintings by Anna Freeman Bentley. The literal subjects are both purposeful constructions of a sort – the carefully staged tableaux of museum ‘interiors’ (intended to demonstrate certain design styles to the interested observer), and the ramshackle stalls of flea markets in London, Paris and Berlin.

The choice of these subjects makes perfect sense when considering Freeman Bentley’s practice, going back to her days on the painting course at the Royal College of Art, the constructed and, crucially, depopulated landscape has long been her area of artistic investigation. In the case of the museum interior ‘exhibits’ the lack of human presence is an existing prerequisite: these are zones of pure contemplation, cordoned off, literally, from any living interaction. The flea market scenes have, by contrast, been purposefully ‘emptied out’ of human figures by Freeman Bentley as she reconstructs the imagery from a combination of memory and photography.

In both instances this deliberate action lends a certain elevating quality to the resulting works. The museum scenes remain empty, but are cropped in a sympathetic way so as to conceal their fabricated and false nature. Meanwhile the disorder of the markets is allowed to settle into more stately compositions: the drapes of the polythene awnings and gently overflowing trays of wares achieving the air of considered still-lives once the jostling crowds of market-goers are removed. In so doing Freeman Bentley achieves a unification of sensibilities between these two very different subjects – works that are at once faithful to and manipulative of reality.

Another abiding inspiration for Freeman Bentley is the notion of the Baroque – the qualities of vibrance, grandeur and a certain sensuality present in all things, and celebrated in art and interiors bearing the name. In this exhibition we see her fascination played out through the use of colour. Works such as *Watching* and *Staging* positively radiate with fiery, burnished hues of golds, oranges, scarlet reds, whilst works with darker palettes such as *Propping* and *Screening* explore the full richness of the shadows portrayed, and contrast them with exuberant bursts of clear and cool blues and greens. These are works that bear the emotional palette of the artist and, from seemingly ‘empty’ subjects, emerge paintings that evoke a deeply affecting sense of presence.

Anna Freeman Bentley (b. 1982, London) is a graduate of the Royal College of Art (receiving her MA in Painting in 2010), having previously studied at the Kunsthochschule Weissenhof, Berlin, and Chelsea College of Art and Design. She has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally. Recent exhibitions include DENK Gallery, Los Angeles (2019), Ahmanson Gallery, Irvine, California (2018) and Space K, Seoul (2017).

Her work has been included in prestigious prizes and institutional exhibitions such as the East London Painting Prize, the Prgaue Biennale and the Bloomberg New Contemporaries. In 2019 she was awarded both the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant and the Palazzo Monti residency in Brescia, Italy. Her work is held in the Saatchi Collection & Hogan Lovells Collection (London), Hotel Crillon Collection (Paris), Ahmanson Collection (California) and numerous private collections worldwide. She lives and works in London.

For further information on the artist and exhibition please visit: www.frestoniangallery.com