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Dana Clancy: Intimate Distance

Clancy, Dana
Boston University

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Walt C. Meissner, Dean ad interim, College of Fine Arts, and Judith Simpson, Director, School of Visual Arts, for supporting this exhibition, and to Lynne Cooney, Exhibitions Coordinator, for her vision and input. Many thanks to Rachael Amos, independent curator, for coordinating the venue, and to the Office of Creative Services including Shola Friedensohn, Designer, and Jan Hauben, Publications Specialist, for lending their expertise to this publication. Additional thanks to friends: Hallie, Director of Green Street Gallery, Natasha Araghi, Franklin Simmons, Albert, Roberts & Associates Architects, and Kathleen Brown, painting nails from many a beauty and giving me fresh eyes to see the world. Many thanks for their support over the years to my Mom and Lee, Dad and Sharon, Clemence, and Barron and Nancy.

Photo credits: Peter Harris

LIST OF PAINTINGS

COVER: Camouflage (detail)
52” x 68”
oil on canvas on panel, 2005

INSIDE OPENING PANEL:
Hot Spot
18” x 20”
oil on canvas on panel, 2005

INSIDE LEFT PANEL:
Capture
18” x 20”
oil on canvas on panel, 2005

INSIDE RIGHT PANEL:
Somewhere Between
22” x 24”
oil on canvas on panel, 2005

BACK PANEL:
This Memory of Water (detail)
52” x 68”
oil on canvas on panel, 2005

Boons

Shania Clancy at Boston University
775 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
www.bu.edu/cfa/visual
Dana Clancy’s recent work takes as its subject the act of looking. The process of painting and drawing inherently implies this activity, yet Clancy’s elegant composition uniquely proposes a complex understanding of how we see with our eyes and our memory. Although seemingly unrelated in theme, her enigmatic portraits and landscape paintings are a skillful and intricate hybrid of graphic forms built up over time. The intensely colored nature of the camera image with delicately rendered, graphic forms guides our eye through the landscape, viewers of people, and viewers of the world around us.

This shift of the viewer between spectator and spectator is a vital theme in Clancy’s work. It plays out most dramatically in her installation for this exhibition, in which individuals from a crowd of parade spectators are isolated on a series of small panels that spring from the surface of a field of color. Clancy observes each viewer’s head from slightly above, which focuses our attention on their visual activity and also heightens our own awareness of the sensation of being watched. Cassatt and her colleagues—such as Manet and Degas—often made the act of observation their subject matter, as well, and like these nineteenth-century painters, Clancy explores the various intrusions of the modern-day flaneur in order to consider how we interact visually with the people and landscape around us.

Dana Clancy’s 1879 Woman in Black at the Opera hangs at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. In Cassatt’s composition, a small male figure in the distance turns his face to the gallery visitor. The bright, twinkling lights—yet the disjunctive scale of the woman in black glassing on Cassatt’s subject, echoing the woman’s gesture and her gaze outward to confront the viewer. The bright, pastel-colored landscape shapes of matte pigment that surround her sitters further transform the literal, documentary vision of the photographic sources. Clancy’s paintings are a skilful and intricate hybrid of drawing from life, photographic sources, memory and imagination. Her portrait process sometimes begins with a staged photograph of her subject, who is often wearing a hat or an exasperating exaggerated facial expression. The camera lens thus offers Clancy an opportunity to consider how we interact visually with the people and landscape around us.

In her Wespritz Series Clancy’s subject is the landscape; yet, once again, she turns her attention to the experience of looking by focusing on the guided gaze of the tourist. In Hot Spot (2005), a ribbon of wooden walkway emerges from slightly above, which focuses our attention on their visual activity and also heightens our own awareness of the sensation of being watched. Cassatt and her colleagues—such as Manet and Degas—often made the act of observation their subject matter, as well, and like these nineteenth-century painters, Clancy explores the various intrusions of the modern-day flaneur in order to consider how we interact visually with the people and landscape around us.

In her Viewpoint Series Clancy’s subject is the landscape; yet, once again, she turns her attention to the experience of looking by focusing on the guided gaze of the tourist. In Hot Spot (2005), a ribbon of wooden walkway emerges from slightly above, which focuses our attention on their visual activity and also heightens our own awareness of the sensation of being watched. Cassatt and her colleagues—such as Manet and Degas—often made the act of observation their subject matter, as well, and like these nineteenth-century painters, Clancy explores the various intrusions of the modern-day flaneur in order to consider how we interact visually with the people and landscape around us.

Clancy’s rich, complicated palette and painterly brushstrokes generate alluring surfaces, and it is easy to enjoy her work purely for its technical mastery. Her blend of graphic modeling, decorative forms, and chromatic range, however, interrogates our status as viewers of the landscape, viewers of people, and viewers of the world of art. Embedding within her paintings both the observer and the observed, Clancy’s work insists on our own active participation in the exchange of gazes with the world around us.

Rachael Arauz, PhD
August 2005

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Rachael Arauz is a Boston-based, independent curator who has worked at museums including the National Gallery of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She holds a PhD in American and modern art from the University of Pennsylvania and has organized exhibitions for the Williams College Museum of Art and the Brandeis University Museum. For her public speaking tours on a broad range of subjects including the drawings of Keith Haring, Arauz is the recipient of the Clowes Award, a residency at the Vermont Studio Center. Rachael Arauz is a Boston-based, independent curator who has worked at museums including the National Gallery of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She holds a PhD in American and modern art from the University of Pennsylvania and has organized exhibitions for the Williams College Museum of Art and the Brandeis University Museum. For her public speaking tours on a broad range of subjects including the drawings of Keith Haring, Arauz is the recipient of the Clowes Award, a residency at the Vermont Studio Center.