



from left: Hextrum, Johnson (detail), Simpson (detail)

ARTIST TALK: AUGUST 8, 6PM

Firehouse Art Center presents three painters addressing in their own way the challenges of exercising agency when individuals are caught by events beyond their control.

Robin Hextrum's oil paintings confront the viewer with the realism of historical work combined with a contemporary use of abstraction, color, and gesture. Calling forward still-life paintings from the Dutch Golden Age, created to celebrate wealth and bounty, Hextrum's paintings emphasize the unsettling reality which underpins colonial luxury, while other works envelop her creatures with environmental uncertainty.

Kathryn Johnson's subjects float in an ungrounded space: her marks and carefully nuanced compositions lend energy to characters menaced by their surroundings and inspired by vintage illustrations of people and devices: dreaming or a dream.

Along the north wall in the gallery all three of Samantha Simpson's "Saga" series are exhibited together for the first time. The mixed-media watercolors are painted on large rolls of paper, each 8-foot section tells a chapter in a story, of families of frogs navigating war: "predators and prey and unnatural actors who respond to and shape the environment." Inspired by Japanese printmaking and 19th century serial storytelling, the series of three works embody visual art's ability to illustrate how small details combine with larger compositional arcs to create a whole that is more than the sum of its parts.

In their use of color and expressive, energetic marks, we experience the tension presented by their subject matter but also the pull of optimism - permanence and impermanence, life and death. Social, political, and physical unrest create environments of instability within the worlds of all three artists, but each succeeds in creating beauty within the chaos: inviting us in to a resting place for worried minds.

Curated by Brandy Coons

Opening Reception
Friday, Aug 09
[6-9 PM]