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“Named For...”

Paintings by Kate Javens

Bernstein Gallery, Princeton University

Exhibition dates: May 4 – August 21, 2009

Public reception: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Friday, May 8, 2009

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With great pleasure, the Bernstein Gallery presents a solo exhibition of paintings by Kate Javens from her renowned “Named For...” series. Many of these works come from her critically acclaimed show last year at the Blanden Art Museum in Fort Dodge, Iowa.

The obvious subjects of Javens’ paintings are animals and birds. These are often larger than life paintings executed on wood, linen and muslin. They are exquisitely rendered by the painter’s layered and feathered brushstroke. Combining the light of Old Master paintings with American naturalism, the painter imbues her subjects with weight and nobility while simultaneously evincing an uncanny spirituality.

The viewer is not captivated only by the beauty of this work. Each painting of a bull or horse, a swallow or moth, represents an unsung hero from American history. The artist writes, “In researching American social history, I’m often surprised by the obscurity of the most altruistic figures. How could people who were so extreme in their humanity, and so influential in defining who we are at our best, be so obscure?” Inspired by these individuals, the artist has chosen animals to reflect their noble character. For example, we can find Benjamin Drew, the Boston abolitionist, as a horse, or Learned Hand, a U.S. Federal Court Judge noted as a great defender of free speech, as a redwing blackbird. Lucy Parsons, born in 1853, was a tireless advocate for the poor and is represented by a sparrow.

Kate Javens was born in Missouri and spent her childhood in Japan, Mexico, and the bicoastal United States. She attended Pennsylvania State University and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Javens is a Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Painting Fellow, a Pew Fellowship in the Arts Disciplinary Winner in Painting, and a three-time MacDowell Fellow. Her works are held in private and public collections, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Museum, the Palmer Museum of Art at the Pennsylvania State University, the Telfair Museum of Art and The Blanden Museum of Art. She lives and works in New York City.