

Bockley Gallery



Julie Buffalohead

Opening Reception: Saturday, November 18, 5 to 8 pm

Exhibition: November 18 through December 23, 2017

Gallery Hours: Wednesday through Saturday, Noon to 5 pm

Bockley Gallery is pleased to present new mixed media drawings by Twin Cities-based artist Julie Buffalohead. Since her last gallery show in 2014, she has realigned her finely honed craft of storytelling by trading her personal, intimate tales of motherhood and domestic life for more public and universal narratives. These potent new works explore the complex relationships between Native American and mainstream American culture, humans and animals, humans and the environment, and current cultural events.

Buffalohead continues to work in her poetic but illustrative style, mapping out uneasy narratives on richly hued, textural sheets of Lokta paper that are handmade in Nepal. Working with pen and ink, acrylic paint, charcoal pencil and gouache, she confidently and instinctually deploys a cast of human and animal characters across an empty, two dimensional plane. In fact, these expanses of flat negative space are as essential to her

narrative constructions as her figures. Suspended in an airless, neutral space, various animals and humans act out oblique narratives that often suggest more than a single meaning. The drawings are sometimes autobiographical, and Buffalohead can “see myself in character as I draw —I can be a fox or a little rabbit.”

In two separate but related drawings, Buffalohead explores the conceptually different ways Indigenous people and those of European descent view ideas of land use and ownership through the motif of a white picket fence. In one, a coyote balances a small white, colonialstyle house on its head as it howls at a doe reclining inside the fence next to an identical house. In the other, two trees flank a buck inside a large picket fence. Ravens fly about overhead, while one perches on a pair of garden shears, and another peers at a warning sign for chemical spraying. In these loosely allegorical works, Buffalohead provokes reflection on land stewardship, the arbitrariness of boundaries and the health of the environment.

Equally provocative is Buffalohead’s response to the recent controversial events surrounding the dismantling of Sam Durant’s sculpture, *Scaffold*, at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden. His monumental work referenced the scaffold structure where 38 Dakota men were executed by hanging in Mankato, MN in December 1862. Buffalohead’s large drawing, spread across four sheets of dark grey Lokta paper, is a sobering work that focuses a critical eye on the acquisition policies of institutions such as Walker Art Center, which curates the adjacent public Garden from its collection.

Here, in a horizontal composition of humans, animals and art, a woman kneels among depictions of several Garden sculptures, including a ghost-like drawing of *Scaffold* and Robert Indiana’s iconic *LOVE*. Balancing on the edge of *Scaffold*, a rabbit offers the woman a miniature version of the much-loved Garden sculpture, *Spoonbridge and Cherry*, by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen. To her right, a coyote clenches in its teeth a miniature version of Katharina Fritsch’s monumental sculpture, *Hahn/Cock*, the brilliant blue rooster recently acquired by the Walker. The intervention of enlarged human and animal figures inside an unnatural landscape of monumental sculpture playfully subverts the relationship between the living observer and art, inverting the logic of ‘monumentalism’ by converting imposing and expensive works into dollhouse scale.

Julie Buffalohead is an enrolled member of the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma, and lives and works in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Over the last decade, she has been the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships including the 2016 Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors grant and a 2013 Contemporary Arts Fellowship by the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Eiteljorg fellowship celebrates established and emerging Native American artists of merit. She has also been awarded a McKnight Foundation Fellowship for Visual Arts, a Jerome Foundation Travel and Study Grant, and a Fellowship for Visual Artists from the Minnesota State Arts Board.

In addition to Bockley Gallery, Buffalohead’s work has been exhibited at local and national venues including the Eiteljorg Museum, the Minnesota Museum of American Art, Saint Paul, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, the George Gustav Heye Center in New York City, a branch of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, the Carl N. Gorman Museum in Davis, California, the Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND, and Artfit Exhibition Space in Phoenix, AZ. She has an upcoming one-person show at the Denver Art Museum in 2018. Buffalohead’s work is found in numerous public and private collections.

Born in 1972, Julie Buffalohead received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in 1995 and her Master of Fine Arts from Cornell University in 2001.