

Bockley Gallery

Jim Denomie

Painting-a-Day

September 15 through October 14, 2023

Bockley Gallery is honored to present a selection of over one hundred works from Jim Denomie's *Painting-a-Day* – a series of 430 intimately scaled oil-on-canvas paintings created through a daily practice in 2005.

A member of the Lac Courte Oreille Band of Ojibwe, Jim Denomie (1955-2022) is celebrated for his sweeping narrative-based history paintings that incisively amalgamate and comment on Native lived experiences within the broader context of state, national and global politics. Skillfully working in color and incorporating pop culture, the dreamworld, erotic, and spiritual references, Denomie's imagery is playful, often darkly comic, and always revelatory.

A long-time friend of Denomie's, poet Heid Erdrich, wrote how his art is "rammed full of figures of all sorts – splendid, sordid, historical, animal, vegetable, mineral and machine." His *Painting-a-Day* series primarily focuses on such figures, mostly singularly. In this way, not presented as a character within his episodic storytelling, our attention becomes focused on his gestural, brushy, colorful, impasto surfaces and their expressive variations. There are human and more-than-human head-and-shoulders portraits of women, warriors, androgynous beings, children, men – many adorned with headbands and a single feather, almost all with prominent breasts, many showing teeth in open mouths "grin[ning] like death and grin[ning] like life." There are

abstractions, a butterfly, a fish, birds, and importantly, there is wabooz (Ojibwe for rabbit), a figure who inhabits many of Denomie's paintings, who he identified with as the trickster Nanaboujou, as well as his alter ego.

Following his year-long daily ritual, Denomie returned to storytelling with renewed energy. As we engage with this plethora of works—standing on their own, and speaking amongst each other in a vibrant, vocal constellation—we might heed Denomie's own words on *Painting-a-Day* to “get supple,” and witness these portal-filled realms.

Jim Denomie (1955–2022) (Ojibwe) was a prolific artist, creating vividly hued paintings, works on paper, and sculptures that aimed a critical lens on the history of Indigenous people and their intersections with mainstream culture. While Denomie was born in Hayward, Wisconsin, and lived in Minneapolis most of his life, he was a global citizen, connecting with and supporting artists within and beyond the United States.

Denomie's select solo exhibitions include the posthumous survey, *The Lyrical Work of Jim Denomie* at Minneapolis Institute of Art (2023–2024), *Challenging the Narrative* at Michigan's Muskegon Museum of Art (2020–2021), *Standing Rock Paintings* at Bockley Gallery, Minneapolis (2019), and *Jim Denomie: Paintings* at Projek Traumon, Friedrichshafen, Germany (2015). His group exhibitions include *The House Edge* at 8th Floor, New York City (2023–2024), *The Land Carries Our Ancestors: Contemporary Art by Native Americans* at National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (2023–2024), *And if I devoted my life to one of its feathers?* at Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2021), *The Expressionist Figure: 100 Years of Modern and Contemporary Drawing*

at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2019–2020), and Imagined Communities at 21st Contemporary Art Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil, São Paulo (2019).

Honored with a multitude of grants and awards, Denomie received the McKnight Foundation's Distinguished Artist Award (2019), a McKnight Artist Fellowship, and the Artist Initiative Grant through the Minnesota State Arts Board (2018), as well as a Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant (2015). His work is in numerous collections, including Forge Project Collection, Philbrook Museum of Art, Denver Art Museum, Minnesota Museum of American Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art, and Walker Art Center.

Following his passing in March 2022, Denomie's family partnered with Bockley Gallery and All My Relations Gallery at the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) to create the Jim Denomie Memorial Scholarship, an annual prize for a Native artist exemplifying its namesake's values of commitment to excellence, generosity of spirit, and engagement with community.

Bockley Gallery is a contemporary art venue and curatorial practice based in Minneapolis. Since its founding in 1984, the gallery has focused on artists living and working in Mni Sota Makoce and the Great Lakes region as well as Indigenous artists across Turtle Island. Representing artists including Sky Hopinka, Dyani White Hawk, Pao Houa Her, Andrea Carlson, Eric-Paul Riege, and more, the gallery offers an intimate experience with art through a calendar of on-site programming, while its collaboration with local, national and international partners expands the dialogue around what it believes to be the most relevant ideas in art today.