

# Bockley Gallery



## *Andrea Carlson: Perpetual Sarah*

Exhibition: February 10 through March 16, 2024

Artist conversation: 4PM February 10, 2024

Bockley Gallery is pleased to announce our fifth solo exhibition with Andrea Carlson, which brings together new works on paper from three series including *VORE*, *L'Assomption Sash for Carrying Things that No Longer Exist*, and the exhibition's namesake, *Perpetual Sarah*.

Combining ancestral memory with archival research, art and film history and theory, Andrea Carlson creates incisive works that disempower colonial histories and practices of erasure by centering survivance, sovereignty, and restitution. Her single and multi-panel drawings skillfully entangle and convolute perceptions of time and space, land and landscape, access, belonging, and memory. Through intricate layering of different media on each surface, a graphic sensibility emerges to falsely register as collage-like, opening transportive potentials within a two-dimensional reality. Ancestral traces, collected objects, and texts either appropriated or created seem to float like debris within these multispecies and multiperspectival space. Carlson's landscapes may only be entered through projection, as we assign identity to images of objects that have washed up on these imaginary shores.

*Perpetual Sarah* (2024) centers perpetuity as an ongoing act of care, affirming that what seems lost can be reimagined or recreated and what is made now can be carried into the future. Featuring prominently in the eight-paneled drawing is a horse adorned in Spencarian calligraphy –Carlson's replica of a drawing carries the memory of its maker, an ancestor named Sarah. The artist is interested in how various identities are attributed to objects through stories, and how this highlights both shared and divergent histories of belonging. Cloud-like speech bubbles without speech hover near the horses, infilled with graphic red, black and white lines of *L'Assomption sash*

patterning. An amalgamation of masks rises like an outcropping from the waters upon which the artist's hands hold a Chunkey stone, flanked by partially drawn baskets woven with strips of the endangered black ash trees.

Most of Carlson's compositions feature water and the horizon line—the defining visuality of her homelands at Lake Superior. In terms of topology, the horizon represents an illusory visual fragment belonging to an infinite surface of a connective planetary sphere; conversely a horizon line in the landscape genre can be tethered to legal fictions of border making and the colonizing desire for the unknown beyond. While Carlson honors water as agential and life-giving, she also casts it as a waterway—a fluid conduit for cultural interaction including knowledge exchange, trade, and conflict.

*Perpetual Sarah* employs the artist's established compositional strategies that encourage audiences to reconsider their view and how it is constructed. Inspired by film and cinematic histories and perspectival technologies, grids are formed to mimic timespace of celluloid film: vertical registers document relational distance and horizontal registers refer to the pan shot or panorama. Since the *VORE* series, another strategy the artist has consistently used is bilateral symmetry, which is historically tied to binocular vision for a neat, virtual impression. Denying us a device with transportative qualities to a harmonious image of elsewhere, her drawings keep us in an unfixed, dispersed, anti-singular timespace.

The *VORE* series challenges collection practices in the museum through the metaphoric figure of the cannibal. Known as the Windigo in Anishinaabe storytelling, Carlson uses the cannibal as a metaphor for colonization and cultural assimilation. The exhibited four-paneled drawing *Perpetual Genre* (2024) features a pair of marble figurative sculptures in the foreground of a dramatic waterscape with a black horizon line. Behind their heads, halo-like, are depictions of surveying prisms. Held in the collection of the British Museum and mistakenly identified and titled as cannibals, this pair of wrestling boys was the subject of one of Carlson's first *VORE* drawings, *Cannibal Ferox* (2008), which was titled after an exploitation film depicting Indigenous people as cannibals. Carlson's reprise of the work marks a shift from appropriating film titles towards writing her own. Another new work in the *VORE* series, *Final Ikwe* (2024), considers the archetype of violence that leads to the "final girl" in film. Playing on doubling with figurative likeness, Carlson pairs an ancient marble statue of Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, with an Ojibwe floral newspaper stencil used for birchbark patterning. Sky's clouds and water's wake patterns meet at the horizon line.

Returning to the patterning of the speech bubbles without speech in *Perpetual Sarah*, the exhibition's three single-panel abstract drawings on paper are titled *L'Assomption Sash for Carrying Things that No Longer Exist* (2024). An Assomption sash, also known as the arrow sash due to its weave, is tied to the identities of French settlers to Canada in the 1700s and Métis people, for whom it was a ubiquitous technology for warmth, binding and carrying things. Carlson renders the dynamic quality of the arrow pattern, which becomes dizzying as they collide, as if wrapped around or folded in unfunctional or even impossible ways. Acknowledging that everything we care for can be taken away, Carlson asks, "How to configure a sash to carry something that doesn't exist? How to wrap something that is lost?" She answers with abstraction to express the sense of loss in question, and to invoke care for, in perpetuity, memory's impressions that refuse translation.

Exhibition text by Erin Robideaux Gleeson

Please contact Bockley Gallery at 612 377 4669 for more information or press.

Image: *Perpetual Genre*, 2024, oil, acrylic, gouache, ink, color pencil, and graphite on paper, approx. 45 x 60 inches (overall), approx. 22.5 x 30 inches (each of 4 elements)