

Jacob Gagnon - *Worlds Collide*

Thinkspace (Los Angeles) - is pleased to present *Worlds Collide*, featuring new works by Toronto based artist Jacob Gagnon. Gagnon's technically meticulous paintings of fauna deliver playful and incongruous imagery with a singular precision. An artist with an impressive penchant for detail, Gagnon's fantastic paintings of animals and human objects are staged as deliberately illogical, albeit playful, encounters. He creates these exacting works with minute brushes and the painstaking application of acrylic layers, handling the brush with the purposed control of a pencil. His paintings seductively integrate the naturalist's attention to minutiae with the free imaginative reign of the surrealist. With a unique finesse for the posturing of unlikely relationships, Gagnon stages beautifully disquieting tensions between the artificial and the natural, the spontaneous and the propped, and the plausible and the absurd.

The stark visual contrasts in Gagnon's works are undeniably effective. Relying on an ambiguous chasmic black space as background, and a dramatic spotlight effect to illuminate the foreground, the rendering of his animals and objects become excessively realistic despite their often miniaturist proportions. The theatricality of these compositional devices, and the artist's ability to confuse and confound scale and representational accuracy, further excise his imagery from the restrictions of the familiar. While often innocuous and recognizable, Gagnon's imagery derives its impact from its recombination and discordant staging. The artist's world is replete with wonderfully bizarre encounters and clever juxtapositions: an otherworldly realm of creature play inspired by free association.

At once whimsical and disconcerting, the artist's playful appropriation of the animal world draws attention to the reality of its fragility and misuse. The poetry of Gagnon's work thrives in the irresolution of these tensions. Ambiguously beautiful and vaguely threatened, realistically rendered and undeniably impossible: worlds collide in infinite black space.

Erica Rose Levine - *Empress*

Concurrently on view in the Thinkspace project room is *Empress*, the gallery's first exhibition of works by Brooklyn based artist and illustrator Erica Rose Levine. A New York city native, Levine completed her BFA at the School of Visual Arts in NYC. Working primarily with colored pencils, graphite and markers, Levine achieves an impressive quality of hyperrealism in her work with a minimal use of media. Her drawings luxuriate in painstaking detail, delivering impressive textures and convincing tactility. Beautifully rendered and perfectly executed, the lifelike flesh of her sitters seems to breathe. Levine's portraits of imposingly regal women are influenced and inspired by the glamour of fashion photography and pop cultural imagery. Her drawings harness the fantasy, luxury and power of feminine beauty in a way that captures its timelessness and its contemporaneity.

Levine adorns her portraits with the addition of gorgeous details, textures and luxe finery, focusing her imagery on the performance of beauty and the ritual of self-adornment. Exploring the establishment and mutability of identity through the personal aesthetic, the artist reveals its power as a vehicle for fantasy and self-definition. Levine begins her works with a minimal and unadorned subject, and builds the details and identity of her sitter through the addition of embellishments. Gleaned from a variety of reference materials and props, these additions and ornaments become transformative. Whether it be an elaborate hairstyle, the inclusion of beautiful fabrics, dramatic make-up or jewelry, Levine captures the unassailable armor of beauty in her immaculate portraits.

Brian Mashburn - *New Works*

On view in the Thinkspace office area are new works by Brian Mashburn. A BFA graduate of UNC (Chapel Hill), Mashburn's oil on canvas works are temporally ambiguous and brooding, suspended somewhere between a familiar past and troubling future. His landscapes simultaneously capture a Gothic sensibility while implying the insolvent cynicism of an apocalyptic vision.

Romantic and expansive in their suggestion of a 19th century sublime, with bare slender trees and atmospheric skies, the works are at once undeniably bleak with their suggestion of ravaged industrial landscapes looming in the distance. The artist stages an irreconcilable tension between a conflicted past and an impossible futurity - the simple poetry of the pastoral is intentionally marred by the spectral presence of rampant urbanization.