

Mariana Bunimov: Gatherings

Opening Reception: Thursday February 16, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through March 25, 2017

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Henrique Faria Fine Art is pleased to present *Gatherings*, Mariana Bunimov's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Featuring a selection of her recent oil on paper paintings of subjects ranging from fashion models to wreckage from natural disasters to drones to surreal landscapes, this exhibition demonstrates how the artist consumes and digests the visual information culled from social media, stock photography and internet image searches, transforming the banal and detached into something enigmatic and, at the same time, seemingly personal. Though Bunimov's practice has shifted from working with physical objects from her past to digital images, the artist still engages in the processes of attraction, selection, appraisal and familiarization. As Jens Hoffman notes in the exhibition text, "Looking at her works collectively, one gets the distinct sense that her obsessive compositions are aimed to shift and process through both past and present, to reconcile, somehow, the material world with her memory, the outside with her interior experience."

In the paintings brought together for *Gatherings*, the viewer does not find mere photorealistic re-creations of Bunimov's source imagery, but rather how the artist has made these images her own. In *Amtrak* (2015-2016), Bunimov leaves clues of the origins of her inspiration: her computer desktop. In the top left of the painting appear the three colored circles—red, yellow, green—that one finds on the top left of every open window on a Mac computer. Reading leftwards we find more clues, a file name and program icons, before our eyes move downward to an expansive mountainous landscape with a train running in the foreground. In Bunimov's decision to leave the ground white, unpainted, the computer window background and the sky and ground of the image become seamlessly fused: the image ceases to be a glorious advertisement for the eponymous train company and becomes a strange facsimile for nature akin to the environment portrayed in Dalí's *The Persistence of Memory* (1931). Bunimov's other landscapes, including *Destruction Site* (2015-2016), the *Casas Caídas (Fallen Houses)* series (2016) and *Red Landscape* (2016), also render familiar scenes in a way that makes them seem alien and unknowable. In these works the artist acknowledges the rifts between the digital and the physical, between appearance and perception, and uses these fissures to turn the "real" and the "known" on their heads.

Another area of Bunimov's production focuses on the portrait and the human form and its subjects are pulled from pages of fashion magazines, Instagram and even searches for the fattest people in the world. Yet even with such a classic subject matter, one as old as the history of humanity, Bunimov is able to instill a sense of mystery into her figures. The stripes of the shirt worn by the man in *Tavoni* (2016) extend outward, seemingly of their own accord, regardless of the man's actual shape, while in *Green Screen 2* (2016) the blank face of a man clad in green screen fabric, his hands clasped across his chest, confronts the viewer head on and conveys details we will never know. As viewers of these works of anonymous people, our gazes mirror the gaze of the artist: we look in order to know, to glean whatever information we can so as to lessen the distance between us and this figure who has been 'exalted' in oil paint.

In these paintings, Bunimov adds blurs and organic drips, she decontextualizes and muddles her sources. The images that come forth onto the paper do so as when remembering a dream, some details remain salient while others fade away. Hoffman concludes, "Objects and images filter into her life as they do to everyone else's, but they don't pass through as quickly, and when they do, they are utterly transformed."

Mariana Bunimov (Caracas, 1972) attended New York University after studying at the Escuela de Artes de la Universidad Central de Venezuela. Her work has been exhibited at the 7th Bienal of Gwangju, South Korea (2008); *Un Mundo Feliz*, Periférico Caracas, Venezuela (2008); *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, La Pharmacie, Switzerland (2005); *Composite*, École cantonale d'art du Valais, Switzerland (2002); *Particular a Particular*, Galería Luis Adelantado, Spain (2001); *La Señora Lumpuy o la moral del juguete*, Museo Alejandro Otero, Venezuela (2000); and the Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (1994).

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