

Press Release

May 19, 2011

THE FITTING ROOM – David Brody, Mernet Larsen, Nicole Wittenberg

May 25 – June 25, 2011

Catalog will be available with essay by guest curator David Cohen

Vogt Gallery is pleased to present a three-person painting show, “The Fitting Room: David Brody, Mernet Larsen, Nicole Wittenberg,” from May 25 to June 25, 2011.

Guest curator David Cohen comments on the title of his show and the artists he has selected:

The “fitting room” of the title comes from the Haruki Murakami novel, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, which I was reading at the time the line-up of this show came together. I wasn’t trying in any programmatic way to illustrate the novel, but was struck, rather, by many affinities between the Vogt three and this magic-realist novel: a peculiar concentration upon qualities of space; interplay of generation; synchronicities of damage and repair. Larsen, Brody and Wittenberg, like characters in the novel, represent three generations as they are born, respectively, in 1940, 1958 and 1979.

In the novel the fitting room refers to a space created by a mother-son team, business partners of the narrator-hero, who are engaged in psychic healing at the site of a disused well; the room is a close replica of another at premises elsewhere in the city previously used by the mother in her couture days, which had been retained as a place whose business-like surroundings put clients at ease as she practiced her healing techniques. The narrator pondered the decision to clone the room when there was no longer a need for disguise. “Whatever the reason for having it, I myself was pleased with it... It was an unreal setting, but not an unnatural one.”

The phrase “fitting room” resonated with the enticingly cabinet-like Vogt gallery space as a fitting place to juxtapose and study painters. In relation to the painters themselves, “fitting room” is a kind of triple entendre: it suggests a room

in which fittings take place, a suitable room, and the activity of finding or inserting room within or into a given area.

From Wittenberg there will be examples from an extensive series of paintings of an interior, a Venetian bedroom that is the kind of luxurious yet functional space that could quite credibly serve an upscale couturier. Her serial approach is to apply, from canvas to canvas, different color schemes, and contrasting balance and painterly touch, while retaining a nearly identical compositional structure, so that in some pieces there is a voluptuous, almost carnal correlation of brushstrokes to bed linens, while in others a chaste flattened schema prevails.

Larsen is also primarily a painter of interiors, or of spaces that force awareness of passage from interiors to exteriors. She pursues radical spatial solutions, eschewing conventional single-point perspective in favor of parallel perspective, reverse perspective and eccentric, seemingly-improvised but rigorously seen-through fusions of different systems within the same work. The Escher-on-acid effects can be humorous, but the earnest intention in her ongoing theme of committee meetings is to represent a convincing roomful of people in such a way as to prevent the foreground figures blocking any view of those behind them. By destabilizing the location of the viewer, sometimes indeed to the point of inducing vertigo, she forces us to *know*, rather than merely see, the situation. Her representational practice grew out of abstraction and is pervaded by awareness of Japanese narrative scrolls.

Brody is also a painter seen to be “fitting room” into his dense, complex, evolving-before-our eyes-as-we-watch pictorial space. In his case, it is sometimes as if rooms are literally slotted into holes or lesions within his vast confabulations of urban structure. His imagery teases contrastive associations in which opposite extremes of scale seem possible: we might be looking at a dense cellular structure, a rusty machine, or the panorama of a futuristic but at the same time decaying city. He generates intense painterly webs of involved, accumulating marks that have the energy of algorithmic patterns and yet are entirely intuitive and improvisatory.

All three painters play off artifice against naturalness in their work. They subscribe to rules of their own making, conjuring worlds of mystery without giving in to gratuitous or arbitrary formal solutions. Brody’s highly wrought imagery epitomizes the notion of purposiveness without purpose; Larsen imbues ludic situations with tenderness and unexpected humanity; and Wittenberg taps a contemporary collision of remoteness and real-time presence in her poignant Skype portraits painted during online video conversations.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

David Brody received his BA at Harvard in 1983, attended the Skowhegan School in Maine in 1984, and went on to complete an MFA in Film/Motion Graphics at California Institute of the Arts in 1989. He has exhibited extensively in New York and elsewhere since 1991, recently staging solo exhibitions at the Sometimes Gallery, curated by James Siena, in 2011 and at Pierogi Leipzig in 2008. He has been artist in residence at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Hallwalls, Buffalo; and P.S.122 Gallery in New York; has held both Yaddo and MacDowell fellowships, and teaches at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Mernet Larsen received a BFA from University of Florida and an MFA from Indiana University. She served as a professor at the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, from 1967-2003 and has also taught at Montana State University and Yale. She has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Tampa Museum of Art, the New York Studio School, Eastern Illinois University Gallery in Charleston, Illinois and the Deland Museum of Art in Florida. She is represented in the permanent collections of the Ringling Museum, Tampa Museum, St Petersburg (Florida) Museum of Fine Art, amongst others.

Nicole Wittenberg received her BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and held her first solo exhibition at San Francisco's Masterworks Gallery in 2003. She is represented in permanent collections of the Colby College Museum of Art, the Boston Museum of Fine Art, the Farnsworth Museum in Rockland and the Portland Museum.

Curator David Cohen is Publisher/Editor of *artcritical*, The Online Magazine of Art and Ideas. From 2001-10 he was Gallery Director at the New York Studio School (where he organized over forty shows including Mernet Larsen's 2005 exhibition) and from 2003-08 he was art critic of the New York Sun. He is moderator of The Review Panel at the National Academy Museum and School of Art, and is an instructor at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, and the New York Studio School.

Vogt Gallery focuses on drawing attention to the complex artistic and cultural ties that bind New York to both Europe and Latin America. Vogt Gallery seeks to challenge mid-career as well as up-and-coming artists of diverse backgrounds to create new visual and conceptual vocabularies to reinvigorate these bonds. This is the second exhibition in Vogt Gallery's initial series of shows aiming to put an emphasis on curatorial practice to further artistic discussion. The gallery will also serve as a venue for performance art.

Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11 am – 6 pm and by appointment

For further details including images and interviews with artists please contact Fabian Bernal at Fabian@vogtgallery.com or at 212.255.2671