

ANN GALE



p a i n t i n g s a n d d r a w i n g s



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Ann Gale: paintings and drawings

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*I cannot possibly think of you
other than you are: the assassin*

of my orchards. You lurk there in the shadows...

—*The Critic*, Frank O'Hara

I first came across Ann Gale's work one late night in college. I was writing a proposal for my painting thesis—a series of a woman alone in a room. At the time, I felt isolated in my commitment to portraiture and the bare pathos of the figure. Following a trail of midnight links, I clicked on Ann Gale, and the painting 'Rachel' came up on the screen. I felt shocked: it was almost like seeing myself projected into the future. The person making these paintings was clearly aware of the inexorably fractured nature of the self and the fragility that underlines our material essence. Sitting up in my chair, I thought, here was someone who was not simply painting the figure, but the vibrating particles that comprise the visible. Looking back, I realize this speaks to the level of empathy and self-identification Gale's work is capable of eliciting, and to the metaphysical nature of her vision.

Gale's dialogue with herself and the viewer is basic and without frills, adhering to a bottom line of consciousness. There is something unflinching about her

Left:

Peter (detail)

2014, graphite on paper, 14 x 11 in

Front cover:

Portrait with Cap (detail)

2014, oil on linen wrapped over Masonite, 14 x 11 in



Portrait with Grid
2014, oil on Masonite, 14 x 11 in

Right:
Peter
2014, oil on Masonite, 14 x 11 in

gaze, something undivertable. Unlike the painters she is so often compared to, like Lucien Freud or Giacometti, Gale does not seem to be caught up in the specifics of a larger message beyond what inheres in the particulars of her paintings. She finds emotional nuance and intensity by interacting with her field of vision as precisely as possible. I find this pared-down relationship to her subjects incredibly refreshing. Here is someone seemingly without the obvious artifice we usually think of as inextricable from artistic expression.

Ann Gale conceives of the environment around her model not as a background or passive container, but as an energy field constituted by the figure—an extension of the portrait itself. The only elements that remain—from the floating mark of color on a thigh to the color on the wall behind it—are absolutely essential to an understanding of this figure in this time and this





Right:

Portrait with Orange Scarf

2014

oil on linen wrapped over Masonite, 14 x 11 in

Left

Self-Portrait with Collar

2014

oil on Masonite, 14 x 11 in



space. Every mark appears to be a projection of the act of seeing. We are held in place by her perceptions and our own.

Ann Gale doesn't make any assumptions and she doesn't take anything for granted. She looks every time. She doesn't assume she knows what a particular model's nose looks like on a Tuesday, despite having painted it thirty times before.

You might call it a willed confinement, this ongoing adjustment to the present, an almost childlike attempt to explain a moment exactly as it is, which is perhaps also the business of art at its most fundamental. There is an insistent modesty in her intentions, which paradoxically establishes a kind of unexpected majesty in her work.

—Anna Mendes



Peter with Striped Kimono
2014, graphite on paper, 28 x 19 ½ in

Right:
Peter with Striped Kimono
2014, oil on canvas, 50 x 44 in





Self-Portrait with Collar

2014, graphite, ink and watercolor on Mylar and paper, 14 x 11 in

Right:

Portrait with Scarf

2014, graphite on paper with collage, 19 ³/₈ x 14 in

Back cover:

Peter

2014, graphite on paper, 14 x 11 in

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