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## 'reenactments' at the Linda Warren



### At The Linda Warren Galley (Chicago)

**thru May 14, 2011** jeffery mcnary The Linda Warren gallery is never stingy with its exhibitions and their heady pleasures. They often appear on the verge of being interrupted by applause. The current show, Megan Euker's, *'Reenactments'* holds a familiar fit and pours richly into that trend. Anyone can buy a ticket to ride, but the destination should tug early on. These works do so.

This is the artist's first solo exhibition at the gallery, and it features new works and large sculptures, displaying her critical focus on gesture, body language and the figure. "Sociology, psychology, acute observation of behavior, deep interest in human interaction and cultural rituals are all things that have impacted my work," shares Euker. "I have also traveled to Italy many times, which has had a huge impact on my work. I depict a lot of stories from Italy in my paintings and sculptures and almost all of the bathing paintings are from natural thermal baths in various parts of Italy."

She continues, "I think when I get away from my normal routines and habits, I become more acutely aware of my surroundings...how people interact, etc." She invites us to think about that through these pieces.

Ms. Euker's periods of living in Italy, on a Fulbright, and her time in Brazil are dramatically captured in this show, from her, 'La Mola', oil on linen with its seductive use of color to her sculpture including, 'Chamada', chicken wire armature with plaster gauze, latex paint, and wood base of two figures engaged in capoeira. The artist trained in capoeira, a martial art developed by African slaves brought to Brazil, heavy with spirituality and physicality. "Athletics are a big impact on my work," Euker says. "I paint and sculpt in a very physical manner, and I think my history doing many athletics informs how I approach art. I think I have an athlete's mentality to making work in regards to pushing myself."

The artist brings a determination, an almost obsession to her work in seeking ways to, "document the moment," and therefore "make a painting, drawing or sculpture based on the situation." "I am incredibly interested in how humans interact, touch, don't touch. So I am attracted to images that are sometimes romantic, sometimes ritualistic or revealing of human nature, she says." Euker tells the story of her sculpture, "The Calling", chicken wire armature with plaster gauze, latex paint, and wood chair, part of her "Good Intentions" series. "When I was living in Italy during 2008-9, I visited a church in Naples where I saw a priest answer a cell phone call while a woman was giving confession", she

recounts. "There were about 30 confession booths up and down the aisles in this particular church, and the booths were all open. You could see the priest's face and torso," she continues. "It was such an ironic, slightly comical, strange thing to see, and I kept imagining scenarios to explain why the priest would casually answer the phone. In any case, I didn't make the sculpture until two years later, but I kept thinking about the image and the story in that time...the paintings were becoming too much of an illustration. I started imagining them as sculptures, and I think they really work as such. I related the story to my parents, who dressed in costume and reenacted the story I told them. I filmed the reenactment, took stills, and loosely based the sculpture on these images." Euker aims straight to her own version of the sublime.

"The *Good Intentions* series represents one of the more idiosyncratic aspects to Euker's practice", write the exhibitions curators. Megan Euker's work develops into an intimate rapport. Nothing lurking in the shadows of surrealism...nothing hiding...nothing seething with irony.

The artist received her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2005 and her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2007. She lends elegance to her work with color. Most is done in the service of "realism". She has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including the Artists' Fellowship, Inc. (New York) and Change, Inc. (est. by Robert Rauschenberg). She is an Adjunct Professor of Painting and Drawing at the College of DuPage.

"I studied a lot with Dan Gustin during undergraduate and grad school, and he has impacted me a lot as an artist. Geoff Barnes was my first painting teacher, and helped in forming the way I paint and teach." Euker also had studio visits with Jerry Saltz who helped her uncover the essence of what she felt she needed to explore as subject matter. "A lot of artists have stories about being deeply moved by the work of another artist, and Lucien Freud is the artist that brought tears to my eyes", holds Euker. "I went to L.A. in, I believe, 2002 to see a retrospective of his work, and that exhibition took my breath away."

Eric Fischl has also impacted her work. "I like the way he talks about painting and the evolution of ideas in painting, the strange narratives in his images and the speed at which he paints. I think his images are intriguing, both formally and on a narrative level, and I am interested in the dynamics of relationships that he creates between the figures in his paintings." She gains power with her dramatic sculpture, and undertakes a transformative process.

"When I'm making sculptures, I think of George Segal's work a lot, because of the everyday-ness of the situations that he portrayed", Euker says. "I am drawn to the relation of his process to abstract expressionism, the fleeting moments he depicts, and the whiteness of the plaster and its timelessness.

It will be intriguing to watch this young artist/academic's development, and we eagerly await it.