

# HESSE FLATOW

## **Katie Butler: *Pomp and Circumstance***

January 6 – February 18, 2023

Opening Reception: January 6, 6-8pm

For general inquiries: [info@hesseflatow.com](mailto:info@hesseflatow.com)

HESSE FLATOW is pleased to announce the opening of *Pomp and Circumstance*, an exhibition of paintings by the Akron-based artist Katie Butler, marking her first solo presentation with the gallery.



Katie Butler's politically charged paintings of opulent campaign dinners harp on the problematic nature of legislating on behalf of the average citizen from a detached framework of privilege. The dining table, as the nexus in which "bread and butter" issues are discussed, sets the stage for ostentatious displays of lobster, caviar, and oysters on the half shell against the backdrop of run-of-the-mill checkered tablecloths. Her use of foreshortened and bird's-eye view perspectives combined achieves a dimensional flattening of pictorial space, disinviting viewers from inhabiting these seemingly seductive tableaux, which are meant to feel fraught, contrived, and otherworldly. Amidst the pageantry of executive seals and fine china, the company card paying the check provides an unsettling dose of reality - a reminder that corporate meal write-offs are designed by and intended to benefit only those who are seated at the table.

In as much as Butler's paintings portray capitalistic ideals of growth and prosperity as hallmarks of the American dream, its symbolism through cornucopias of food is not without undertones of perishability. Rooted in traditions of Dutch still life painting in which *memento mori* objects allegorized mortality and impermanence, Butler's paintings similarly caution against blanket assumptions of perpetuity. Whether through extreme perspectival shifts that threaten to topple wine glasses over or the lone fly as a harbinger of something amiss, the illusory façade of grandeur and stability is momentarily suspended. While Butler conveys a journalistic sense of factuality as she sources her imagery from White House archives, their simulacrum in a painterly space, coupled with suited figures who register as archetypes more than actors, collectively function as props for a metaphorical political theater.

In light of the upcoming anniversary of the January 6th Insurrection, which coincides with the opening reception of *Pomp and Circumstance*, Butler's paintings take on a new significance. Like the sobering attacks on the Capitol Building, which saw the endangerment of democracy, the US Constitution, and a working justice system, Butler's works similarly signal the fragility of seemingly axiomatic pillars of society that one often takes for granted.

**Katie Butler** is a painter based in Akron, Ohio. Her allegorical still life paintings provide critical commentary on the financial disparities in American society. Recent exhibitions include the Krasl Art Center, St. Joseph, MI; Tchotchke Gallery, New York, NY; Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston, MA; Hashimoto Contemporary, Los Angeles, CA; Abattoir Gallery, Cleveland, OH. Butler received her BFA from the University of Akron in 2017 and her MFA from Kent State University in 2021.

Image: Katie Butler, *Pomp and Circumstance*, 2022, oil and acrylic on canvas, 40 x 60 in (101.6 x 152.4 cm)