



NANCY
MARGOLIS
GALLERY

SYLVIA NAIMARK | DOG SECRET
FEBRUARY 15 – MARCH 31, 2018

Nancy Margolis Gallery is pleased to announce Sylvia Naimark's first solo exhibition at the gallery, *Dog Secret*. The show will be on view February 15th through March 31st, 2018, with an opening reception on Thursday, February 15th from 6pm until 8pm.

Swedish artist Sylvia Naimark paints fictitious worlds imbued with mysticism, sublimity, and quietness. *Dog Secret* comprises 23 oil paintings that masterfully blend figuration and abstraction to conjure impressions of the familiar and the foreign. Naimark's work from this series can be divided into three distinct categories: intimate studies of old mementos; depictions of transient figures dwarfed by vast landscapes; and people and animals interacting with one another. When looked at as a whole, these paintings provide hints or glimpses of larger narratives that viewers can construct themselves.

Dog Secret contains a selection of small paintings each with the same title: *Det Som Blev Kvar*, Swedish for “*What remains*.” Each painting is a delicate study of an object, or memento, floating against a solid background: a sewing machine, a pair of glasses, a necklace, a cushion. Even without help from the title, the viewer senses him or herself confronting a relic of lost history, or perhaps a relic of Naimark's history. The objects, while unremarkable in their everydayness, force the onlooker to think about their provenance and question their relationship to the artist. These questions are not stirred solely by the viewer, however, but seemly by Naimark herself. Her paintings of objects are not rich with exacting detail or confident strokes; rather, they feel like indistinct recollections of fading memories. In this way, Naimark is also searching, asking questions, and grappling with the unknown.

A recurring motif in *Dog Secret* is Naimark's portrayal of hollow, “ghost” figures—sometimes only depicted as thin outlines—drifting through atmospheric landscapes that dominate the figures in scale. An example is *Lingering Points*, a monochromatic painting of light brown, beige, and cream. Naimark's sophisticated palette and painterly techniques of scraping, glazing, and building transparencies create an ethereal ambiance of the imagined landscape. Seemingly cloaked in a thick mist, the scene lacks any identifiable objects, save for two figures in the bottom right quadrant of the canvas. The figures are built up through thin contour lines, allowing the surrounding landscape to become visible through their bodies. One figure appears to walk towards the viewer, holding in his outstretched arms a second figure. Naimark's minuscule rendering of the figures by contrast to the expansive landscape tells us something about the artist's perception of the natural world. The exaggerated scale emphasizes the power and sublimity of nature, and reminds the viewer just how small we exist within it.

Finally, Naimark creates a world in which wild animals and humans coexist and share a common language and understanding. *Can I Hold Him Again*, *Elephant*, *Dog Secret*, and *Friendofafriend* all depict a close kinship between an animal and a human. In *Elephant*, a faceless figure stands in the midst of a solid textured background, holding a baby elephant on her hip the way a mother supports a toddler. Similarly, in the painting *Dog Secret*, an outline of a girl holds a large dog in front of her chest. Although the painting lacks detail, most notably facial features, the figure's head appears to be pointing towards the dog's right ear, as if she were whispering a secret. In other paintings, such as *Can I Hold Him Again* and *Friendofafriend*, Naimark goes a step further by depicting dog-human hybrids. In *Friendofafriend* a girl in a pink dress holds a brown dog under its stomach—only, the girl's face is replaced by a dog's face. The pose of these two dogs is reminiscent of the two human figures in *Lingering Points*. Naimark's instinct for interchanging humans and animals—and mirroring human poses in her depictions of animals—elevates the non-human creatures in her world to an enhanced emotional, intellectual, and spiritual level.

SYLVIA NAIMARK was born in 1955 in Malmö, Sweden. She has studied at the University of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm; Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem; and Stockholm University of the Arts, Stockholm. Naimark has had solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States and internationally, including Washington D.C., New York City, Paris, Stockholm, and Göteborg. Her last solo exhibition was at Galleri Ping-Pong in Malmö in 2017. Naimark was awarded a grant from The Foundation Längmanska Kulturfonden in 2017, and in 2016 she was assigned the National Swedish commission for the arts. She has artwork in numerous public collections, including Landskrona Museum (Landskrona, Sweden); Eksjö Museum (Eksjö, Sweden); and Stockholm City Council (Stockholm, Sweden). In January of 2018, an 80-page art book titled, *Sylvia Naimark: Paintings 2008-2018*, was published with the support of The Foundation Längmanska Kulturfonden in Stockholm.