

## Brian Harte: Family

November 16th, 2017 - January 14th, 2018

The logo for GNYP gallery, consisting of the letters 'GNYP' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered within a light gray square background.

There is always a certain narrative in Brian Harte's paintings, although he does not plan his images. Instead he rather attacks them. His paintings emerge out of an evolving set of impulses. But he does not transform his impressions in an act that can be compared to traditional action painting. His compositions and colors are carefully chosen and applied to the canvas.

While taking a closer look at Harte's painting *night*, one can observe a highly constructed surface. On a nondescript red background blurring thin lines imply a room. There is a sink, a shelf and a window allowing us to gain a glimpse of the night. A nude appears in the window. Above the shelf we can see a yellow object that is literally labeled with the word "lemon". This typical symbol of vanitas imagery is quoted by the artist as a lost symbol. Also, the nude in the window looks more like a painting attached to the wall, rather than an actual nude seen through a window. The pictorial subject allows us to reflect on the traditional conditions of painting. By depicting a well-known vanitas symbol on the one hand and recalling the significant window topic within the history of painting on the other hand, the artist is obviously dealing with his art historical heritage. Harte is particularly interested in his relationship with the old and new masters. While the lemon reminds us of Manet's enigmatic portrait of the selfsame fruit, the isolated and distorted character portraits let us think of Francis Bacon's compositions.

Reflecting on his education is one of two central motifs in Harte's artistic practice. The other central motif is his social environment, involving intimate scenes with his wife and his little daughter. The abstracted figures typically appear isolated, set against flat nondescript backgrounds. In many cases we can see clearly how the background happens to get a special treatment. The gestural texture of the surface implies the impulsive approach of Brian Harte's painting practice. Thin lines of pencils indicate shapes and contours. Color drops appear sporadically.

Looking at his work *auto portrait* we can observe how an almost brutal arrangement of distinct colors and shapes being expressively combined with each other. The composition represents the artist's psychological and at the same time ambiguous reflection. The intertwining forms twist the mind of the viewer. By letting the paint dissolve at the bottom of the abstract portrait, the canvas is revealed as a two-dimensional field, leaving us with the question: where does the illusion drop?

Stephanie Götsch