

LewAllenGalleries

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Janet Monafo: *Gatherings*

Exhibition Dates: March 30 – April 21, 2018

Artist Reception: Fri, March 30, 5 – 7 pm

Gallery Hours: Mon – Fri, 10-6
Sat, 10-5

LewAllen Galleries

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Sedgwick Skull, 2008, pastel on paper, 30 x 42 in



Pile of Gourds, 2008, pastel on paper, 42 x 54 in

Santa Fe, NM – LewAllen Galleries is pleased to announce a remarkable exhibition of recent works by Janet Monafo, whose extraordinary still life images transform domestic, everyday objects into grand, spellbinding arrangements of light and color, hue and texture, order and disorder, memory and metaphor. Strikingly contemporary in their orientations, these remarkable oil pastel paintings take the age-old tradition of meticulously rendered still life into the 21st century. Opening with a reception on Friday, March 30, 2018 from 5-7 PM, this exhibit will run through Saturday, April 21.

With an extraordinary level of mastery of the challenging medium of oil pastel, Janet Monafo infuses her works with activated, glowing color that awakens and vitalizes her inanimate subject matter (vases, teacups, fabric, fruits, takeout boxes, plastic water jugs, and glowing metallic pots) – objects that suggest entire captivating universes of memory and association for the imagination.

These quotidian household objects are transformed by Monafo through a vivid choreography of carefully organized shapes and patterns of light and shadow. Critics have taken note of the elegantly distinctive visual feeling created by Monafo's art and the nonverbal possibilities of visual metaphors that emerge from her compositions. Typically working at a large scale (extremely unusual for works in oil pastel), Monafo pays careful attention to the fine details of lighting, scale, and spatial relationships – relating reflected colors and distortions of light that dazzle with nuances of hue and luminescence.

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The luxurious and glowingly tactile quality of Monafó's work evokes Dutch or Flemish still life paintings with their celebration of the inherent beauties found in individual objects in our daily lives. Similarly, Monafó's creations glow with a sense of vitality that is rarely seen today and display a quality that has been described by many as "jewel-like." The meticulous detail and joyous epicurean colors are a delight to the eye.



Stack with Skull, pastel on board, 34 x 48 in

Monafó has taken the still life – a format long enshrined in centuries of tradition – and has brought it into a vigorous new reality.

In a very contemporary manner, the imagery depicts specific objects that are often part of our daily lives, yet her references are oblique. Inclusion of individual objects in the works often has little to do with similarity or function. The artist explains, "It's more apt to be about the relationship of the colors and textures of the objects."

Also akin to Dutch and Flemish works, Monafó's imagery displays ceramics, textiles, and organic objects, all echoing traditional still life painting but in the context of a thoroughly contemporary world. Like the historic antecedents of these works, there is an underlying understanding of the fleeting nature of time, of the objects, and of our own lives.

As such, Monafó includes allusions to contemporary life and social mores; her inclusion of modern-day ephemera such as Styrofoam takeout containers and plastic wrap constitutes a brilliant riff on traditional ideas of permanence and impermanence.

Working with a strong element of spontaneity, Monafó's gatherings of domestic objects sometimes seem contradictory suggesting a fascinating tension between the intuitive and the purposeful, the enduring and the temporal. In a modern material world, her juxtaposing both treasured objects and those that are disposable – each privileged equally in Monafó's glowing arrangements – might be read to suggest that it is beauty that endures, not things.

Janet Monafó's pastel paintings have earned her wide recognition and respect from collectors, curators and art writers. She was elected to the Pastel Society of America Hall of Fame in 2002. Her paintings have been included in major gallery and museum exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, the National Academy of Design, New York, NY, and the Evansville Museum of Art in Evansville, IN, among others.