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FRIESEN GALLERY IS HONORED TO ANNOUNCE ECLIPSE: OBSCURED MEMORIES, AN EXHIBITION OF NEW PAINTINGS BY LOS ANGELES AND SANTA FE-BASED ARTIST LAWRENCE FODOR

ARTIST | Lawrence Fodor
EXHIBITION TITLE | Eclipse: obscured memories
EXHIBITION DATES | August in entirety, 2017
OPENING FOR THE ARTIST | Friday, 04 August 2017

Historic works of art and significant celestial events have thrilled my imagination since I was quite young. I have drawn in museums from paintings and sculptures and I continue to explore, investigate and dissect historic and contemporary art. I have chased a solar eclipse, watched meteor showers through the night, experienced multiple lunar eclipses and seen ancient notations of these kinds of events on the walls of canyons and caves. I am always looking – everywhere – in an attempt to see.

– Lawrence Fodor

Lawrence Fodor began this body of work in early 2015 – in anticipation of the total solar eclipse on August 21, 2017. The path of totality runs through the northern and central portions of the United States from the west to east coast, including 50 miles north of Ketchum, Idaho. It may appear to be an oblique correlation, but significant celestial events have always played a role in the work of artists – directly or indirectly. They have notated, recorded and marveled at these phenomena in an infinite variety of ways since before humans were making marks on cave walls. It is also important to note that these paintings were conceived and produced in conjunction with the artist’s move back to Los Angeles, California in August 2015, where he has established a permanent part-time artist-in-residency in a 1901 warehouse loft. The artist’s simultaneous conversations with place, art history and astronomical phenomena inform this work.
At first glance, Lawrence Fodor’s large-scale mixed media oil paintings are intense, lyrical, and wholly abstract works of art. Hidden behind the surface of these abstractions, however, is a vast archive of historic masterpieces, meticulously executed homages to icons including Peter Paul Rubens, Jean Etienne Ramey, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Leonardo Da Vinci, Théodore Géricault, JMW Turner, the Laocöon, and ancient Greco-Roman sculpture. Old world masters haunt and vibrate through Fodor’s richly layered, delicate, palimpsest-like surfaces.

For days, weeks, and often months, Fodor re-creates specific master works of art on canvas or paper, at times in meticulous detail. He draws from paintings and sculpture with important art historical relevance, housed in museums across the globe - many of which he has had the privilege to observe in person. Analyzing the composition, structure, color, and meaning of these historical pieces he then abandons the brushes, working solely with his hands, slowly shrouding the painting, obliterating all but oblique vestiges of the original works of art. The historic works are eclipsed – but not merely for a moment. He leaves traces of centuries-old stories, quiet allusions of what came before.

With a deep reverence for these icons and a fascination with re-interpretation, Fodor draws the past into the thoroughly contemporary present. The images, themes and conceptual content of these historic works are obscured, revised and re-contextualized for the 21st century in a highly personal visual language of intuitive mark making. The paintings directness, raw energy and de/re-construction resonate and reiterate the artist’s newly urban environment while their historic sources reflect the world at large.

In late 2016 Fodor began painting two versions of the historic paintings, side by side. As he continued to expand and refine both paintings, he challenged himself to continue on one of the pair as a 21st century version of the historic work – and eclipse only its partnered painting. Fodor’s concept of creating exacting copies of the original work translated with the signature painting style of his hand, obscuring one of them and then exhibiting the two paintings side by side as a diptych, was revelatory for the artist. The two paintings, created side by side, stood now in conversation with each other – one utterly abstract and the other, at first glance, as if was taken from some museum’s 18th century storage. Both paintings are rooted in historic master works and the extensive history of painting, created simultaneously with the same 21st century sensibility – one with the utmost respect for its source, the other re-contextualized beyond recognition. The pairs give clues as to what came before, what is present and what, in this artist’s conviction, must change.

“In the single paintings, I rely on memory as the image is frenetically transformed – running the risk of forgetting it’s structure purposefully, in order to discover and explore veracities in the act of painting,” said Fodor in a recent interview. “When I stop painting, there may be hints of the original muse, an echo possibly, although my process conceals most of the visual reference of the painting’s substructure. In the diptychs, there is an entirely different conversation presented for myself and the viewer. That dialogue stems from the irony of such massively important works of art narrating entirely outdated mythologies. Art historically relevant – absolutely – but simultaneously nothing more than propaganda.”

Stopping short of what might be considered a formal resolution in the “eclipsed” paintings, there is an unfinished and somewhat fragmented aspect to these paintings that retain the evidence of history, reinvention, and methodology. Possibly the unresolved aspect of these paintings correlates to the artist posing this question to the viewer, “How do we redefine these obsolete paradigms within which the world struggles?”

Not quite forgotten, there is vast space for interpretation.
Lawrence Fodor was born in 1951 in Los Angeles and started painting at an early age. He studied painting, printmaking and art history at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, California, received a BFA majoring in printmaking and art history and completed graduate work in painting at Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. Fodor’s paintings are exhibited in fine art galleries and museums in the United States and he has received favorable reviews in Art News, Art in America and numerous regional publications. He was a recipient of the City of Santa Fe Mayor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts (2014) and his proposal for the exhibition *Cumulous Skies; the Enduring Modernist Aesthetic in New Mexico* received NEA funding for the City of Santa Fe’s Arts Commission to produce the exhibition (2013). His paintings have been included in the publication and exhibition *Speak for the Trees* (2010) and have been the subject of two catalogues to accompany exhibitions at the Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, California (*Holding Light*, 2012) and the Lannan Foundation, Santa Fe, New Mexico (*Kôan Boxes*, 2009). Fodor’s work is in numerous private, corporate and public collections, most notably the Lannan Foundation Collection, the New Mexico History Museum and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and has been included in solo and group exhibitions at the Laguna Art Museum, the New Mexico Museum of Art and the Lannan Foundation.

Lawrence Fodor currently lives and works in Los Angeles, California and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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