



## **Susan Bee, *Recalculating: New Paintings***

May 25-June 19, 2011

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 26, 6-8 pm

Brooklyn, NY, May 2011. A.I.R. Gallery is pleased to announce ***Recalculating***, a show of new paintings by Susan Bee. This is her sixth solo show with the gallery.

Many of the works in this show are based on movie stills, particularly film noirs. These mostly small oil paintings dramatize the relationships between male and female characters through the lens of the dark, violent films of the 1940s and 1950s. The paintings use a flattened and abstracted picture plane, as a starting point for uncanny narrative and figurative overlays that engage psychic dislocation, trauma, and incongruous mystical and religious iconography. These new works figure complex, sensual, dramatic tension, along with strong emotions, in an interwoven whole. The paintings confront, without resolving or sublimating, gender roles and power relationships. Bee's focus is on the marked visual constellations that underlie key popular culture stereotypes.



Images of natural elements (trees, sailboats, clouds, oceans, and mountains) form the basis of some of the other works in the show. These paintings are inspired by Caspar David Friedrich, Charles Burchfield, and other painters of symbolic, imaginary, and romantic landscapes. These works are painted with an emphasis on the expressivity and color potential of the paint.

Finally, another series of paintings reflect a quieter, more meditative approach to the show's themes. These works feature mythological and religious figures such as angels, fairies, saints, and demons.

Bee's work is a hymn to visual pleasure and the possibilities of fancy: works of high imagination that draw on poetry, humor, irony, and memory. Her paintings are characterized by their wry humor and unaccountable ironies. Structurally rigorous, each of Bee's pictures is a combinatory assemblage of "things" and "images" that reveal our cultural imaginaries as inexorably rooted in visual culture. Overall, Bee provides a thick description of our culture at its most resonant and intoxicating.

In *ARTnews*, June 2009, Meredith Mendelsohn wrote: "For 'Eye of the Storm' Susan Bee presents an intriguing selection of bright, bold paintings full of dramatic narratives.... A single work can evoke at once anxiety, melancholy, humor, and disdain.... Bee's figures also appear to be from separate realities: the painted ones belong to the world of the painting—while the collage ones—a buxom pinup from the 1940s, for instance—seem to come from a dream or nightmare.... Bee's playfulness with paint and collage as well as the ambiguity and drama of her work leaves viewers with a lingering sense of both unease and fascination."

Craig Olson wrote in the *Brooklyn Rail* (March 2009): "Bee's work projects out of the absurdity and openness of the surrealist ether like a root dipped in blood. Consecrated in a motley crew of archetypes, animals, cutout pulp novel women, myths, and holy winged demons, her recent work offers us a glimpse into the ageless disasters that have become all too real for us again, the metaphoric readings we apply to them, and the futility of ever trying to harness control over their power."

**Susan Bee** is a painter, editor, and book artist who lives in New York City. Her work has been included in numerous group shows and has been reviewed in *Art in America*, *ARTnews*, *The Forward*, *The New York Times*, *Art Papers*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*. Her artist's books include collaborations with Susan Howe, Johanna Drucker, Charles Bernstein, Regis Bonvicino, and Jerome Rothenberg. Bee is the coeditor of *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artist's Writings, Theory, and Criticism* and *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: Online*. She has had fellowships and grants from Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Arts, the NEA, and NYSCA. She teaches in the School of Visual Arts MFA in Art Criticism and Writing program. Her website is: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/bee>

A.I.R. Gallery is located at 111 Front Street, #228, in the DUMBO section of Brooklyn. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 11am to 6pm. For directions, please see [www.airgallery.org](http://www.airgallery.org). For additional information please contact the gallery director, Kat Griefen, at 212-255-6651 or [kgriefen@airgallery.org](mailto:kgriefen@airgallery.org)

