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SHACKLED GIANT

HAROLD TOWN
THE MAN BEHIND THE PAINT

FRANK RODICK
ART FACING DEATH

SEBASTIÃO SALGADO
PLANET UNEARTHED

WOMEN ARTISTS:
I SEE YOU, I SEE YOU NOT

DAVID ALTMEJD
THEATRE IN A BOX

CHIH-CHIEN WANG

Exquisitely Mundane

CHIH-CHIEN WANG
Cabbage Flower #2

N° 239 SUMMER 2015



SODEP service d'abonnement, C.P. 160, succ. Place d'Armes, Montréal (Québec) H2Y 3E9

Postes-publications convention n° 40007872 / Numéro d'enregistrement 09285

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HEATHER KEENAN

In Passing

Par Yvonne Owens

Arrivals
Oil on canvas
25.4 x 25.4 cm



HEATHER KEENAN

Winchester Galleries Modern
758 Humboldt Street,
Victoria BC

April 10 to May 23, 2015

Heather Keenan has, for many years, painted strongly narrative scenes, the exact meanings of which remain forever mysterious or even paradoxical. People, privately and in their numbers, intent upon the process of becoming something else, are Keenan's subjects. Crowds of outward-yearning people, of all ages, genders and types, peer upward or towards each other. In some case, they seem to be gazing just as intensely inward. They encounter each other, or pass each other by, amid vast, transitional spaces – train stations, embarkation platforms, august hallways of unspecified official buildings, or museums. The milling crowds fade and blend in saturating cascades of light, as if in the process of being translated into that light – of becoming somehow exalted beyond their dowdy, mortal forms.

Their gestures are aspirational, reaching towards each other or toward the indeterminate space of energy, intimations of cosmic wind and subtle movement, or the immanent, saturation of light that dominates each composition. The figures are dwarfed by their terminal environments. In *Rome Station*, tiny figures emerge from a hazy background, loomed over by a triumphal arch. This imperial signifier, historically offering passage only to nobles and equestrians, is in turn hovered over by still more massive corporate towers, commercial bastions of newer, still more mighty and omnipotent powers. Milling crowds seethe ineffectually about their bases, waiting... for whom, or for what? Sometimes the colliding realities are those of Time. In *Station XX*, the travelers wear dated attire, and seem 'old-fashioned.' An antiquated, coal-burning train puffs toward the platform. People are coming and going, waving hello and goodbye, arriving and departing – or are they the departed? Is this one of the relays – the points of arrival and departure – of the afterlife journey?

In another diorama that seems to speak of Time, figures that have the aura of refugees from a Golden Age, Depression-era emigrants from some past glory, walk doggedly into an uncertain foreground that awaits them like the unreadable future. They exit from among stately archways, out of a dimension that blazes with golden radiance, into a dim, literal 'grey area.' A clock upon the wall, and a golden lion's head crest, suggest an emergence of a chastened people from a High Victorian, *fin de siècle* – helplessly drawn along, involuntarily exiting some *ancien régime* of finesse, romance, lost courtesies and civility.



Rome Station
Oil pigment stick on canvas
20.3 x 25.4 cm

The settings have the vague, indeterminate feeling of waiting rooms or processing stations. The maelstrom of light at the centre of one painting, titled *Passage*, seems to magnetize the people clustered about its edges to its centre. It is like a light storm or angel that appears to be offering up its light and energy to its encircling individuals or groups. Whole families, small clans or tribal encampments surround the mystery of white light at their centre, seeming as if drawn like moths; or is the swirl of light drawing the life force out from its magnetized subscribers like some hungry revenant? Mounted riders approach the revelation of light roiling at the heart of the image, while others who appear to be prophets or petitioners hover at its edges, once again seeming to wait, a little hesitantly – for a sign?

A torrent of light showers down into the centre of the composition in another piece, called *Station XIX*, where cascades of chalky white fall into the picture from an undisclosed source. Is this fall of light heavenly in nature, or mortifying? In the haze of shadow and light of the background a colossus can be faintly discerned, and the suggestion of classical columns. This seems an exalted space, like a museum – a temple of art and statuary. Small figures navigating the floor of the lofty space are rendered almost invisible, obliterated by the inundation of white, translated into mere gestures, eaten by inexorable time, and drowned by light. ●