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GARAGE

ART

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Shannon Cartier Lucy Finds Her Home

After a ten year-hiatus, the painter returns with a new body of work, and solo shows in New York, Miami, and Los Angeles.

Shannon Cartier Lucy wasn't going to force it. "I know I'm an artist in terms of just how I see the world," the painter tells me huddled in a corner of the **Lubov** gallery in Chinatown on a particularly freezing New York day. "[But] I couldn't [make anything]. Artist block."

Cartier Lucy had enjoyed brief success in the art world in the early 2000's, showing at Team Gallery alongside Banks Violette and Hans Op De Beeck, but by 2011, spurred by drugs and a divorce, she packed up and left the city. "I was like fine, I'll get my shit together and become a psychotherapist. Get a masters. I'll go to Nashville, be around family, save on rent," she says. For the following decade, she did not paint.

Then one day, three years ago, after a visit from her ex-husband, she did it. She made a small, haunting painting.

In the painting, a round fishbowl filled with water and three goldfish sits atop a gas white stove—the same one in all my rented New York apartments, maybe yours too? The stove is on, the translucent blue flame quietly raging underneath the fish. Its title, *Our New Home*.

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"This is my *Mona Lisa*," she tells me she remembers thinking, not *not* joking. "I surprised myself that I could even paint like this, because I'd never even painted realistically before." Her previous work was not figurative at all, rather it concerned with words and "quirky" (her words) concept juxtapositions;; a jigsaw puzzle of all- black pieces, a small bag that would usually be filled with candy at the dollar store left empty and labeled as "nothing," a painting of the FILA logo with a flower underneath and identified as "State Flower of FILA." The works are definitely products of their time (post 9/11 New York).

"I didn't paint, I don't know why," she tells me, "I think I challenged myself too much, like I tried to be punk. I've always tried to challenge whatever I thought was already weird, I'd be like *no, that's too obvious, I want to play off that and then play off that even.*" Her path to art was not exactly a fluke, but it wasn't planned either. She had moved to New York from Nashville, where she grew up, to enroll at Gallatin to study "design/documentary film/I don't know," when she happened to sign up for a painting class with **Lisa Yuskavage**. Cartier Lucy had tried her hand at painting when she was in high school, "I tried it but it was really embarrassing, a shitty emotion [to have] when I was 14 years old," she wasn't expecting much when she signed up. "[Yuskavage] taught me how to paint. She loved painting," she remembers, "I had another professor, **Michael St. John**, who is a friend of mine now, but he didn't actually teach me how to paint. He was more into [exploring] *what are you into? How can you express yourself as an artist?*"

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"NAPTIME," 2018. OIL ON CANVAS. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND LUBOV, NEW YORK.

And so the goldfish came as a surprise, but then again not really. "I guess I had learned [how to paint] years and years ago, so I just painted this and then it's like they started pouring out of me." After the goldfish came a painting of two female hands playing the piano, one of them precariously balancing a glass of water and a stick that have been placed upon them, in another painting a woman leans against a wall—is she waiting for someone?—holding a plastic bag full of swans, another painting is a scene in a bedroom, everything is covered in plastic: the fan, the nightstand, the young woman laying in bed, asleep.

That the images are so unsettling may be because they are presented so matter-of-factly, a product perhaps of growing up with a schizophrenic father. "You would walk into his house and the mattress would never be on the ground, chairs would be upside down on top of desks, or the TV wouldn't be facing you, but it would be on, facing another TV which had peanut butter [smeared] on the front." She adds, "I think because I'm a child of that, I had to find peace with

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appreciating that versos being the controlling eldest child trying to be like *stop doing that, be normal!*”

She continues, “Total chaos is really beautiful to me, really innocent and really precious, and kind of outsiders and magical. It’s absolutely what I’m attracted to, and I think maybe it’s because I’m inherently drawn to my dad.”

After she had painted about 25 works, people started asking her if she was going to “show.” Although she eventually loaded her paintings into a rented van and drove down to New York to meet with a few galleries, she said it was the response she received after posting her work on Instagram, where I too came across her work a few months back, that gave her a bit of confidence to take the next step. “People [were] finding me, and just being so generous to share with me, *I love your paintings*. I trust every single one of these people, because there’s nothing attached to me, it is just the paintings.” Francisco Correa Cordero, who runs the Lubov gallery, came across her work after someone came up to him at an art fair in Miami and said “you should be showing work like this,” and showed him images from her Instagram. As it turns out, they were right.



"MY SIGNATURE ACT," 2017. OIL ON CANVAS. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND LUBOV, NEW YORK

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"I think I found peace with making art from a place of no expectations, but I know they're good enough," she explains, "Plus, I'm a woman." The statement seems unfinished, but of course, it's not. Especially in this era of "rediscovering" female artists, an acceptable career arc for women is to work in anonymity all their lives, and once they reach their twilight years—if they're lucky—they become the toast of the art world. ("Good things come to those who wait!," said **a recent article**.)

"I had to come to terms with that [because] that's what I've been given as a possibility," she tells me. "I went through my thirties thinking *I've got to have a kid, too, how's this going to happen?* I can't do it all. It's a curse, in a way. I'd go *do I have to choose?* I can't be [the] supportive role, I'm just too weird. I'm the artist." She's not bitter, ("I know it sounds so brutal, it's not") and this isn't an **unusual conversation** (negotiation?) for women to have with themselves, especially women who are also artists.

"There's this musical artist, **Sibylle Baier**, she's from the sixties, she makes the most beautiful music," Cartier Lucy suddenly remembers. "No one knew who she was, nor did she try. So I thought if I respect her, I can have respect for myself and be here."

Shannon Cartier Lucy's "Home Is a Crossword Puzzle I Can't Solve," is on view at Lubov in New York until March 8th. "Woman With Machete," is on view at De Boer Gallery in Los Angeles until March 21st. "The Ever-Flashing Strap" opens at Nina Johnson Gallery in Miami on April 3rd until May 2nd.

https://garage.vice.com/en_us/article/wxegez/shannon-cartier-lucy-finds-her-home

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