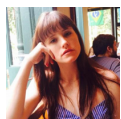


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In New Paintings, Shannon Cartier Lucy Blows The Lid Off Reality



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Shannon Cartier Lucy, "The Autopsy," 2021, Oil on canvas, 35 x 44 inches
IMAGE COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV.

A few weeks ago, my 5-year-old daughter called my husband into the living room. She wanted to show him a cool television show she was watching. She pressed play on her iPad, and the screen was filled with the scene of a man doing an autopsy on a wild animal. She was watching PBS's "Inside Nature's Giants," and even as my husband flinched away from the gore, she was fascinated.

I won't say my daughter isn't like anyone else, but she certainly isn't like everyone else. She often points to her limbs and tells me that she is made up of animal parts. She isn't scared of ghosts or monsters. Her favorite color is red. In her early years, she was often kept away at night by "the invisible girl" who

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sat at the end of her bed. In my family, there is a long history of mental illness. I worry, sometimes, that my daughter's fascination with the uncanny and the gory might link her to this dark legacy. I'm also proud of her because I don't have to try hard to raise someone who knows who she is. My daughter knows who she is already.

I see my daughter in the paintings of Shannon Cartier Lucy, which will be on view at "The Loo Table," [an exhibition at Lubov gallery in New York from September 18 through November 7, 2021](#). Consisting of nine paintings, seven of which were made in the past year, the exhibition uses the aesthetic language of master painters of light and shadow such as Vilhelm Hammershøi and Johannes Vermeer to create landscapes that lift the veil off what we have been conditioned to see — and expose so much of what we do consider to be real as artificial. At the risk of sounding like a complete dolt, they allow the viewer to see the world with fresh eyes, like a child does.

Often, over the past year, like so many other people, I have felt the effects of intense screen burnout, which has led to depression and exhaustion. For the first time in twenty years, to recover from it, I stopped trying to cram my time with "productive" or money-making activities, and instead, did nothing. I lay in bed and watched the different shades of leaves on the two magnolia trees outside of my window. I sat in a chair in the shade, and watched a hummingbird visit the purple flowers of a bush that flourished in the humid Southern environment where I live.

Lucy captured not exactly what I saw, but instead, what it felt like to look at the world again after so much time away from it. *Wasps and Bramble* (2021) depicts a thorny stem, hovering over a clear liquid, visited by two finely rendered wasps. *Loblolly Pine* (2021), which depicts a pine cone in a half-filled glass of clear liquid, covered by a hand, looks like an experiment my daughter would do when I told her she wasn't allowed to use her iPad. *A New Pack* (2018) shows an exquisitely rendered carpet covered with four pairs of clean white underwear — a "pattern," as my daughter proudly announces when she notices the repetition of certain elements in our ordinary days.

Lucy studied painting at New York University, and then gave it up after losing herself to the hard-partying, cut-throat ways of the art world in the early 2000s. "I'm sort of just a soft human, and it was too much," she says. "It didn't

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feel real.” She eventually moved to Nashville, where she grew up. “It felt like giving up,” she says. “There was no art scene, and no cultural energy.” Her father, who is schizophrenic, and was homeless for a time, moved into the home she shares with her partner. “He’s a guy who wears two pairs of pants, and smears his television with peanut butter,” she says. Rather than being horrified by his behavior, she finds it fascinating. “That off quality, that uncanny quality [in my painting], I’m attracted to that because of my father,” she says.



"Wasps and Bramble," 2021, Oil on canvas, 22 x 32 inches
IMAGE COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV.

In 2017, Cartier was a week away from graduating with a master’s degree in science from the University of Tennessee when a painting “came out of me,” she says. The first painting was followed by thirty others. She was scared to identify as a painter again after giving up the medium. “I related [painting] to failure, to not getting what I wanted,” she says.

But the paintings she made in the past three years are virtuosic, expertly balancing on the edge between beauty and grotesqueness, violence and serenity with flat, assured brushstrokes. Often, they are very funny. *Chair Self-Portrait* (2018) depicts the artist, her long straight black hair covering her face, pinned on her belly by a dining room chair while two other people sit patiently at a perfectly set table. *Girl at the Loo Table* (2021) depicts a young,

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pretty girl sitting at a similar table, eating a meal with comically large utensils — perhaps the way that Lucy feels as an adult trying to behave. *Woman in Reflecting Light* (2021) shows a beautiful woman dressed like Princess Leia, completely enraptured by her shadow on a table. I look at the painting, and I see my daughter at 25, whiling away an afternoon.

Often, Lucy's paintings hint at sexual deviance, or self-harm. *Better Call it Grace*, a monograph of Lucy's work published by Hassla Books concurrently with the exhibition, is full of reproductions of paintings of women bent over tables, wrapped in plastic or holding sharp scissors against their wrists as if they are going to cut off their own hands. But the paintings in "The Loo Table" — the exhibition takes its name from a 17th century card game played on a round folding table — are devoid of such innuendo. They embody the viewpoint of a girl whose mind has yet to be muddied by sexual awakening. What does a dog look like when you cut him open? What happens when you put an acorn in water? What does a shadow consist of? It is a relief to ponder such things instead of the rising COVID-19 numbers in my local school district, or why I'm not having enough sex with my husband.

"When it was the right time, these paintings came out," Lucy says.

To learn more about the exhibition, [visit Lubov's website](#).

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/briennewalsh/2021/09/17/in-new-paintings-shannon-cartier-lucy-blows-the-lid-off-reality/?sh=323dc90d3b5a>

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