

FACES+ figures

Ann Gale

The University Gallery at the University of Massachusetts Lowell is pleased to host “FACES + Figures: Ann Gale,” a selection of paintings and drawings by one of the leading contemporary figurative painters, Ann Gale. Intense, honest, and uncompromising, the works in this show are thoughtful mediations between sight and touch, holding formal discourse with past and present artists, and serving as considerable examples of painting’s quiet persistence and relevance.

Gale’s works are complex statements emerging from her decades-long exploration of the self and other, and the relational dynamic that develops from the dialogue of silence as model and artist are forced to share the same space for an extended period of time. Solitary, distant, and detached from us, the figures in Gale’s paintings appear frozen in time, as if suspended in the visual correspondence of paint that she develops with each model. They inhabit a pale and muted world of color, draped by a subdued and diffused light that at times flickers across the paintings. The intentionally neutral atmosphere of each work allows the figure to develop naturally, unhindered by nostalgia and sentimentality.

Developed over countless sittings and constructed through thousands of brushstrokes and marks, the paintings develop a density of activity that appears to be in a state of constant change. From a distance, there is a sharpness and intensity to the fiction of the work that begins to shift and dissipate as one moves closer, ultimately dissolving into painterly fact. The paintings seem to never sit still, requiring the viewer to be an active participant in their reading and completion. That they take a long time to come into existence should come as no surprise, taking months and sometimes years to complete.

Ann Gale’s works are unflinching and unapologetic in their scrutiny. Embracing the perceptual, she allows the uniqueness of the act of seeing to drive her work, eschewing ‘likeness’ and the descriptive for a deeper truth, one that is borne out of a lived experience with her subjects. Slow, measured, deliberate, and thoroughly considered engagements, her works uphold and expand the tradition of painting, even within the fast-paced climate of contemporary culture.

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