

PHIL BOWER

Figures in Landscape

July 7 – August 4, 2007

Reception: July 7, 6-9PM



Los Angeles based artist, **Phil Bower**, will be featured in his first solo show with Carl Berg Gallery. Bower will present five new paintings in an exhibition titled “Figures in Landscapes.” In these provocative works Bower presents figures engaging in sex acts within picturesque and tranquil landscapes. Bower has presented these images as figures in nature--as part of nature, much like images of animals mating as seen in nature documentaries.

The figures in Bower’s compositions are often nestled into lush landscapes hidden from the public view. Bower’s images are taken from candid shots that the artist purchased through an Internet website. His paintings depict real people in real landscapes and are not staged presentations. The figure and landscape play an equally important part to the final composition, not focusing just on the sex act but exposing the act to the viewer within the context of nature. He continues to carve out territory in contemporary painting by uniquely blending photorealistic techniques with an intuitive and exploratory palette that is rife with startling glazes and metallic colors.

Although Bower’s chosen imagery can be interpreted as graphic, his portrayal is not. Bower does not expose the figures’ genitalia, breasts or even their faces in these works, but instead blends the figure into the landscape in a somewhat peculiar manner. Bower is not trying to hide the act but rather seeks to embrace it. Bower, in these works, attempts to leave behind American taboos about sex and present a more honest portrayal of this common and natural act.

Nudes in landscape have played an important role in art history but have often been met with much controversy. For centuries the nude figure has been presented solely in the context of allegorical and historical subjects. It was not until Manet’s “Déjeuner sur l’Herbe” that a nude female figure was presented amongst men in a contemporary context. This painting, which now may be seen as a classic, however met its fair share controversy when it was presented at the Salon De Refuses in 1863.

The nude figure and sexual depiction has continued to provoke criticism in art history. However, it has often been the manner of the portrayal that has been more objectionable than the actual subject matter i.e. realistic paintings of nudity and sex acts have often incited greater criticism than paintings of similar subject matters created in an expressive or more abstracted manner. Bower’s realistic portrayal of the human figure engaging in sex acts confronts this debate creating a compelling juxtaposition between what is deemed as appropriate or inappropriate imagery. Ultimately however, it is up to the viewer to make his or her own interpretation.

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