

:: GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY

Jon Blatchford and Kelly Neibert: Homeland

3/15/19 – 4/27/19

Grant Wahlquist Gallery is pleased to present “Homeland,” an exhibition of paintings by Jon Blatchford and Kelly Neibert. The show will run from March 15 through April 27, 2019. **An opening reception will occur on Friday, March 15 from 5 – 8 pm. The gallery will host a conversation with the artists on Saturday, March 16, at 2 pm.**

“Homeland” demonstrates the gallery’s ongoing commitment to functioning as a meeting point for artists and audiences from Maine and elsewhere. Though Blatchford is based in rural Maine and Neibert in Chicago, their shared interest in everyday subject matter and painterly approaches are emblematic of a wider reappearing of the intimate in contemporary art. In a present rife with political and ecological crisis, when the news seems unceasingly bad, Neibert and Blatchford demonstrate that turning towards home need not be a retreat but can also be both a way of surviving and an ethical stance.

Blatchford lives in New Gloucester near the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, and his recent paintings reflect his engagement with and observation of that community. Most of his paintings in “Homeland” begin with photographs of daily life at Sabbathday Lake—its landscape, gardens, livestock, members, and rooms—which he reduces to black and white and mounts to panel. He then applies paint to select areas of the panel to varied and stunning effect: shadows deepen or reverse, figure and ground switch, and prosaic subjects reach toward abstraction. Blatchford has clearly looked closely at the work of Gerhard Richter and Luc Tuymans, and his work continues their examination of the relationship between photography and painting with uncommon honesty. His transformation of photographic images is not merely a formal exercise, but functions as a way of heightening their psychological charge.

Neibert’s exuberant paintings bring the highly-textured marks and distorted perspective of Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard into our current moment. In place of the Intimists’ well-ordered drawing rooms and family members engrossed in books, she presents friends or her partner scanning the web on laptops and watching Netflix in cramped apartments. Where the inhabitants of Bonnard and Vuillard’s paintings typically maintain a certain level of decorum, Neibert paints domestic scenes that are ambitious yet unafraid of the messiness of contemporary life; laundry piles up, beer is drunk straight from the can, and a rotund cat jumps onto the toilet for a drink.

As Fairfield Porter wrote of Bonnard, Neibert and Blatchford’s forms come from tenderness. They give us paintings of kindness shared between people, animals, and the places they inhabit. In their work we find ethics without moralism, family without tribalism, affection without sentimentality, and an onrush of relief.

The gallery is located at 30 City Center, Portland, Maine. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm, and by appointment. For more information, visit <http://grantwahlquist.com>, call 207.245.5732, or email info@grantwahlquist.com.