

:: GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY

Karen Lederer: Cheeto Fish

8/19/17 – 9/22/2017

Grant Wahlquist Gallery is pleased to present “Cheeto Fish,” a solo exhibition of works by Brooklyn-based artist Karen Lederer. The show will run from August 19 through September 22, 2017. An opening reception will occur on Saturday, August 19 from 5 – 7 pm.

Lederer engages with the legacy of high modernism from an utterly contemporary standpoint, creating formally rigorous pictures that are charming, accessible, playful, and often humorous. Originally trained as a printmaker, her paintings frequently incorporate printed gradients and textures in unexpected arrangements, creating an unstable picture plane that welcomes ambiguity and grows in depth with time. She draws equally on motifs from Modernist painting (Matisse, Picasso, Léger), fashion and design (Marimekko prints), digital culture (the framing and directed point-of-view of Instagram), cultural tourism (museum mascots and gift shop mugs), and objects from her everyday life. Lederer places everything from modernist masterpieces to cans of La Croix on an equal symbolic playing field in a fresh extension of the pictorial democracy of her forebears.

“Cheeto Fish” features nearly 20 paintings and monoprints, all of which demonstrate her masterful skills as a colorist. At its core is a series of pictures that riff on Matisse’s drawings, paintings, and prints of goldfish. As did Matisse, Lederer presents goldfish in containers (bowls, cups, or, as in *Conference* and *Doctor Fish*, small pools that resemble footbaths) in interior settings. Her goldfish are simpler and more graphic than Matisse’s, yet also more active, moving in all directions (*Fish Cup*) or exiting the frame altogether (*Indoor Swim*). “Cheeto Fish” is punctuated by a number of pictures of Cheetos, another common motif in Lederer’s work. For Lederer, still life is another form of portraiture. “I am fascinated by how still lifes communicate meaning, how images slip into symbols, and how common forms echo through disparate things as in the curved shape of the fish, finger, stem, and Cheeto.” This formal slippage is most pronounced in *Cheetos Party*, a monoprint in which a hand plucks the orange snacks from a bowl covered in moiré printed forms echoing the Cheetos shape, behind which orange goldfish appear to swim.

In a number of works, Lederer alludes to the productive, often antagonistic relationship between Matisse and Picasso (*Staring Contest*, *Sylvettes and the Fish*). Picasso ceramics gaze at goldfish in what could be considered a pictorial representation of his statement that viewers “have got to be able to picture side-by-side everything Matisse and I were doing at that time. No one has ever looked at Matisse’s painting more carefully than I; and no one has looked at mine more carefully than he.” In these pictures, Lederer observes the mutual staring of Matisse and Picasso from an affectionate distance, a distance also informed by David Hockney’s prints from the 1980s and Polly Apfelbaum’s experiments with color. Though countless artists have

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examined Picasso, Matisse, and the relationship between them—in *Solo Dance*, Lederer nods to their pervasiveness by including a coffee mug with an image of Matisse’s 1909 version of *La Danse* alongside a goldfish bowl—the freshness of Lederer’s approach demonstrates that this examination can still generate something new in our present moment.

Karen Lederer received her BFA in Printmaking and Drawing from the Sam Fox School of Fine Art and Design at Washington University in St. Louis in 2008 and an MFA in Printmaking from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2012. Her work has recently been featured in exhibitions at Anya Tish Gallery, Houston; Grant Wahlquist Gallery, Portland, Maine; Field Projects, New York (solo); Danese/Corey, New York; and Cuevas Tilleard, New York. In 2016, she was awarded a residency at the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program and a Keyholder Residency at the Lower East Side Printshop. Her work has been written about in *The Chart*, *Brooklyn Magazine*, *Arte Fuse*, *New American Paintings*, and *Maake Magazine*.

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.