

JUNE BISANTZ



RACHEL SIPORIN



JENNIFER KNAUS



Commentary/Herself

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June Bisantz Jennifer Knaus Rachel Siporin

Rachel Siporin, curator
Essay by Samantha Pinckney

June Bisantz, catalog design

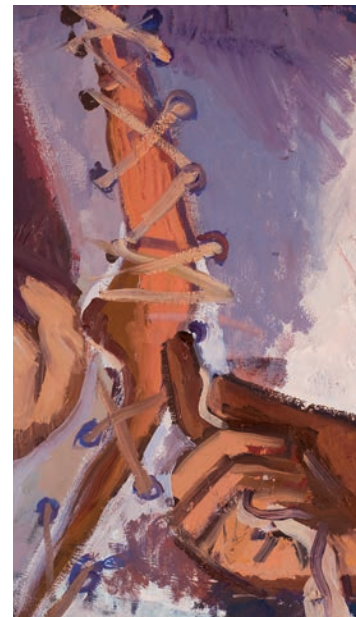
Brickbottom Gallery Somerville, MA May 28- June 27, 2009



June Bisantz
Alone - Watercolor (detail)



Jennifer Knaus
Seaweed Head - Oil on panel



Rachel Siporin
Keyhole - Oil on wood (detail)

The exhibition *Commentary /Herself* investigates the ways in which autobiography and narrative link the work of the three exhibiting artists by examining their efforts to produce relevant images of the “self” for the 21st century. The artists’ works, despite employing contrasting processes and media, have interesting parallels. Each of the artists uses the vantage point of the “self” to comment, in ways that are unique and personal as well as undeniably feminist, on contemporary social and political issues. Each also similarly juxtaposes disparate images in their creation of the “self”. Finally, each appears to mask personal concerns behind the impersonal veneer of art history.

Jennifer Knaus’ work begins with a desire to “personalize idealized notions of beauty and importance, to embellish icons with humor and a little absurdity.” Her imagery combines interests in female iconography and still-life painting. As a result, Knaus unites two normally disparate pictorial genres: portraiture and still life, and is fascinated by the relationship between her human subjects and the natural world.

Each of Knaus’ images is an amalgamation of various attractions including the artist herself, her friends and family, her backyard garden and her interest in the history of art. Her exactly precise works usually start with her own image, which then gets taken apart and reassembled with other things. She combines, then, photographic exactitude with intriguing puzzles of juxtaposition. Her oil paintings are generally intimate in scale and touch, full of telling details and amusing distortions that center on “portraiture” but that might be better termed “assemblages”.

Knaus’ work also draws on two art historical sources. One is the Northern Renaissance tradition of small exactly drawn portraits and still-lives in which the goal is to draw everything from people to plants with the same gem-like clarity. The other is surrealism, the logic defying style pioneered in Europe between the wars. On the one hand, there is the utter particularity of rendering, on the other, the rubbery distortions that tease the viewer’s credulity. Knaus

tampers not only with the making of images (her Cubist-like deconstructions and distortions) but also with the notion of framing a window onto the world. True to Modernist theory, her canvases are mirrors reflecting a reconstructed “self” that explodes portraiture’s traditional aim to conform and to flatter and that urges the viewer not to take contemporary notions of beauty and importance too seriously.

While Knaus’ work is a reaction to contemporary sexual politics, Rachel Siporin’s work is, in part, a reaction to contemporary cultural politics. Deeply affected by feelings of helplessness in the face of inhumanity, Siporin paints a collage of contemporary atrocities that become metaphors for the universal theme of guilt. Siporin’s works, however, are personal rather than overtly political and, like Knaus’, begin from the vantage point of the “self”. Siporin’s works seem to suggest that we are all, in our recalcitrance, the “unknowing perpetrators of inhumane acts”. In subtle ways, the figures in her works shift roles until it’s hard to tell the difference between victims and victimizers.

Siporin’s work, like Knaus’, is an amalgamation. Her works are composed from an evolving collection of photographic images from the newspaper. Siporin then draws or paints from these images freehand, combining and constructing an invented space. The resulting images are executed with a gestural touch that reflects an interest in the process of painting, in surface and in incident.

Siporin, too, is a student of art history. Her sources, like Knaus’, are disparate and reflect her dual concerns of composition and surface. Siporin’s compositions are reminiscent of the frozen moment, condensed space and unusual perspective utilized by 19th-century Realist painters like Degas and Manet – a generation of painters affected by the birth of modern journalism. Additionally, Siporin’s interest in the process of painting and in surface reflects an interest in 20th-century artists of the New York school such as Willem De Kooning, with whom she shares an interest in the active handling of paint. By denying the expected expressions of likeness, personality, and mood through formal manipulations of composition and surface, Siporin’s portraits are rendered anonymous or impenetrable. This mixing of identities becomes Siporin’s point.

June Bisantz’ works also engage in original ways with contemporary sexual and cultural politics from the vantage point of the “self”. Bisantz believes in the powerful reach of commercial advertising and her works acknowledge that the 21st century “self” must be seen as existing in the domain of the mass media. However, these pieces tackle the mass media images of airbrushed and superficial faces with which we are daily bombarded as well as the mass marketing of a female “persona”. The works suggest that the identities media images represent are always contrived. Instead, Bisantz looks at her fears through a humorous lens and robs them of their power by sharing them openly with the world.

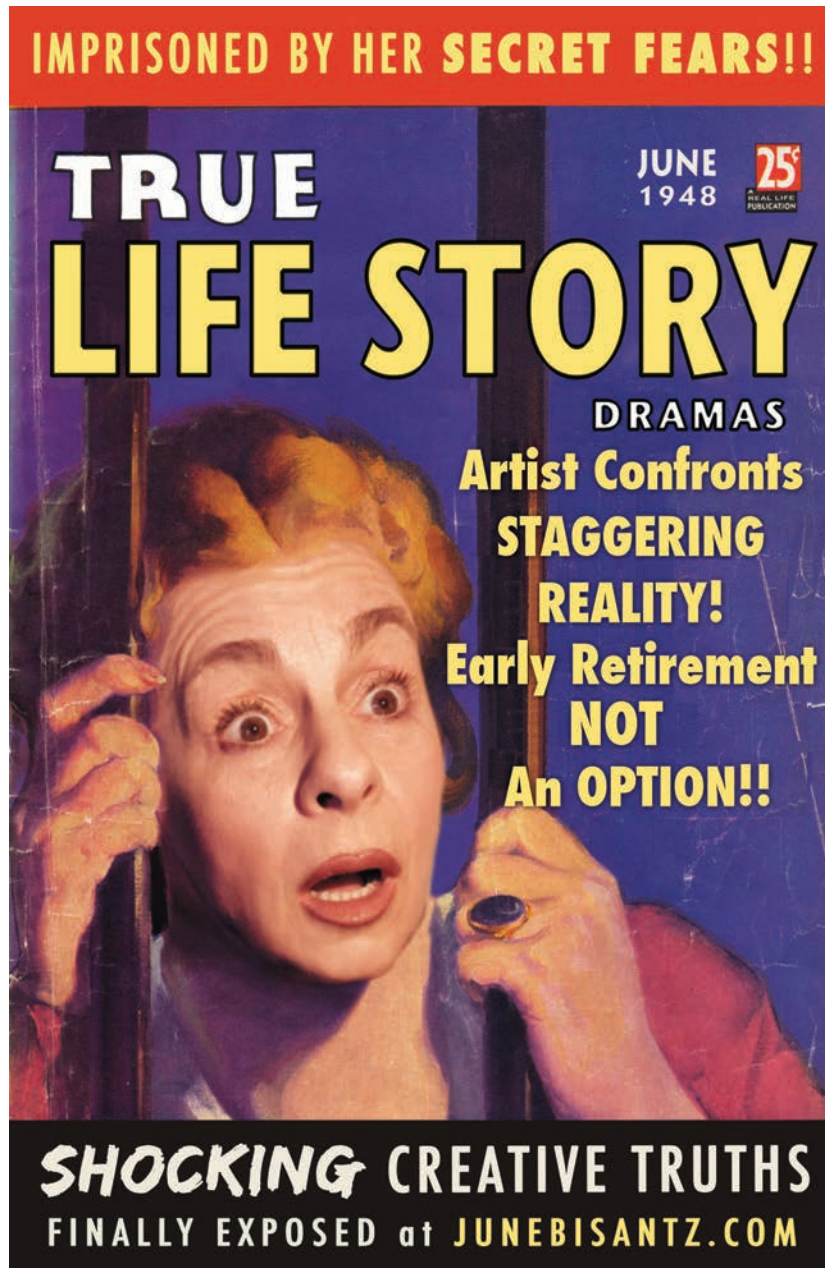
Bisantz’ works are perhaps the most literal “assemblages” of the three exhibiting artists. Her self-portraits are constructed of photos of herself collaged into vintage magazine images. Reborn as commercial props, they parody the media connection between identity and gender and serve as a commentary on the mass media’s role in manipulating appearances and popular values. In them, Bisantz acts out the heavily marketed fantasy that we need to remodel ourselves in order to be good enough. The works ultimately profess that identity is complex; that it is based on more than image alone.

Bisantz’ background as a commercial artist and illustrator inflects the works on view and her images owe a debt to the vocabulary of American ads. Products of American mass media and commercial culture were the central subjects of American Pop art, which Bisantz seems to draw heavily upon. Even Bisantz’ digital technique owes a debt to Pop’s privileging of photographic and printing techniques over conventional painting.

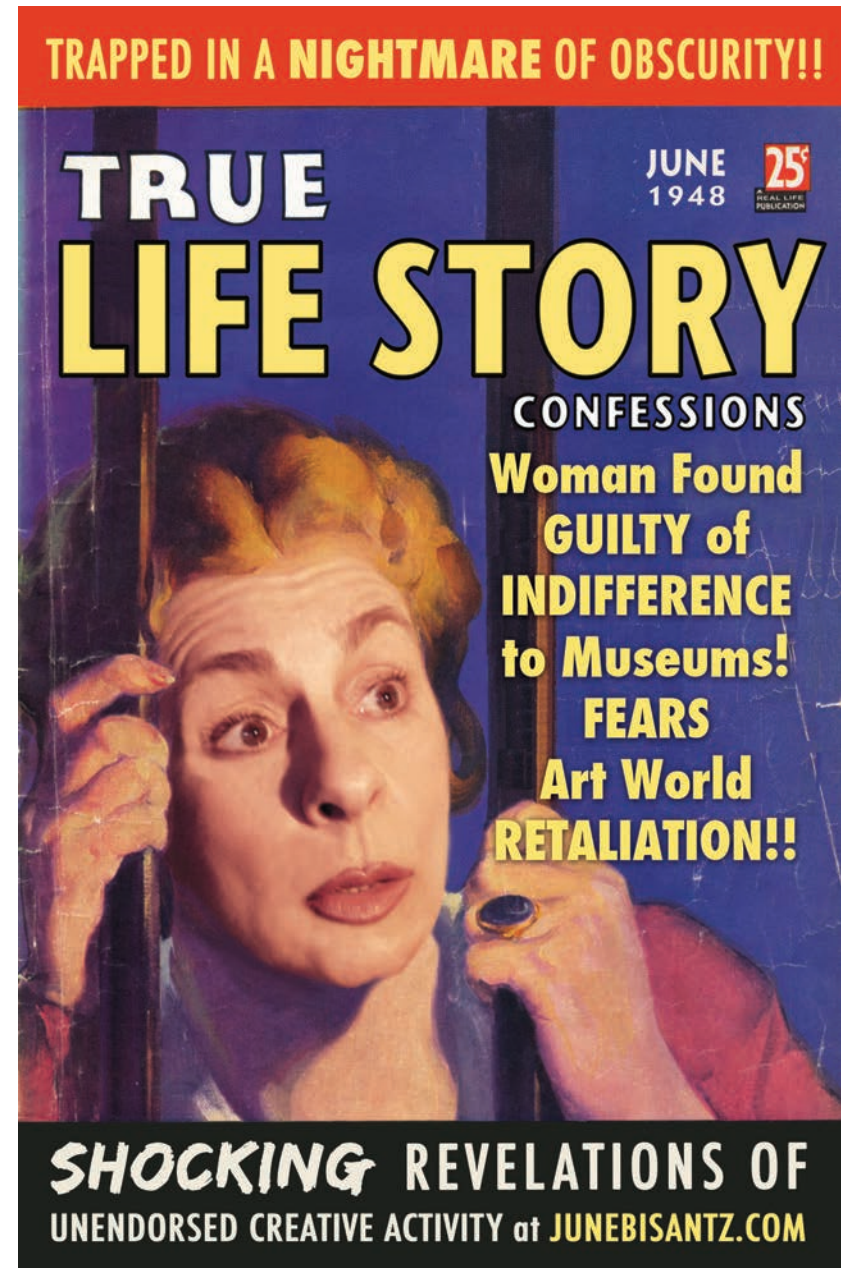
One tendency of contemporary art is the desire to engage in original ways with the art of the past. The artists in this show reflect this tendency in their engagements with previous art historical styles and in their efforts to produce relevant images of the “self” for the 21st century. Taken together, the works in this show are reminders that we are not the sum of our facial expressions, nor are we a catalogue of events. Human identity is far more shifting and impermanent.

Samanth Pinckney, *Art Historian*

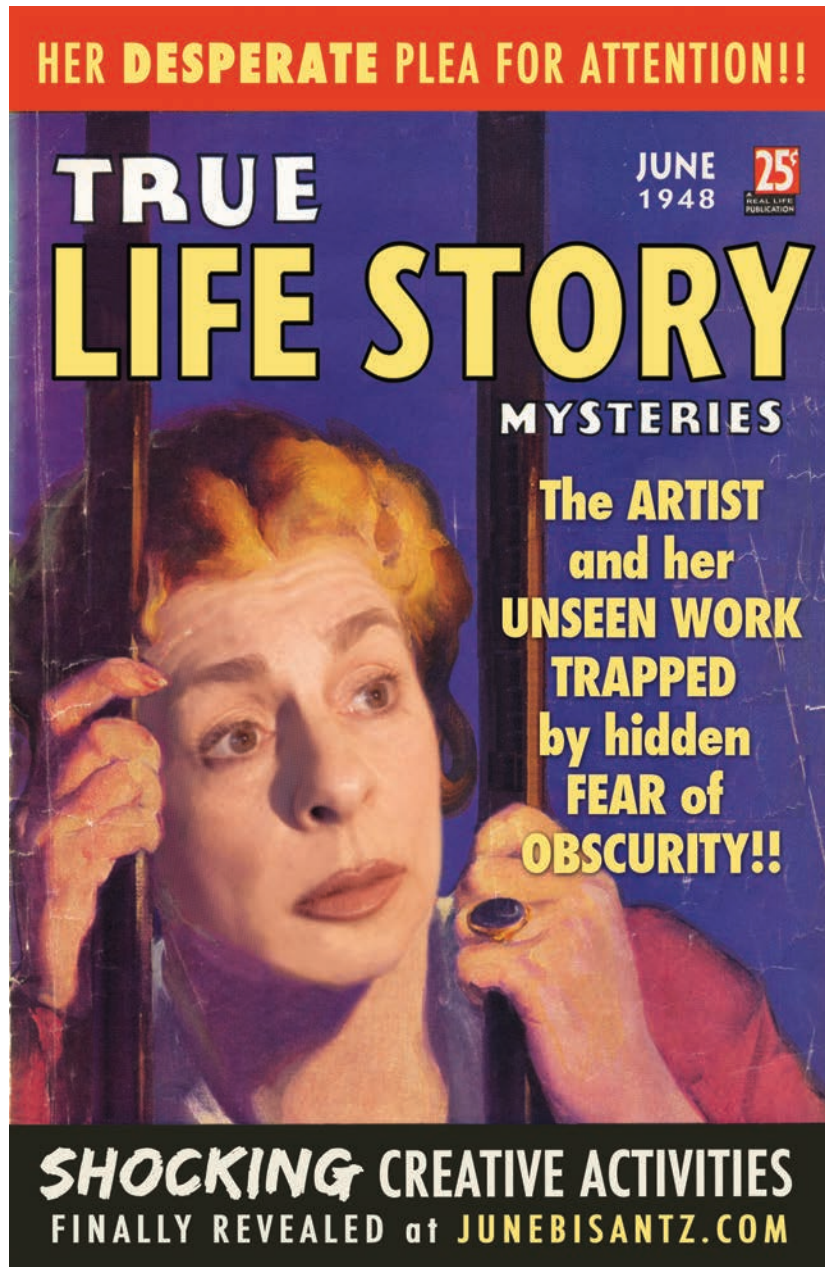
June Bisantz



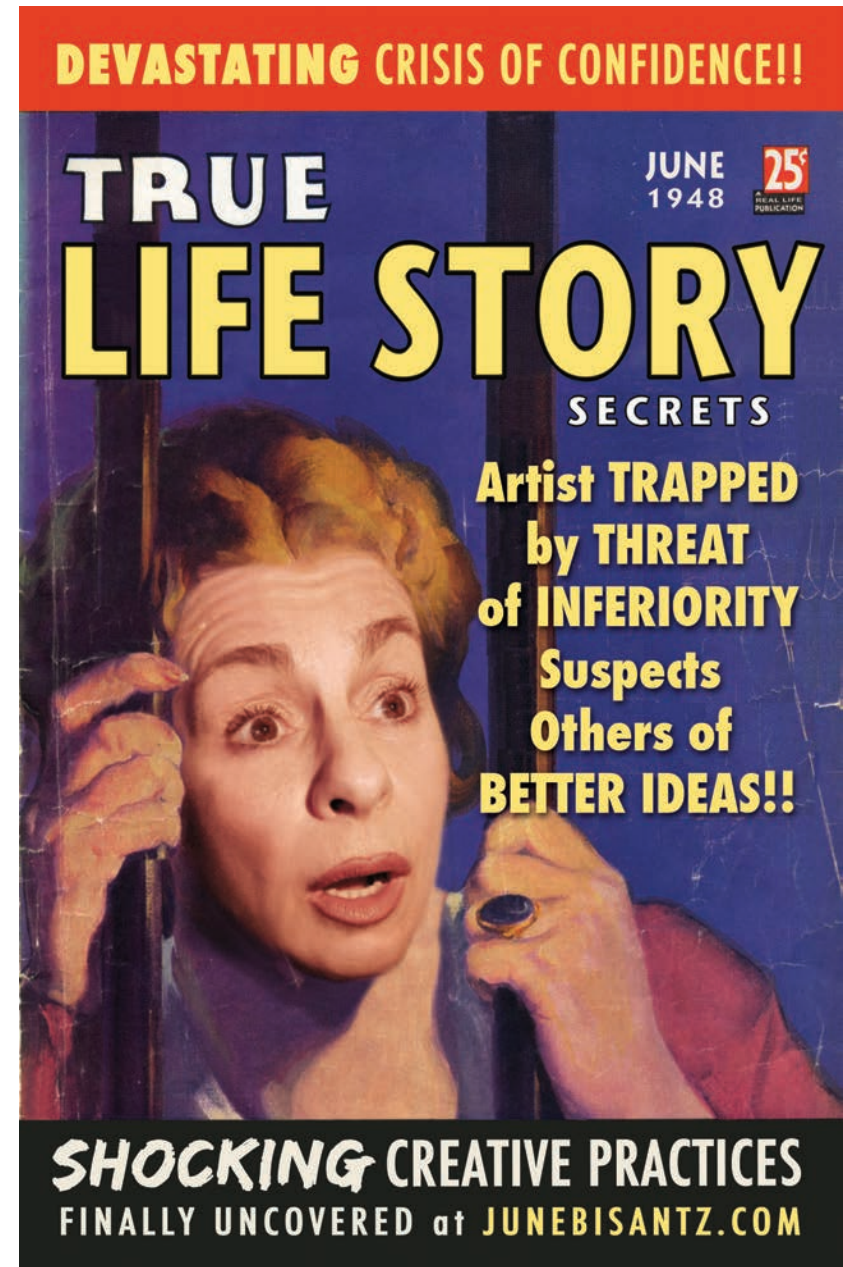
June Bisantz
True Life Story Dramas
Digital Image for Back-lit Advertising Panel 69X47" 2008



June Bisantz
True Life Story Dramas
Digital Image for Back-lit Advertising Panel 69X47" 2008



June Bisantz
True Life Story Mysteries
Digital Image for Door Cling 18X12" 2008



June Bisantz
True Life Story Secrets
Digital Image for Door Cling 18X12" 2008



*June Bisantz
I Love My Dishwasher
Free-Standing Cardboard Cutout
59X36"
2002*



*June Bisantz
Before and After
Free-Standing Cardboard Cutouts
65X29"
2002*



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In store only.

One coupon per guest. While supplies last. No substitutions or rain checks. Coupons must be surrendered when felony is complete. Void where prohibited. Prohibited everywhere. Men in suits and government agents only. Cash value impossible to determine.

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June Bisantz
No Purchase Necessary!! Free Money!
Sizeable Digital Image for
Store Coupons & Point of Purchase Display
2009

HURRY!! Limited Time Offer!!



No Purchase Necessary!!

In store only.

One coupon per guest. While supplies last.
No substitutions or rain checks.
Coupons must be surrendered when time is spent.
Void where prohibited. Cash value greater than previously thought.
Valid only where other plans are suspended.

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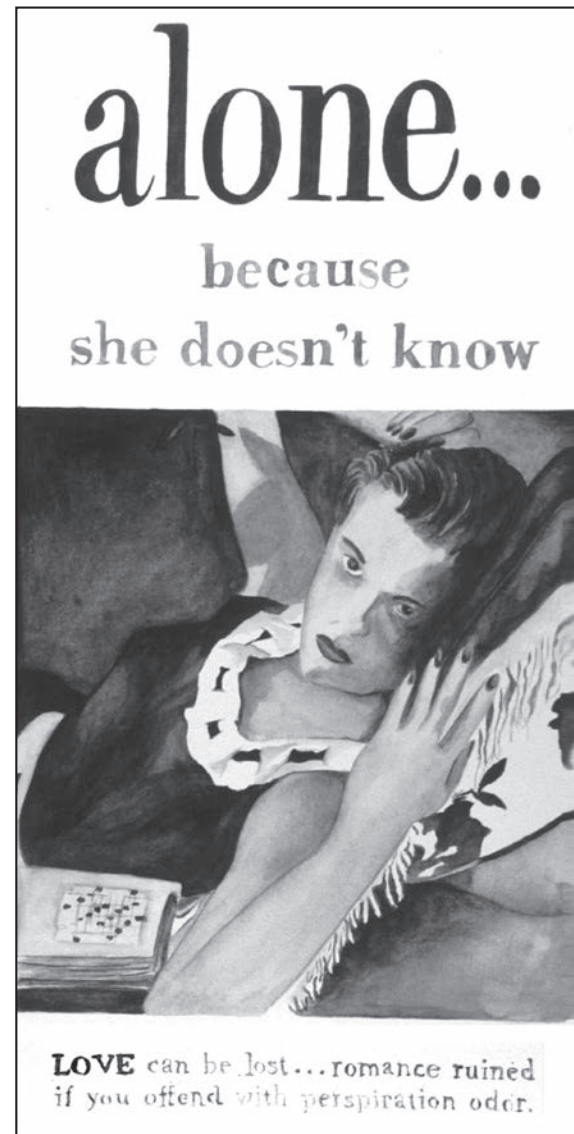
All rules and restrictions apply



June Bisantz
No Purchase Necessary!! Free Time!
Sizeable Digital Image for
Store Coupons & Point of Purchase Display
2009



June Bisantz
I'll Take Romance
Watercolor 20X16"
1999



June Bisantz
Alone...
Watercolor 18X10"
2000

Jennifer Knaus



Jennifer Knaus
Marble Head
Oil on Panel 12X24"
2006



Jennifer Knaus
Spider Wort
Graphite on Paper 10X8" 2008



Jennifer Knaus
Ode To Hair
Graphite on Paper 16X8" 2009



Jennifer Knaus
Wax Beans
Egg Tempera and Oil on Panel 10X8" 2006



Jennifer Knaus
Mid Spring
Oil on Panel 24X18" 2008



Jennifer Knaus
Weeds
Oil on Panel 28X18" 2006



Jennifer Knaus
Sea Weed Head
Oil on Panel 24X15" 2008

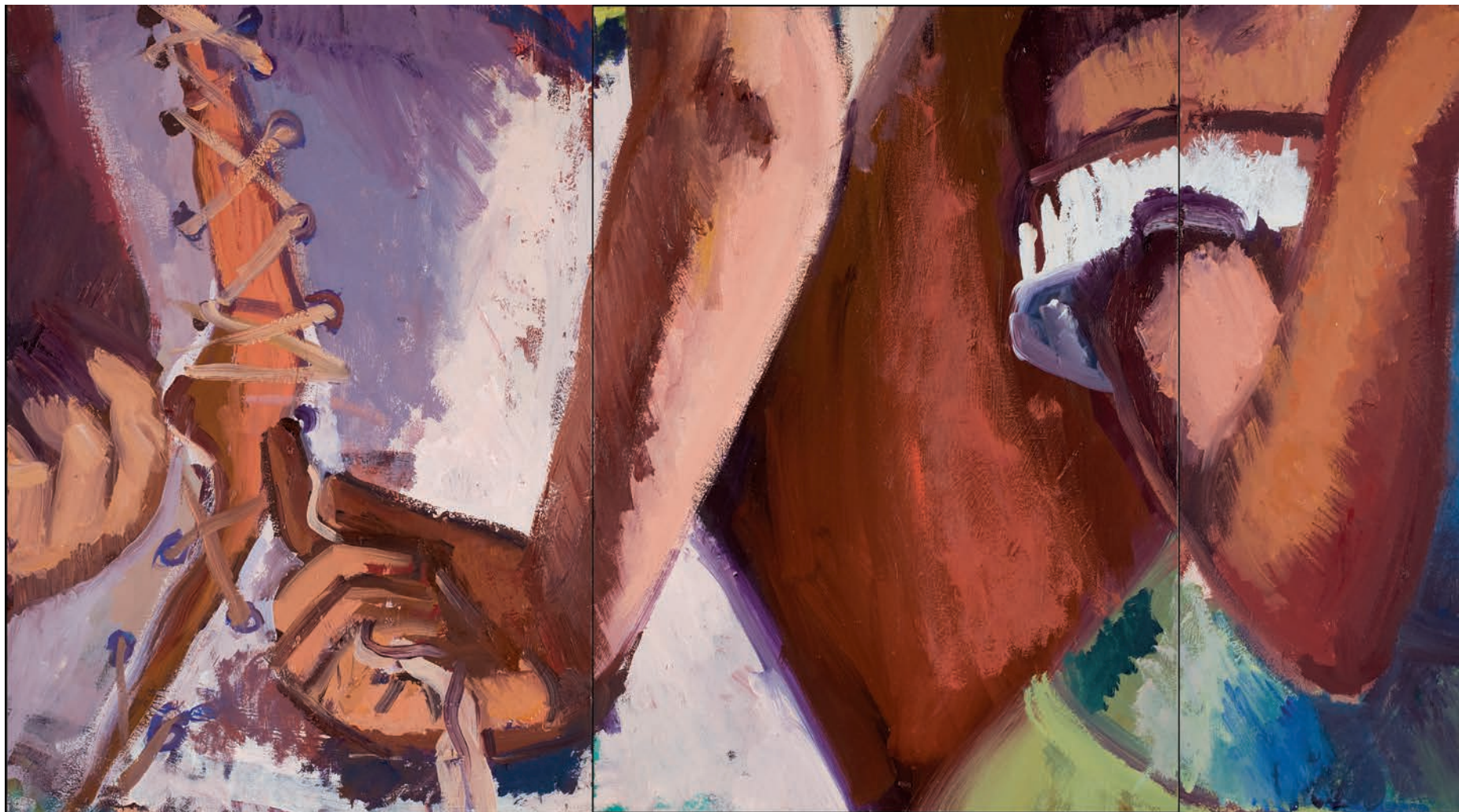


Jennifer Knaus
Caryatid
Oil on Panel 40X22" 2008



Jennifer Knaus
Under Water
Graphite on Paper 12X8" 2009

Rachel Siporin



Rachel Siporin
Keyhole
Oil on Wood 12X45"
2009





Rachel Siporin
Witchery
Oil on Panel 36X72"
2008-09

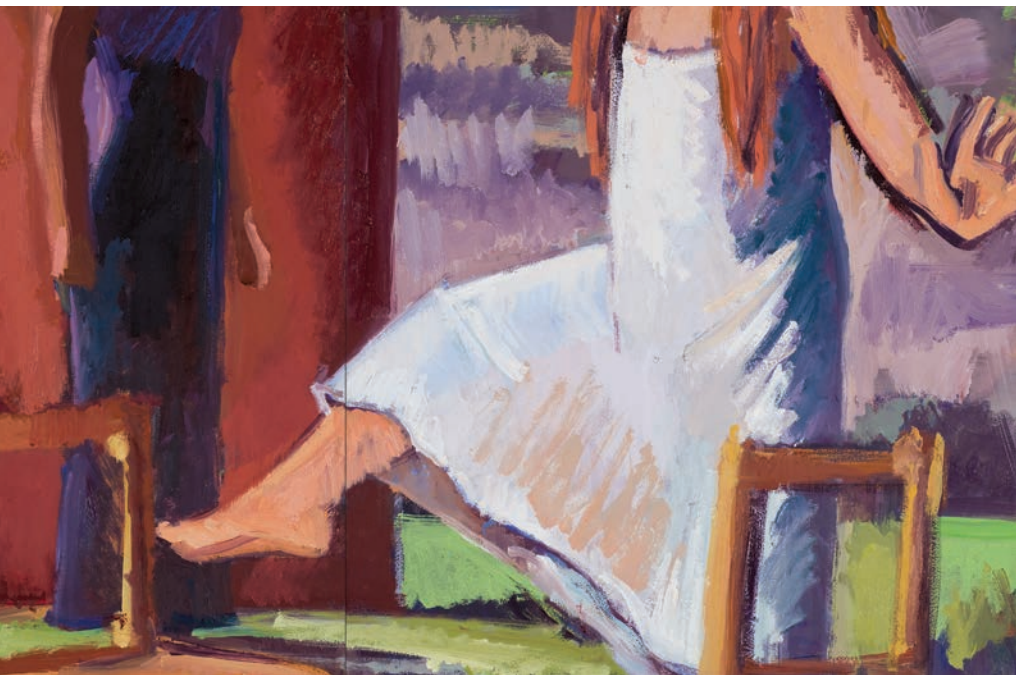


Rachel Siporin
Escape
Mixed Media on Paper 30X44"
2008



Rachel Siporin
Valkyrie
Oil on Panel 6X24"
2009





Rachel Siporin
Musical Chairs
Oil on Panel 12X48"
2009





Rachel Siporin
The Sink
Mixed Media on Paper 22X39"
2008



June Bisantz junebisantz.com
Rachel Siporin rachelsiporin.com
Jennifer Knaus jenniferknaus.com