

Workspace

For immediate release:

lesley heller
workspace

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Start Here

Curated by Brian Mattlin

December 11, 2016 – February 5, 2017

Opening Reception: Sunday, December 11, 6-8pm

Who do we think we are? Where does our sense of self originate and how does it intersect with others and the world around us? In the midst of a national debate over “us vs. them,” and a culture increasingly seen through a lens of identity politics, Lesley Heller Workspace presents *Start Here*, curated by Brian Mattlin. Featuring the work of Susan Mikula, Kaye Mahoney and Anne Gilman. Three women, three mediums, three conversations with the infinite and the intimate that explore—if not necessarily explain—how outside forces come to shape who we are, and may become. Mikula turns her gaze back and within, Mahoney expands her view out into the physical and metaphysical world, and Gilman looks up and around, responding to the challenges of the everyday, while reminding us time and again, as we must do time and again, to simply “start here.”

Viewers of **Susan Mikula**'s “u.X” photographs are often reminded of Paleolithic cave paintings. There is something powerfully primitive about them, as if we are witnessing the earliest discoveries of fire and community, but also conflict and fear. In these shadowy figures and scenes, printed on rough and heavy handmade Japanese paper, we sense an ancient narrative and a common bond. In her “Picture Book” series the iconography is more modern, more civilized, with the somehow familiar images floating on smooth, pale paper in large shadowbox frames. But the underlying emotional tone is just as atavistic. There is magic and menace in the outsized creatures and mysterious houses that populated all of our childhood stories, and still lurk in our adult subconscious. What is it we sense in these totemic archetypes? What early and seminal moments of forming consciousness?

Painter **Kaye Mahoney**'s experimental Libratory brews up deceptively simple concoctions of potent force, cutting through to big questions about our connections to nature, philosophy and the universe. In this iteration, a series of hinged diptychs as “books” sit closed on the shelf, with titles such as “Annagrammatical Reincarnation,” “Balanced Philosophy (by deduction),” “Red On Redon” and “Tattoo – Yo Man” visible on the spine. Taken in hand, as intended, each opens to present a meditation, a metaphor, a play on words, a riddle or even a joke. Others, such as “Massively Grave” and “Deadly Swoosh” are among her most viscerally direct explorations of mortality and our connection to the forces of nature. Throughout there are underlying concepts that speak to how we relate to each other and our world, layered on top of the intimacy of holding an artwork in your hands, of experiencing it physically; not just with the eyes and brain.

Anne Gilman inscribes sheets and scrolls of paper with powerful, often poignant streams of consciousness; an intensely personal verbal and visual conversation between herself, her subject matter, her environment, and with language itself. Using pencils, inks, chalks and charcoals she extemporaneously writes and overwrites, erases and redacts, in English and in Spanish as the language and the moment dictate. With pieces ranging in size from a sheet of note paper to ten feet tall, the work is detail-oriented and labor intensive, often contrasting areas that are carefully controlled with sections that show process and chance. Typically starting from some memory, moment or event in her life, over time the world leaks in, outside sounds and ideas intrude, then inform, the evolution of the work. The finished product, a map of how we shape and are shaped by the world around us, can feel like a cross between a page out of your own secret diary and one from the Dead Sea scrolls.

For more information or to request images, please email info@lesleyheller.com or phone 212-410-6120.