

## JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

### BECKY SUSS

*Where They Are*

February 21 – March 28, 2020

Opening reception for the exhibition: **Friday, February 21<sup>st</sup>**, from **6-8 PM** at **513 West 20<sup>th</sup> Street**.

Jack Shainman Gallery is pleased to present *Where They Are*, a new series of paintings by **Becky Suss** (b. 1980) at the gallery's 513 West 20th Street location. In Suss's second solo exhibition with the gallery, this new body of work draws upon seminal children's literature to further explore the ideas of interiority, domesticity, and memory central to Suss's practice.

The exhibition's title, *Where They Are*, refers to the educational philosophy of Lucy Sprague Mitchell, founder of Bank Street College of Education in New York. A pioneer in the field of early childhood education, Mitchell's approach emphasized the familiar and comforting rather than the foreign and terrifying. Her student, Margaret Wise Brown, created the most famous example of this method in *Goodnight Moon*, yet Brown never felt validated in her contribution to literature and early childhood development. Like Brown, Suss's work also elevates domestic spaces that have long been undervalued, due in part to their associations with femininity and family. Suss privileges these foundational stories as a rebuttal to what she sees as a devaluing of child-rearing, a pervasive phenomenon despite the fact that childhood is the bedrock for every adult's worldview, influencing the ways we construct our society and the politics we embody.

After becoming a parent herself, Suss returned to the literature of her childhood, inspired by the memories of these imaginative narratives. Each large canvas represents a work of fiction distilled into a single scene devoid of characters. The artist plays with perspective, patterning, and scale to create flattened compositions that represent the interiority of psychological space. Suss considers how the act of painting through shifting scale, distorting perspective, and combining disparate references mirrors the plasticity of memory, continually reformed and revised. One painting inspired by Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is populated not only by Suss's memories of the book, which begins on a houseboat in Kashmir, but the stories she grew up with from her father's own recollections of his time traveling in the same region, as well as the actual objects he collected there.

Interwoven into each painting are historical allusions and attributes. In one interior depicting the titular character's bathroom in *The Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, Suss includes two antique vases from the Italian High Renaissance in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection. These objects reference the mystery of the ownership of a Michelangelo sculpture at the center of the novel. Other paintings include architectural details authentic to the literature's setting, such as the traditional Kashmiri khatamband ceiling in the painting relating to the Rushdie book, or the furnishings of a northern Danish fisherman's home in another work which references a pivotal scene in Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*. In the same painting, the stars seen out the window accurately reflect what would have been seen in that region the month and year the story takes place. In her meticulous research, Suss draws a parallel to her practice with these authors who similarly engage spaces where historical facts meet storytelling and fantasy.

In addition to the large scale interiors are five smaller paintings of illustrated children's stories further highlighting the significance of these familiar images in our development. The inclusion of children's literature in her work continues her investigation of the spaces in which fundamental ideals and identities are created, while a latch-hook alphabet rug, along with two small studies, continue the engagement with the complex connotations and foundational elements of the domestic. In doing so, Suss explores how important these stories and spaces are to our development, imagination, and understanding of the world.

Suss was born in 1980 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she is currently based. She received an MFA from the University of California, Berkeley, a BA from Williams College, and in 2013 attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. In addition to a solo exhibition at the ICA Philadelphia, Suss' work has been exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; the Fralin Art Museum at the University of Virginia; Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia, PA; the Berkeley Art Museum, CA; and The Berman Museum at Ursinus College, Pennsylvania, as well as at storied Philadelphia artist collectives Vox Populi and Space 1026, of which she is a former member. Additionally, Suss was recently awarded the prestigious Pew fellowship by the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage in Philadelphia, PA.

Concurrently on view is ***Beyond the Blue***, an exhibition of new works by **Vibha Galhotra** at 524 West 24<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as ***Meleko Mokgosi: Democratic Intuition*** at The School.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. For press inquiries please contact Emily Alli, Sutton, [emily@suttoncomms.com](mailto:emily@suttoncomms.com), +1 212 202 3402. For other inquiries please contact the gallery at [info@jackshainman.com](mailto:info@jackshainman.com).