

An abstract painting featuring a central, bright green, teardrop-shaped form. Above this form is a cluster of colorful, textured brushstrokes in shades of pink, red, blue, and white. The background is composed of various shades of grey, blue, and white, with some areas showing a grid-like pattern of thin lines. The overall style is expressive and gestural.

Judith Simonian  
Foreign Bodies







FLESHY PINK ROOM

72 x 60 inches, 2014, acrylic on canvas

# Judith Simonian

## Foreign Bodies – Recent Paintings

Dialogue: Jennifer Coates and David Humphrey

March 12 – April 16, 2015

EDWARD THORP GALLERY

210 Eleventh Avenue, 6th Floor, New York City, NY 10001

## Search Party

**DAVID HUMPHREY:** What strikes me about Judith Simonian's paintings is that she relishes the way paint can slur its way into description. Imagery comes in and out of being under her brush. In *Patio Lounge Chairs*, 2013 there's a gray smear across the foreground. It could be a shadow or a frozen pond with painterly flare-ups, maybe fish under the water or trash spread across it. Simonian's brush strokes squirm into life. But tell me, Jennifer Coates, what is that black shape that's crashed onto the chairs?

**JENNIFER COATES:** An asteroid from outer space that destroyed the lounging people. The fish are actually splatters of blood and innards across the icy water. Maybe the asteroid is the literalization of what Simonian does with the brush strokes, making images come in and out of presence. The black shape is a stand-in for her artistic impulses that carry narrative weight but also obliterate.

**DH:** Let's move on to the beach ball in *Beach Ball In Pool*, 2015. I see somebody with high white boots walking towards the edge of the pool, in danger of being splashed.

**JC:** Is that jumble of circles on the right a collage of grapes pushing into the scene? Or is it the action of bubbling that comes off the water?

**DH:** I thought it was an artificial grape sculpture from the interior of the house that somehow intruded. It wants to join the beach ball because they're morphologically related.

**JC:** They've been having a conversation across the house for years and finally the fake bunch of grapes gets to leave the living room. Do you think that the woman in the background feels threatened?

**DH:** She seems pretty snappy, attractively mod.

**JC:** But her eyes are open wide. I think it's shock and awe; she's traumatized. The swimming pool erupted into a magnetic force of attraction that brings together shapes with morphological resonance.

**DH:** Do you think she's frightened by what she wants?

**JC:** I think she feels left out because she's not a sphere. She wonders why she is here. The pool is attracting spheres and maybe the spheres that are embedded in her person are now at risk because they might leap out of her body and join the party.

**DH:** Her dress is blue — which could qualify her to be part of the watery jumble.

**JC:** Is the pool a stand in for the painting, for the painting process?

**DH:** Absolutely, it's an object with four sides filled with wet stuff that promises transformation. If you dive into the pool you could have a pleasurable, slightly out of body experience and these paintings are all about slurring boundaries. Let's think about *Search Party*, 2011.

**JC:** These little black person-blobs in the distance could be a search party. There is an unidentifiable object in the foreground that looks like an abstraction. What if the search party is on the lookout for the least legible thing in the painting, the thing hardest to understand? They don't see it. They're walking in the wrong direction. They're walking towards the pictorial when what they're actually looking for is this abstract entity, closest to us.

**DH:** But what if they're fleeing from it. I think you and I have different feelings about the indefinable.

**JC:** You're more of a pictorial guy when it comes down to it, aren't you?

**DH:** Well I wouldn't go that far.

**JC:** I think we're on opposing teams.

**DH:** And this painting is helping us understand that. There's a lot of shredding going on in these paintings. There's smearing and dissolution, but imagery has been torn out of one context and dropped into others. The object in the foreground of *Search Party* is like an alien shard. The bits of paint that splatter across its surface are intruders from another dimension.

JC: Maybe the picture is frustrated with itself. There are clawing, spattered outbursts, as if the picture is uncomfortable. It's funny to think about the paint-bits as residue of the artist's behavior, as though Simonian was punishing the painting for being so rowdy.

DH: I think that's why the people want to get out.

JC: They're at risk.

DH: Well, do you want to leave this chilly place and go to the warmer *Fleshy Pink Room*, 2014?

JC: It reminds me of Florine Stettheimer in a nice way.

DH: Yes, it's very civilized and girlishly cozy like a Florine interior. What's that green shape in the foreground?

JC: It's a crotch.

DH: The bathing suit area of the painting?

JC: It's a point of entry that also blocks. And look, there's a nocturnal cityscape or dark, blurred street scene beneath it. There are two opposing situations: the warm and well-lit interior and an encroaching threat.

DH: That red area behind the green couch looks like it's smoldering. There's a weather system blowing across this painting that changes while you look at it.

JC: People must be having sex behind the couch.

DH: Really?

JC: That's the only thing I'm thinking.

DH: Do you want them to be having sex?

JC: There is a radiant, fiery action back there and the couch is nudging in: it wants to participate.

DH: It does seem a little agitated. Are we projecting fantasies into this painting?

JC: Her painterly expressiveness invites us to. These are fun paintings.

DH: (laughing)

JC: Let's move on to my favorite, *Snow Cone*, 2014. Simonian mentioned it is based on a porcelain piece from the Met. I love that the central image is in a state of fragmentary ruin but the shadow it casts is of an intact object with little handles on the sides. She has caused an apocalyptic landscape to descend upon it, annihilating its edges and removing its handles — which I think is really unfair.

DH: You just said everything that I wanted to say about this painting. But I could add that the white shape at the top of the porcelain artifact seems like a sharp blade that has ripped a portal into the top of the image.

JC: Do you think the object caused damage to itself and to its surroundings?

DH: Yes, like a tool with agency.

JC: Can we extrapolate from that and say this is what artworks do, what artists do?

DH: Artists rip and tear to make new contexts. Maybe this white shape is an artist surrogate, kind of fancy and kind of wounded.

JC: Kind of dangerous, a liar. "I cast a shadow that suggests I am something other than what you see before you, and yet I'm in possession of a blank for you to project onto and besmirch."

DH: Well, we should aspire to that as artists, I suppose, even if it comes with a cost. What is the cost? Maybe our sense of wholeness.

\* \* \*

David Humphrey is an artist and writer based in New York. He is represented by Fredericks Freiser Gallery and teaches at Columbia University. He is also the author of "Blind Handshake" and had a column in *Art Issues* magazine for many years.

Jennifer Coates is also an artist and writer based in New York. She recently had a two person show at Valentine Gallery with Tom Burckhardt. She currently writes for *Time Out New York* and has also published reviews in *Art in America* and *The Brooklyn Rail*.



PATIO LOUNGE CHAIRS

24 x 20 inches, 2013, acrylic on canvas





TILTING RED TOWER

66 x 58 inches, 2015, acrylic on canvas



SNOW CONE

46 x 64 inches, 2014, acrylic on canvas



TINY SUBLET

8x10 inches, 2015, acrylic on canvas



SEARCH PARTY

52 x 62 inches, 2011, acrylic on canvas



BEACH BALL IN POOL

18 x 24 inches, 2015, acrylic on canvas



CHALICE AND FISH

30 x 32 inches, 2014, acrylic on canvas



ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

10 x 8 inches, 2014, acrylic on canvas



THE STANDARD

24 x 16 inches, 2015, acrylic on canvas





RED FISH BOWL

8x10 inches, 2014, acrylic on canvas



COIN TOSS

26 x 18 inches, 2015, acrylic on linen



WINTER RESORT

58 x 60 inches, 2015, acrylic on canvas

## Judith Simonian

was born in Los Angeles, California where she received a MA and BA from California State University, Northridge. She lives and works in New York City.

### Fellowships and Awards:

- 2014-15 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship
- 2015 Dora Maar House (residency fellowship), Menerbes, France
- 2012 Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY (residency fellowship)
- 2011 Artists Alliance Lower East Side Rotating Studio Program (6 month residence)
- 2009 MacDowell Colony Fellowship (5 week residency) supplemental grant from Leon Levy Foundation
- 2008 Blue Mountain Center, Blue Mt. Lake, NY (1 month residency fellowship)
- 2006 Adolph And Esther Gottlieb Foundation
- 2004 Virginia Center for The Creative Arts (3 week residency fellowship)
- 2003 Fundacion Valparaiso, Almeria, Spain (1 month residency fellowship)
- 2000 Adolph And Esther Gottlieb Foundation
- 1999 Blue Mountain Center, Blue Mt. Lake, NY (1 month residency fellowship)
- 1990 National Endowment For The Arts, Visual Artists Fellowship Grant

### Solo Exhibitions:

- 2015 Edward Thorp Gallery, "Foreign Bodies — Recent Paintings" New York, NY (catalogue with dialog: Jennifer Coates and David Humphreys)
- 2014 John Davis Gallery, Hudson, NY
- 2013 Edward Thorp Gallery, "New Painting", New York, NY
- 2012 J.C. Flowers & Co., "Recent Paintings", New York, NY
- 2011 Edward Thorp Gallery, "What Belongs Where", New York, NY (catalogue with essay by Stephen Maine)
- 2006 Janet Kurnatowsky Gallery, "Chronic Civilization" Brooklyn, NY
- 2003 Eyewash@Girdle Factory, "Web of The Map" storefront installation, Williamsburg, NY
- 2001 Sloan Art Gallery, "Wet" Colchester, Vermont
- 2000 Kai Hilgerman Gallery, "Wall to Wall Eros" Berlin, Germany
- 2000 Sideshow Gallery, Collage/Painting Portraits (tandem with Bob Witz sculpture) Williamsburg, NY
- 1999 Spensieri Contemporary Art, "Selected Paintings from the Last Decade" San Francisco, CA
- 1996 NY Kunsthalle, "Between Wuthering Heights" Video Hybrid Installation, NYC, NY
- 1994 Ovsey Gallery, "Repainting Balthus", Los Angeles, CA
- 1991 Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago IL
- 1990 Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 1989 Jayne Baum, New York, NY
- 1988 Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 1986 Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

- 1984 Peter Miller Gallery, Chicago, IL
- Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- Leila Taghinia-Milani, NYC, NY
- 1983 Ovsey Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

### Selected Group Exhibitions (2000 to present):

- 2015 Brian Morris, "How to Finish A Painting", Lower East Side, NYC
- Manny Cantor Center "All/Together/Different", curated by Linda Griggs Lower East Side, NYC
- 2014 Valentine Gallery, with Tom Burckhardt, Jennifer Coates and Michael Chandler, Bushwick, NYC
- Life on Mars, "Never Mind The Bullocks", Bushwick, NY
- John Davis, Carriage House Paintings, Hudson, NY
- Edward Thorp, Gallery Artists Summer Selections, Chelsea, NY
- 2013 BCB Art, "Nocturnal", Hudson, NY
- Janet Kurnatowsky Gallery, "Paparazzi 2", Williamsburg, NY
- Edward Thorp Gallery, "Gallery Artists: A Survey", New York, NY
- 2012 BRIK gallery, "Cowgirls", Catskills, NY
- Edward Thorp Gallery, "Long and the Short of It". New York, NY
- Janet Kurnatowsky Gallery, "Paparazzi", Williamsburg, NY
- The Center for Contemporary Art, "Humus Redux", curated by Jeffrey Williams, Bedminster, NJ
- 2011 Lipscomb University, "Humus", with Gary Stephan and Wes Sherman, Nashville, TN
- Cuchifritos, "Intuitive Realities", Working Space 11, AAI Residency Artists curated by Jeanne Brasile, New York, NY
- Janet Kurnatowsky, "Paper 2011", Brooklyn, NY
- 2010 Edward Thorp Gallery, "Talk Show" New York, NY
- Sideshow Gallery, "It's a Wonderful 10th" Williamsburg, NY
- 2009 Truman State University Art Gallery, "American Race" Kirksville, Missouri
- 2006 Weatherspoon Art Museum "Art on Paper, Biennial " Greensboro, NC (catalog)
- Venice Printmaking Studio, Venice, Italy
- 2005 Islip Museum, "The Nature of Things" (catalog), East Islip, NY
- Anita S. Wooten Gallery, "Intimate Abstraction (catalog), Orlando, Florida
- Kerrigan Campbell, "Home Economix" New York, NY
- "TheTateChelsea.com", "Winterview"
- 2002 Barbara Levy Gallery, Fire Island, New York
- Cooper Union, Grand Hall Gallery, New York, NY
- 2001 Sideshow, "21st Suffragettes", Williamsburg, NY
- Pierogi, "Flatfiles", Williamsburg, NY (1997-2001)

2000 Side Street Projects, "Urbans Art of the 80's", Los Angeles, Ca.  
Margaret Bodell Gallery, "Facts and Figures", New York, NY  
London Biennale, International Festival of the Arts, London, UK, organized  
by David Medala  
Freudian Center for Research and Analysis, "Imaging the Wunderboard"  
Koan Jeff Baysa, curator, London

#### **Public Collections:**

The Broad Art Foundation, Paris, France  
Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, UCLA/Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.  
The Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA  
Pfizer Inc., NYC, NY  
Fresno Museum of Art, California  
Laguna Beach Museum of Art, Laguna, CA  
Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA  
Orange County Museum of Art, Orange County, CA  
AMICO Library (Art Museum Image Consortium)  
<http://www.amico.org>  
St. Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont  
Community Redevelopment Agency, Los Angeles, CA  
Barbara Sinatra Children's Center, Palm Springs, CA, "Secret Speak" (site installation)  
Los Angeles City Art Collection, MacArthur Park Public Art Program, "Talking  
Pyramids"  
Prudential Insurance Co. of America, Newark, NJ  
Security Pacific Bank, Los Angeles, CA  
Security Pacific Bank, New York, NY  
YMCA, Honolulu, HI

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*Acknowledgments*

The artist wishes to thank the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation for their generous 2014-2015 grant.

A special thanks is extended to Edward Thorp and his staff, and to Peg Reilly for the layout and design of this catalog.

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*Paris, 1984*

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New York City