

...Quotes by Anna Conway...

This sounds funny, but often I imagine the sound in the painting in order to choose the mood or color to start

I think one of the reasons my paintings are so dense and complicated physically, with every inch being accounted for, is that I find it impossible to ever sift through life's complications to catch the one big story or thread, to ignore those nagging, ever-present distractions and details

To ask how and if paintings matter, and what about their qualities gives them meaning and purpose—Purpose being the title of my show—in my mind runs perfectly alongside the question of how individual humans can and do matter.

DEVOTION

The man on the cot is a modern farmer or cowherd, like a shepherd who tends a flock of sheep. In this case, he is tending a herd of cattle which will eventually be used for food. I had always wanted to make a farm painting [...] I think of this farmer as being trapped, like a lot of people are on their job site [...] Like many office cubicles I have seen, this industrial farmer has an “inspiration poster” on his wall [...] I always find it fascinating and slightly unnerving when you see the notes or reminders people have or create for themselves as ways to “keep going.” Invariably you imagine what happens if this fails. What if the man in Devotion fails to find that RESOLVE? What about his own mind or will is he afraid of exactly?

IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN LIKE THAT

Early on there was a large, male figure, occupying most of the space in this tiny bathroom. The figure had an enormous back, and he was wearing a white T-shirt. I think the transformation from a figurative to a non-figurative painting started when I imagined that his shirt might have a word or image on the back. As I worked on it, I realized I could erase the man altogether and turn his whole body into a post-it note on the mirror. The post-it note is there, as a stand-in for the man. I really love how surprises like this can happen to a painting. It has a bit of magic about it.

DETERMINATION

For this show I had been thinking about the very private and individual moments adults have when they talk to themselves, or seek to inspire themselves to get through difficulty or boredom, or when they are frightened. I was thinking about times when a person is transfixed in the privacy of the moment, or wakes up in the middle of the night and feels disoriented, as a child does. That's the painting titled Determination.

POTENTIAL

I imagined that an artist got possession of a de-commissioned battleship and had it relocated there, obviously at enormous cost to a collector or a public art fund. I definitely thought of this artist as aiming for a powerful reaction from the audience. The artist's great hope would be that the dislocation of this grand man-made object would have the same startling effect as encountering the heads on Easter Island or the pyramids in Egypt. In my painting, the magic is present but the park is also in the middle of nowhere, and there are no visitors, beyond the one—you, the viewer of the painting—who is looking down on the ship from an un-manicured hillside. In a way, I'm imagining this viewer as possibly having the transcendent experience that the artist wants for them. But the viewer is here alone, and there's no one to share it with. No photo would be big enough to capture the physical experience of being there. So the magic might be present, but it is fragile and fleeting.

PERSEVERANCE

When it came to painting the poster, I was thinking about people who have insomnia and watch the television programming that's aimed at the 1 to 4 am audience. I myself have sat in front of a television at this hour, and invariably ended up watching lame documentaries about places like Easter Island, or the sites of Egypt's pyramids. I think of those programs as bedtime storybooks for adults. What better way to exit your mundane or worrisome present life than to mentally time-travel and consider the magic of people before us? [...] For me, the poster of the Easter Island heads is in this office to remind whoever works there of being in awe, to revere human endeavor while they are living through their own life of monotonous labor in this bleak office.