

CAROL COREY FINE ART

ELISE ANSEL: *The Women*

September 25 – October 31, 2021

*It's as if she's pulling the vaunted old scenes
authored by Great Men through time's vortex and
revealing them to be something new – shorn of
history's traps but still rooted in its essence,
something that shimmers and hums.¹*

Carol Corey Fine Art is pleased to announce the opening of *The Women*, an exhibition of new paintings by Elise Ansel.

Elise Ansel is a *visual translator*, taking paintings by the Old Masters and rendering them in a contemporary artistic language, shifting them from figuration into abstraction, transforming their meaning and message.² For Ansel, the act of painting represents an alternative way of seeing, allowing her to engage in an intimate dialogue with her source and to comprehend it on a more profound level. *By applying her contemporary female perspective to centuries-old male works of art, Ansel is addressing the continued gender inequality in our society.³*

Ansel begins her interpretation of an Old Master painting with a series of small improvisational oil studies. *The small studies are pared down responses, painted rapidly as a way of obscuring representational content, distilling color and composition, and rehearsing gesture and palette. 'I use the small studies as points of departure for larger works, allowing the constant discovery of one state to give rise to another. The large paintings embrace the choreography of the small works with an increased emphasis on color and gestural expression. I cross back and forth over the border between abstraction and figuration, searching for things that are fresh and unexpected. My goal is to step away from the Old Master painting and create an original work of my own that can stand on its own, while at the same time remaining in some way rooted in or reflective of the source.⁴*

In *The Women*, Ansel references works by Titian, Bellini, Goya, Boucher, Delacroix, Gentileschi, and Ruysch. Each of her works explores the role of women in different ways – as subject or artist, or both. In *Sardanapalus*, which references Delacroix's *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827), Ansel captures the color, light, movement and energy of the original painting, but literally upends this rather violent scene of murder/suicide. She shifts the literal narrative into something purely visual, transforming its meaning and message. "The narrative reemerges as a different story, because I am a different author."⁵ Artemisia Gentileschi's Judith paintings transform Gentileschi's murderous rage at the injustice of the sexism she experienced into a creative act

¹ McQuaid, Cate. The Boston Globe, Aug. 15, 2021.

² Kors, Stacey. "Found in Translation," *Zest*, Winter 2019.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Pill, Steve. Interview with Elise Ansel. *Artists & Illustrators*, March 2021.

⁵ *Zest*, Winter 2019

which spreads light in the most impactful way possible. The habit of seeing woman as object is denied and replaced with a focus on Judith's hand. The occluded face is in the background whereas her hand is in the foreground. The small flickering flame of a candle highlights this shift in focus. "My Judith paintings build on this idea and carry it into the realm of contemporary art by shifting the focus from the depicted hand to the brushstrokes themselves, which become objects in their own right. The brushstrokes are the remaining visible trace of the movement of the artist's body during the act of painting, the remnant and record of the artist's physical action on the canvas. The formerly passive object of the gaze becomes the locus of self-directed action, the subject/object dynamic reversed."⁶

Born in New York City, Elise Ansel received her BA from Brown University and her MFA from Southern Methodist University, Dallas. Ansel has been the focus of many solo exhibitions, including those at Danese/Corey in New York City in 2017 and 2018, and most recently at Cadogan Contemporary in London in 2019, David Klein Gallery in Michigan in 2020, and Carol Corey Fine Art in Kent, Connecticut in 2020. Her works have also been featured in many group exhibitions including "Art in Art" at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCAM) in Kraków, Poland; "Pushing Painting" at the David Winton Bell Gallery at Brown University, and the Portland Museum of Art Biennial in 2018. Her work was included in the "Summer Exhibition" at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 2015 and 2019; and "Artists Choose Artists" at the Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill, NY in 2014. Her paintings are held in many public and private collections such as the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCAM), Krakow Poland, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, and the Evansville Museum of Arts and Sciences. Elise Ansel lives and works in New York City and Maine.

For further information please contact the gallery at 917-797-9654, or carol@coreyfineart.com.

⁶ Elise Ansel. "Rachel's Flowers and Artemesia's Kill," 2021.