

## ART AND CAKE

**Annie Lapin: *Watchers and Winks* at Honor Fraser**

**By Shana Nys Dambrot**

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Annie Lapin's new paintings are eccentric, polydextrous scenes which make the viewer question the reliability of their own eyes. Lapin's evolving, expanding mashup of processes largely erases the distinction between rendering and abstraction, obscuring the stylistic tells of manual and digital techniques. Basically, each composition is a hyper-



intelligent visual game, a puzzle in which it's doggedly unclear whether the figures, edifices, landscape elements, and receding pictorial spaces are inherent in the image, or else the product of an irresistible neurological impulse toward pattern seeking. Confronted with both the atmospheric meanderings of the large scale works and the precision of the more intimate pieces, one can almost feel the mind wriggling in the grasp of this state of pareidolia as though it were a physical sensation. The compelling urge to deconstruct and comprehend the compositions – to sort out the extant from the instinctive and attempt to be as certain as possible as to what one is actually seeing – results in a depth and duration of attentiveness that is its own fugue-like reward.

A thorough examination of the details and broadness of Lapin's earthy, intriguing, diaphanously surreal paintings reveals that their organic complexity is in fact the result of myriad technical methods for organizing and applying her mediums. Passages are built and layered over grounds of poured charcoal washes, which meander into self-directed contours, forming the anticipated but unforeseeable armatures onto which she deploys further marks and fractures of oil and other pigments, metallic leaf, applique fibers. Despite a certain gestural flourish and immediacy in her mixed-effect textures, her millefeuilles are carefully built beforehand, as Lapin uses Photoshop to explore endless possibilities before committing these moments to canvas. This careful planning also results in the sturdiness of what appear to be interlocking and receding natural and architectural spaces, clearly defined interior rooms and exterior vistas, convincing light sources, and line-drawing that coaxes further anatomy and physiognomy from the pools and shadows of the initial pours.

In smaller works, the digital fingerprints remain very much apparent in repeated motifs – clouds, sky, painted frames, Pollock-esque splatter – that directly quote the heady days of early graphic design software and its visual culture of hyper-everything and smooth neon hombra. These “winks” to her current studio muse also appear amid the multivalent frolic of the larger works, any slice of which no matter how small yields a universe of textural treasures, and whose totalities contain not only evidence of circulating air, but also traces of human presence – which in turn irrevocably suggests narrative. Lapin's special gift has always been for fusing the dynamics of abstraction with the requirements of a picture, but in

her current work she takes it to another level by introducing not only illusion but somehow story into her deft equations.