

Thoughts That Cure Radically

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October 27, 2012

On the occasion of the posthumous retrospective of Cézanne's work in the 1907 Salon D'Automne, Rainer Maria Rilke in a letter to his wife describes the need to get the, 'right eyes' in which to view the master's challenging canvases. Susan Jane Walp's recent paintings on view at Tibor de Nagy gallery in Midtown Manhattan are a long term process in which the artist attains the 'right eyes' to view nature and transcribe it minutely to canvas. Each painting is no more than a foot square and depicts simple, perishable objects such as a basket of fruit, a napkin and the errant oblong utensil. Told in tones of greys, ochres and plums, Walp's paintings are mostly chromatically understated except for the quivering cadmiums and tangerines of the centrally depicted fruit. A student of Lennart Anderson and a devotee of Balthus, Walp's paintings share in their ability in combining perceptual awareness with classical simplicity through quotidian subject matter. Incised pencil marks outline the objects into small compressed shapes. A composition of apples in a cardboard basket is made of snow white rectangles, beige triangles and lamp black diagonals that orbit a pulsing red sphere. Despite each canvas being no larger than twelve inches square, there are whole sections of the surface that have only the barest scumble. Walp has the viewer complete the space behind the depicted object, allowing more pictorial room for reflection. Walp's paintings evince the imperative to 'get the right eyes', how nature can only be truly viewed through long and deliberate trial. Her choice of still life painting is a reflection of that imperative. Her objects, mostly humble and a few, such as a bubble gum wrapper and a barcode, point to the contemporary world. Otherwise Walp's still life art is one of reflection and nuance. Still life painting in the right hands is a lyrical art. Susan Jane Walp's paintings are small portraits of passionate looking, recalled in tranquility.



*Small Red Apples in a Berry Box
with Knife and Scrunchie*
2011, oil on linen, 9 1/8 x 9 1/8 inches

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