

Susan Eley

Fine Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 27, 2021

Inhabit
Amber George and Melanie Parke
In collaboration with Garvey|Simon

September 9 – October 21, 2021
46 W 90th St, Floor 2, New York, NY 10024



Opening reception: Friday, September 17, 6-8PM

Susan Eley Fine Art is pleased to announce *Inhabit*, a two-person exhibition featuring abstract encaustic paintings by Amber George, from Bonita, CA; and interiors in oil by Melanie Parke, from Arcadia, MI. We are delighted to collaborate with Garvey|Simon to present Parke's work. *Inhabit* will be on view from **September 9 through October 21** in our Upper West Side location. **The Gallery will host an artist reception on Friday, September 17, 6-8PM.**

Central to both George's and Parke's paintings lies the idea of the interior: the realm one physically occupies and the private, psychological space. Both artists paint as a means of recollecting and visually recording memory and recent experience.

Inhabit marks George's eighth exhibition with SEFA, most recently: *Making Their Mark* (2011), *Materialize* (2014) and *TWOXFIVE* (2016). Parke previously exhibited four abstract paintings in SEFA's Spring 2017 group show, *Driven to Abstraction*. Melanie Parke's work has been featured in numerous shows curated by Garvey|Simon; most recently, *Manic Botanic* (2020) and *Color Play* (2021).

SEFA NYC is currently open Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 11AM-5PM. To schedule an appointment outside of Gallery hours, please contact emily@susaneleyfineart.com or liz@garveysimon.com.



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NYC - 46 West 90th Street, Floor 2, New York, NY, 10024 – Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 11AM-5PM

Hudson - 433 Warren Street, Hudson, NY, 12534 - Thursday-Monday, 11AM-5PM

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Amber George's multimedia, encaustic paintings serve as a record of recent physical, mental and emotional journeys. George's paintings, featured in *Inhabit*, reflect the artist's painful and challenging experiences over several years of fertility treatments, resulting in the birth of her beloved daughter Hazel, and through to the present, raising a toddler during COVID-19. Her life as a new mother has resulted in what she says has been a "softening" of her artistic practice, resulting in more tender and playful creations. Her recent paintings, a visual diary of these past events, ask the viewer to consider space, home and comfort.

George's 2020-21 paintings rely less on repeating, formal geometric shapes, stripes and circles—characteristic of earlier work—in favor of more dramatic, yet playful imagery that references clouds, super-sized raindrops, flower stems and blooms. Favoring blue, yellow and green with hints of pink and magenta, George's new work depicts large, bulbous clouds, as in the five paintings in the *Inhabit* series; and stalks of thick, emerald green grass, rendered in a near animated, cartoon quality, reaching upwards towards an abstracted sky in *Seeking Perspective I*.

George also incorporates vintage bedsheets into some of the work, chosen for both their characteristics of color, pattern and texture, and for their personal reference to her 1970s childhood. The fabric immediately lends the paintings a soft touch, suggesting weaving, mending and femininity.

George paints with blocks of encaustic wax, sourced from R&F Paints in Kingston, NY. The complex, time-consuming painting process entails melting the wax on a custom-built hot table, mixing the colors and applying the paint to custom birch wood panels. Skillfully diluting the colors with translucent beeswax, she works quickly with her panels, as the medium cools fast.

During the height of the pandemic, George began to cut old paintings into pieces—rectangles, triangles, rhombuses, etc.—and reassemble them. What results are tessellated quilts and reimagined narratives with names like *Migration* and *Cul-de-sac*. Piecing together a puzzle with no correct solution took the artist days, as she returned again and again to replace a piece here or move another there. With the help of Hazel, the process took on a more playful, collaborative approach. George's artistic practice has always been a family affair, as her husband, David, a fine art woodworker, builds her panels and frames, along with the custom hot table, replete with aluminum foil and lightbulbs.



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Melanie Parke's recent and ongoing series of oil paintings of interior spaces celebrates the kitchen as the hearth of the home. The kitchen, which connotes warmth, food, nurturing, domesticity, companionship, rest and renewal, is the place where we begin and end each day, where we find comfort, take a minute of solitude and respite.

Each of the 16 interiors, carefully selected for *Inhabit*, depicts a specific place, painted from imagination or source material that includes reconstructed memories or visions, both of places real and imagined. Parke takes pleasure in creating spaces in which people can metaphorically slow down. Her paintings are about finding slowness in a fast-paced world and asking, 'what kinds of things reveal themselves during slowness?'

Each physical space is distinct with its own furnishings and decorative objects—the edge of a dining table, set with tea service and a plate of fruit; a sink top draped with a patterned dish towel; a window ledge, laden with flowers. While the paintings may read as still lives, they are anything but still; each painting offers a fleeting moment, as if someone were passing through, their presence as ephemeral as the warm breezes one feels blowing through the windows. One almost senses that if Parke had painted the same interior in a subsequent hour, the result would be entirely different, as the light outside would have shifted, spinning the colors and shadows in another direction. In this way, Parke paints the invisible, as each scene reflects the interiority of a person living in a specific moment.

Parke's paintings are 20 x 16 inches (with the exception of two 20 x 20-inch works). Parke chose this small size for both practical and artistic reasons: She recently moved into a smaller studio, and like many of us during the pandemic, had been thinking about living and working in confined spaces and in close proximity to her own thoughts. When working small, she feels closer to the material and believes that one can read more of the mark-making. Parke comes from a traditional landscape painting background—having studied light, shade and shadow, temperature and color relationships—all of which she applies to her unique method of painting interiors.

Parke is interested in Cezanne's idea of 'passing through objects,' which expresses a sense of depth and planar elision, and explores fluid space and movement through rooms. In *Midnight Holly*, one passes through the first doorway, towards the green doors in the back. In *Copenhagen Coffee* the color of the sky climbs up the wallpaper, asking the viewer to consider inside versus outside. The open windows, prevalent in almost every painting, offer an infinite view outside.

The artist rarely considers the people who occupy these rooms, but prefers to imagine that she herself lives in each one, surrounded by bouquets, birds, coffeepots, towels and teacups, signaling domesticity and routine. The presumed spring and summer seasons conjure feelings of desire, longing and fullness. Parke's intimate paintings offer empathy and hospitality to travelers, wanderers and nomads, along with a place to renew oneself.

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