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ELISHEVA BIERNOFF: RESERVOIRS OF TIME EXPLORES THE NATURE OF MEMORY

San Francisco-based artist Elisheva Biernoff explores time, memory and “enigmatic realism” through highly realistic and detailed paintings in her first solo museum exhibition at the Nevada Museum of Art.

Reno, NV (October 21, 2023) - The small-format paintings of San Francisco artist Elisheva Biernoff are inspired by enigmatic photographs she encounters and collects. Her highly detailed works take their inspiration from found images she locates in flea markets, salvage stores, and even on eBay—images that capture lost memories and moments in time. The photographs she gravitates towards are outtakes – photographs with double exposures, light leaks, odd cropping, and other errors.

Elisheva Biernoff: Reservoirs of Time, an exhibition that will be on view at the Nevada Museum of Art on October 21, 2023 – April 21, 2024, features Biernoff’s exacting paintings in a collection that highlights the artist’s interests in the unfamiliar and strange, a sense of place, and above all, in the nature of memory. Biernoff has remarked “... [memory] is a slippery thing, photographs are tricksters, supplanting actual memories, or distorting, exaggerating or redirecting.”

“Painting, for Biernoff, is an elegiac way to see and understand a photograph,” said Apsara DiQuinzio, senior curator of contemporary art at the Nevada Museum of Art. “Given that Biernoff spends so much more time looking at the image than the person who took the picture...she imbues the work with consideration, empathy and a belief that every minute detail of the image is momentous and meaningful.”

The exhibition features ten small-format paintings taken by strangers and that evoke an element of ambiguity and pensiveness. The process of creating the highly detailed works unfolds over a period of about three months in which the artist recreates it all: the same diminutive size as the found photograph (both front and back), the emulsion defects or lens flares, or other unintentional imperfections that transform into intentional features of Biernoff’s paintings.

As the details accumulate, the compositions of her works eventually adopt a photographic quality. In rendering them in great detail, the artist explores the role of mischance, and reflects on the anonymous traces of lives and places that are for the most part unknown to her. Effectively, Biernoff finds herself painting and collecting other people’s memories, friends, relatives and noteworthy places. Because the artist doesn’t know the photographer or those featured in the images she paints, each work is an invented world.

“One might think of these exquisitely rendered paintings as a Proustian madeleine, or the catalyzing agent that recovers lost memories. In this way, Biernoff embodies an impossible act: the recollection of other people’s mementos through the act of painting, where the significance of the captured moment necessarily remains impenetrable to her and the viewer in what one might think of as an enigmatic realism,” writes DiQuinzio in her essay for the exhibition’s brochure.

Through this unique process, Biernoff evokes the process by which we remember through an artistic process that embraces imagination and possibility, given that the actual lived experience of those in the photographs that inspire her paintings are inevitably unknown.

“The paintings are reservoirs of time and concentration, where everything is made on purpose,” said Biernoff.

About the Artist

Biernoff was born in 1980, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and lives in San Francisco. She received an MFA from California College of the Arts and a BA from Yale University. She also studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, London, and has received a MacDowell Fellowship. Her work has been exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Contemporary Jewish Museum, the Asian Art Museum, and CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts—all in San Francisco; in addition to the New Orleans Museum of Art; Copenhagen's Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; and Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR. Biernoff's work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, SFMOMA, the Yale University Art Gallery, and Albright-Knox Art Gallery, among others. She is represented by Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco. *Elisheva Biernoff: Reservoirs of Time* is her first solo museum exhibition.

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The Nevada Museum of Art is the only art museum in Nevada accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). A private, nonprofit organization founded in 1931, the statewide institution is supported by its membership as well as sponsorships, gifts and grants. Through its permanent collections, original exhibitions and programming, and E.L. Cord Museum School, the Nevada Museum of Art provides meaningful opportunities for people to engage with a range of art and education experiences. The Museum's **Center for Art + Environment** is an internationally recognized research center dedicated to supporting the practice, study, and awareness of creative interactions between people and their environments. The Center houses unique archive materials from more than 1,000 artists working on all seven continents, including Cape Farewell, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Lita Albuquerque, Burning Man, the Center for Land Use Interpretation, Great Basin Native Artists Archive, Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, and Trevor Paglen's *Orbital Reflector*. Learn more at nevadaart.org.

Land Acknowledgement

The Nevada Museum of Art acknowledges the traditional homelands of the *Wa She Shu* (Washoe), *Numu* (Northern Paiute), *Newe* (Western Shoshone), and *Nuwu* (Southern Paiute) people of the Great Basin. This includes the 28 tribal nations that exist as sovereign nations and continue as stewards of this land. We appreciate the opportunity to live and learn on these Indigenous homelands.