

## REBECCA FARR: edge

gallery km is proud to present edge, an exhibition of paintings and mixed-media works on paper by Los Angeles-based artist Rebecca Farr. The show features 11 oil paintings on board and canvas, along with over twenty notebook-sized collages, constructed with cut paper and adhesive. This is Farr's second solo show at the gallery, after opening gallery km with her inaugural exhibition, Relay. The gallery will host a reception for the artist on Saturday, February 11th, from 6 to 8pm, and the show will run through March 24th.

edge presents us with an exploration of the historical legacies of Westward Expansion and Manifest Destiny in America, and the activation of those legacies in our contemporary historical moment. Farr's practice has been focused for some time around questions of migration—specifically, the movement and interactions of people across daily communal space. In this new series, she has taken her previous concentration on the micro migrations of daily life and pulled back into an expansive view of historical patterns of migration occurring on a societal scale, specifically the cultural mythology of white/Western privilege that informs the hegemonic Western relationship to immense, 'unoccupied' space (often space occupied by an 'other'), and that space's ideological and physical colonization. The pieces in the show are animated by four core themes in the mythology of Manifest Destiny as Farr interprets it: human encounters with vast unknown space, the dualism of light vs. dark, the mythology of the end of time, and the idea of being Chosen.

The exhibition approaches these themes laterally, through two interrelated parts: first, the mythology of Westward Expansion and Manifest Destiny, presented through Farr's paper collages. Second, the oil paintings, which render moments of the mythology's contemporary endpoint, in the form of expansive beachscapes where diminutive figures meet against a vast horizon of land, sea, and sky.>/p>

The collages layer and interlock found imagery of current and historical figures over constructed environments, both natural and manmade. Often formed through the use of multiple small pieces of paper in repeating hues, the 'natural spaces' affect vastness and freneticism, while the manmade environments carry a simultaneous sense of imposition and of coming undone. The figures in the collages reference the historical narrative of these mythologies, and give us a sense of which moment in time Farr has chosen to activate for us in the story, or which conversation between moments. The dated figures at first seem recognizable, as if characters in a novel or history book we were taught in our youth. A group of white men clearly at rest from work look as though they could be members of a California or Dakota gold rush, but we can't quite be sure. An older man walking a horse might be leading a wagon caravan, but what reads as a wagon upon closer inspection becomes a view of a tree-lined tunnel trellis in the Antebellum South. In some pieces, contemporary individuals are shown during instances of sentimental affection or tragedy, creating immediate nostalgia in the viewer. In one, headless women during the climax of a spinning class are presented below the smoke towers of industrial America, as if fueling the production of toxic industry with their physical labor. All of these elements combine with the presentation of the collages in a close-knit grid on two of the gallery walls to create an interlocking sense of where we have been and where we are, and the seeming unraveling of the frighteningly misguided principles of Manifest Destiny; principles that were always too unwieldy to be contained by the physical space upon which they were projected.

While the collages proffer visceral claustrophobia and something like manic cogitation, Farr's oil paintings approach the same issues by offering the very space we seem to so desire, and giving us the compositional and thematic room to contemplate the impossibility of that space. The paintings range in size from 18 by 24 inches to 48 by 60 inches, with the majority at the larger end of the range. Each of the paintings has a similar repetition of form and context, as if Farr is trying to tell us the same truth from twelve slightly different angles. We see figures on a beach, too small for any real subjective identification through faces, but just large enough to recognize and identify with their activity. The day is foggy, and accordingly some of the detail is inferred. In one, a man pauses as if he may have thrown a rock into the ocean (the tone of which mirrors that of the sky, when it is visible in the composition). In another, a group stands with their legs in the water and, we imagine, their clothes pulled up above their knees, in a composition in which they are so dwarfed by the sense of the landscape surrounding them that we can hardly understand their hubris in believing should be allowed to enter the ocean at all. In another piece, bicyclists enter the frame on the boardwalk of a beachscape that is almost entirely sky. The vulnerability of the tiny groups—who look like they might collide on the small space they occupy compositionally—combines with the humorously small bright details of a caution cone and boardwalk demarcation to complete our feeling that we have reached an endpoint in our ability to conquer.

The exhibition encourages an intuitive rather than a deductive dialogue, an approach underlined by Farr's choice to tackle her subject matter through two forms without overt correlation. The collages present historical trajectory with transient speed and abruptness on materials not guaranteed to last, while the paintings capture the seeming calm of the current moment through classic archival oil paint. The bridge between the two forms is provided by Farr's commitment to present her findings with compassionate detachment rather than political aggrandizement—her professed intent not to “drive the viewer to a state of shame or even a specific emotional disturbance... but hold them in that space that hovers over a question.” Insistent on posing questions rather than supplying conclusions, Farr allows a continuous cycling of interpretation between the historical trajectory invoked by her collaged origin myths, and the revelation of that trajectory's limit in her paintings.

Rebecca Farr lives and works in Santa Monica, California, and has exhibited in Los Angeles and throughout the Pacific Northwest. This is her second solo show at gallery km.