



Hannah Beerman: *Paintings*

November 18, 2023 – January 6, 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, November 18, 6-8PM

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

Is there ever a simple answer to this question?

Matter is the *it*, the subject, the thing. It can imply the physical, the substantial, or the felt and sensed but unseen. This question prompts us to examine the existence of something: a presence, its impact, the material and immaterial, forever in conversation with each other.

For Hannah Beerman, the painting is a conversation; the conversation is a painting.

So what *is* the matter?

This map of exquisite points

of what?

Points of tension, the irresolvable

But ... What, this? HERE?

Yes and in fact, just right beyond the picture plane *it* is there. *It* being: life's fragments.

Fragments of ourselves, our desires, needs, met and unmet.

There's a collision of the very large and the very small, of the very moment and of every moment ever, not unlike the metaphysics of poetry, where the material and immaterial keep bumping up against each other, trading places and shifting, creating a friction whose residue is language, is glitter, is a dog's chew toy. Who's the object here? Who's the perceived? The painting or the person? The poem or the reader? The collective conscious or the unconscious? These are conversations occurring in Hannah's paintings: matter chatter.

In order to take in Hannah Beerman's paintings, you have to zoom out without losing perspective of the newness, the unruly yet precise arc of life which never ends and runs, flocks, slithers through the room, molting and shedding its layers, feathers, skins, and identities across each and every surface of the picture plane. You must confront your own ideas about boundaries and where you stand with intimacy in order to experience the fullest possibilities these paintings have to offer. There exists a gap, mere inches but also lifetimes, between you and *it*, the stuff of and in the painting, and whether this creates longing, intrigue, confusion, fatigue, familiarity, or dismissiveness has as much to do with your capacities to feel and to believe as it does with your ideas about art and its incomplete history.

Not only do strange relations emerge between the materials, marks, and textures within the picture plane, but between you and said presences. The haptic, kinetic gestures invite you into their field of infinite movement, only to get there is not an easy task. You can't just arrive. You have to allow your prejudices about what constitutes Painting with a capital P, what matter we're talking about here, to remain suspended. Can you handle suspense? Especially if there's no climax? Or thousands of them? When the material hierarchy disappears, when there's an all-inclusive approach to process and material – paint as matter, debris as matter – your psyche flickers with the awareness that you too, are matter. Your body, its clothes, the tools we use to clean ourselves and



our pets, our homes, our walls, the contents gathered in dark corners, items found in relatives' homes, toys, utensils, glitter. None of it matters. All of it matters. Plus then we must also include the wrappers, the clunky plastic that encases practically everything we use these days. If life is absurd, then all matter matters (to quote Eva Hesse).

Should come as no surprise that, over the course of our friendship we have invented a language. Inverted phrases, typos-turned-code, and butchered phrases that have become metaphors for other things.

When the systematics of language is called into question – if we are to believe in anything, is it language we believe in, or the need / desire to name, to know, to use it to relate? – other systems follow, buckle, at times collapse. What Hannah calls an "unzipping". What constitutes a painting? Where does it begin and end? Is what makes it into the picture what "matters"? When I see what is there — much like the retina's response to color, which is to generate its opposite or compliment — I automatically see and think what is not there. What we cannot see but feel present. The unchosen things that remain on the floor, in the room. What about those?

Discern, (distinguish, understand), from the same root (*krei) as secret. *A-ha*. The thing not known, hidden from understanding, untold, unrevealed, unseen, whatever it is whistling in the dark calls us in to listen close. But what are we listening for, exactly?

I realize that much of this text about Hannah's paintings has turned out to be questions. This too is no coincidence. Our exchange, this need to relate, consists mostly of questions, and Hannah's paintings, as all the impactful ones do, ask something of us. We are called into a series of questions that asks, perhaps even requires, us not to know.

Text by Bri Garcia.

Hannah Beerman (b. 1992, Nyack, NY) lives and works in New York City. Beerman earned her BA from Bard College in 2015 and her MFA from Hunter College in 2019. Recent exhibitions include *Up All Night*, Fredericks & Freiser, New York, NY; *Call me if you get lost*, Claas Reiss, London, UK; *Friends & Family*, Anton Kern Gallery, New York, NY; *As Above, So Below*, curated by Barry Schwabsky, Duck Creek Arts Center, East Hampton, NY; and *Sunspots and Underpants*, T293, Rome, IT. Beerman is a forthcoming resident at the MacDowell Colony.