



WITNESSES
&
dreamers

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P A I N T E R S O F T H E I N N E R C I T Y

Oliver Bevan

Henry Kondracki

Timothy Morrison

Paul Butler

Mandy McCartin

Flora Natapoff

Timothy Hyman

Lucile Montague

Kate Wilson

FLORA NATAPOFF

I was born in New York and have always lived in cities. My father, who was the son of Russian Jewish immigrants used to tell the story of how when he was a kid, he thought that when you go to the country, if you dig down beyond all that dirt you'll find cement! There is some of that in me.

It was a very exciting time when I was an art student in the fifties: it was the emergence of the New York school (Abstract Expressionist Painting). There was an aura of excitement and idealism, not only about art but connected to politics and general intellectual life; all the things I was interested in.

It took a long time after this period at Berkeley to get away from the thrall of the New York School, (which I still admire). In the late sixties I had a preoccupation with the work of Pieter Brueghel and for about two years worked on large collages based on images from his paintings which I had seen when I travelled to Europe. The central image was the tower of Babel (from a memory of the Colosseum in Rome) with all those exits and entrances. I had a studio on the Harvard campus at that time and used to pass the unfinished construction of the new science centre. I kept stopping to look at the construction site while going to work on the tower. The cross over was so obvious. Then I began to do work about the construction site which was followed by a flood of urban images, factories being torn down, bridges, powerful structural images. I worked for twelve years on a large collage format (7' x 9').

Moving to London a year after getting MS, I had to change my working procedures. I started making small paintings based on my experience of moving around the streets and taking photographs. People

appeared in the work; then I started to string them together in horizontal rows. That connected with a lifelong interest in Chinese painting, the long scroll format, the sense of moving through the space, being near, being far. These things became the centre of my spatial understanding.

Carnival City

It reads row by row, like a comic book, and simultaneously reads as a whole. The upper left is a distant view of a remembered bridge. The break moves you inside the bridge which reminded me of climbing many years ago inside one of those bridges that raises up over a river, and what it feels like to look out through the bridge structure. The second row sets you up against the flat wall of industrial urban facades and moves to an opened out, almost classical space. Moving down to the third row you are literally inside the subway system, a closed space going through those barred entrances. The forms however travel from layer to layer, from part to other part.

A graduate of Cornell University and University of California, Berkeley, Flora Natapoff has exhibited regularly at the Barbara Krakow Gallery in Boston in addition to solo shows at Interim Art and the Riverside Studios in London. Her work is in many US collections including the Museum of Fine Art, Boston and the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts. She has lived in Hackney for twelve years.



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