

MATTEAWAN GALLERY

Ellen Siebers

Soft Nails

March 14 – April 5, 2015

Opening reception Saturday, March 14, 6-9 pm

Matteawan Gallery is pleased to present Ellen Siebers: *Soft Nails*, an exhibition of small-scale oil paintings on view until April 5. The exhibition coincides with the two-year anniversary of Matteawan Gallery, which opened in March 2013.

Ellen Siebers' paintings are subtle and mysterious, combining abstraction and representation in unusual ways. Her current series is inspired in part by the German abstract painter Blinky Palermo, as well as by the Shakers religious sect, known for their simple lifestyle and austere elegant furniture and architecture. Siebers is interested in "the relationships between spirituality and simplicity, and simplicity as the spiritual." She approaches art making with a similar straightforwardness. For her paintings she uses 3/4" plywood panels with beveled edges and makes a traditional gesso out of powdered marble as a ground for oil paint. Her panels vary in size from 6 to 22 inches, but they are always square. For Siebers the square panel presents an ambiguous space that is as much a window as it is an object. The consistency of materials is an important parameter in her work, as she tends to paint from memory, beginning with a very loose idea and not using visual references or creating a drawing in advance.

Siebers' spontaneous way of working is inspired by her interest in the powerful presence of the mind's eye in an average day. According to Siebers, "With every moment our limitations and visual processes force us to link together a series of images, perspectives and perceptual phenomena. Everything begins to feel like mythology." Certainly, there is evidence of a personal mythology in the repeated forms in her paintings – hands, fingers, and feet; grids or windows; household objects like a knife or blanket; and the moon. These motifs seem to refer to a strange narrative that we may never fully grasp. Sparse abstract compositions, flatness, and muted colors contrast with human anatomy, shadows, perspective, and horizon lines, conjuring a dreamlike image.

Originally from the Midwest, Siebers recently moved to the Hudson Valley from Brooklyn. In 2014 her work was included in a solo exhibition at Bushwick Open Studios: *Do It Yourself*, 3rd Ward Building, Bushwick, NY, curated by Peter Shear, and in group exhibitions at Smart Clothes Gallery and the Prince Street Lofts/Verge Art Fair, also in New York. She has exhibited nationally with solo exhibitions at Common Wealth Gallery, Madison, WI; and beta pictoris gallery, Birmingham, AL; as well as group exhibitions at Porter Butts Gallery University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI; Remote Projects, Bloomington, IN; Clara M Eagle Gallery, Murray, KY; Mason Murer Gallery, Atlanta, GA; Peter Paul Luce Gallery, Cornell College, Mount Vernon, IA; Hous Projects, Los Angeles, CA; Madison Public Library, Madison, WI; Byron Burford Gallery, Iowa City, IA; and Manifest Gallery, Cincinnati, OH. Siebers received an MFA in Painting from the University of Iowa and a BA from the University of Wisconsin Madison. She is currently an adjunct professor of art history at the College of Mount Saint Vincent, Bronx, NY.

For additional information please contact Karlyn Benson at info@matteawan.com.