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JOEL JANOWITZ

New Paintings & Monotypes

May 12 – June 18, 2011



Choice, 2011, oil on linen, 18 x 24"



Note, 2011, oil on board, 18 x 24"

Opening May 12, and running through June 18, 2011, Victoria Munroe Fine Art is pleased to present new paintings by Joel Janowitz. Inspired by a regular poker game he was tired of losing, Janowitz began to sit out and draw the players at the table. Soon, he was painting hands in various familiar positions- shuffling cards, opening a photo album, drawing, and holding a letter. In all of these figurative compositions one hardly notices there are no faces because the gesture of the hands tells the whole story.

This captivating body of work demonstrates a leap to a new subject matter while at the same time affirms Janowitz as a brilliant painter of mood and light. In another series of oil paintings and monotypes also on view, he returns to the interior of a summer house in Maine owned by Fairfield Porter. In these two series, Janowitz structures intriguing compositions where evidence of people is all around, but they are not.

Mesmerized by the gestures of his friends as they cut and deal each poker hand, Janowitz paints a tense game space in which each player's hands evoke the nuanced poses of a gambler leaning over the card table. In one painting, titled "Choice", long elegant hands laid on two different cards recall the veined, expressive hands in Tintoretto's portraits. In "Blue Card", one is reminded of Cezanne's many studies of card players. The tension in the player's cupped hands is palpable in contrast to the remote color and shapes of other cards on the table. In another work titled "Note", a woman's delicate hands seem to be twisting a letter as she sits at a sunny table spread with a moody pink light. Without painting her head and face, Janowitz focuses on her posture, her hands as they grip the news in the letter, and the fading light across the table - a projection of loss? While recalling paintings of women reading by Vermeer, Degas and Hopper, Janowitz's contemporary voice asserts his focus on the psychological space.

Janowitz has long been interested in painting a particular summer house on an island in Maine. It is a place he knows well and has painted for twenty years. In these powerful compositions of chairs around a table with doors open to the sea air and sunlight splashing through the room, Janowitz captures the presence of a family retreat. There is an intimacy of place conveyed in a palette of worn olive, blues, grays and whites. The comings and goings of "summer people" at ease on an island off New England comes alive. Inspired by the spaces of human experience and memory of place, Janowitz captures changes in time and atmosphere with a rich immediacy in oil. Both in the paintings and the monotypes, he achieves an articulate, painterly expression of the enduring nature of a visual memory.

Joel Janowitz has exhibited widely in the United States and his work is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum, the Fogg Art Museum, and the Minneapolis Museum of Art, among many others.