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## Art in America

### HOPE GANGLOFF

by Charles Marshall Schultz 6/28/13

SUSAN INGLETT

**NEW YORK** Working within the traditional realm of portrait painting, Hope Gangloff has developed a stylized approach that favors texture and shape over light and depth. There is a fluidity to her best compositions that activates every inch of her surfaces, and a tonal flatness that brings all the elements into neat cohesion. Backgrounds become backdrops for subjects who sit, stand or lie down, gazing with varying intensity at something or someone just outside the picture's frame. Consequently Gangloff's portraits have a fragmentary quality, as if her compositions were cropped from much larger scenes.

All but one of the nine portraits Gangloff exhibited in her recent solo show at Susan Inglett (the artist's fifth there since 2006) are set in a rural environment. Her subjects—most of whom are her friends—inhabit cozy interior spaces: one perches beside a wood-burning stove; another lounges with a cigarette and a soda. Chopped wood and Adirondack chairs figure in multiple canvases and are the main elements of the largest work in the show, *May December Romance* (2013). This painting is the only one in which people are absent; the title introduces a playful anthropomorphic relationship between a woodpile and some warm-weather furniture covered in snow. Circular targets riddled with bullet holes are pinned to a tree trunk and the woodpile, suggesting that this quiet country scene doubles as a makeshift shooting range. No wonder the chairs are empty!



Gangloff is a great painter of hands and faces; rendered in dashing brushwork, they always appear full of expressive weight. Her other major talent is for articulating patterns in thin, fastidious lines, enabling her to paint clothing and textiles with incredible finesse. These techniques serve as counterweights to each other, and are fully realized in *Snowday* (2012), a large work in which a dark-haired girl in a blue robe lies nestled among pillows and blankets. It is works such as this one that encourage comparisons between Gangloff's figures and those of the Austrian portraitists Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele.

One effect of Gangloff's meticulous and mesmerizing display of crosshatching and overpainting is that her subjects seem locked into their environments. The figures are typically fully clothed, their outfits providing a natural and abundant source of patterns for the artist to work with, so it is interesting to see how Gangloff reorganizes her compositions when the subject is naked. Rather than fitting neatly within an overall arrangement of forms, the full-figured nudes in *Afternoon Shower* (2012) and *Lydia (The Tattooed Lady)*, 2013, appear to be superimposed upon their environments like cutouts. This is especially the case with *Afternoon Shower*, in which a man scrubbing his back looks as if he is in front of the running water rather than actually standing in it.

There is no erotic element in Gangloff's nudes, and they are no more exposed for being undressed. A sense of privacy, or at least separation, is established by means of their gazes; distant and nonconfrontational, they convey a sense of aloofness. Here, as in many of Gangloff's portraits, her subjects seem to be only physically present. What holds their attention the viewer can only imagine.

PHOTO: Hope Gangloff: *Lydia (The Tattooed Lady)*, 2013, acrylic on canvas, 81 by 54 inches; at Susan Inglett.