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Hope Gangloff Paints What She Knows

New York artist curates a new portraiture exhibit at Cantor
April 12, 2017 By Jeffrey Edalatpour

[The Cantor Arts Center](#) is about to usher in a season of curation devoted to Hope Gangloff. In late May, the New York-based artist will be painting onsite. According to the Cantor, the public will have a chance to watch her "paint several large-scale, site-responsive portraits to hang along the light-filled Atrium Balcony." Additionally, Gangloff also plumbed the museum's permanent collection to populate *Hope Gangloff Curates Portraiture*.

As the title suggests, in this recently opened exhibit, Gangloff carefully arranges, and sometimes juxtaposes, several of her own portraits with a diverse range of works from the 16th to the 20th centuries. A casual observer can clearly make out the direct influence of the artists Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt in her portraiture, for which she's primarily known.



In *Lake Minnewaska* in June, 2013, a dark-haired woman bends her body forward into a strange position of repose. She glumly stares out from the canvas, her foot firmly planted against a tree branch. A dense pattern of leaves and flowers drapes around her naked body. Her figure fills the entire length of the painting like many of Schiele's and Klimt's portraits. The physical elongation, coupled with an intricate background design, confers a similar sense of languor on these young bodies.

But neither of these more obvious influences appears in the exhibit. Instead, Gangloff has chosen a healthy number of androgynous figures from the past. They encourage alternate readings of her work, even if the pairings are deliberate red herrings. Frank Duveneck's *Head of an Italian Girl* (c. 1886-1887) hangs next to *Lake Minnewaska* in June. If the painting had been untitled, the girl could easily pass as one of Caravaggio's boys. It's her wary expression, though, that resonates with Gangloff, not her gender fluidity.

Along the same lines, Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger's *Portrait of a Man in Classical Dress* (c. 1610) hangs in an octagonal frame next to *Study for Diko Shoturma in Recording Studio 2016*. Gheeraerts paints an enormous pink sash that enhances the man's lip and cheek color. He also wears an enigmatic smile and a mustache like the Eurovision Song Contest winner Conchita Wurst. Shoturma sports a scraggly beard and mustache but there's no trace of femininity. It's his pose, painted in profile from the chest up, that bears some relation to Gheeraerts. The people she paints are brightly colored but their identities feel fixed in place.

In an explanatory note, the Cantor described her process like this: Gangloff "adamantly insists that she will only paint people she knows, calling the act of portrait-painting a 'personal exchange' between subject and artist." Her blue and green skin tones suggest an uncertain intimacy, being close enough to see the veins but not what makes them turn red when they happen to get cut. They also tend to withhold more than they reveal. Gangloff paints like a friend who is good at keeping secrets. She chooses the physical details of a subject's room to tell the story rather than relying on perfecting facial expressions. On the one hand, you only learn superficial details about her friends and acquaintances. On the other, you admire her ability to capture them and wonder what exactly she'd capture, and leave out, about you.

Hope Gangloff

Thru Sep 24, Free

Cantor Arts Center, Stanford