

# ROBILANT + VOENA

Ena Swansea: New Paintings  
December 28, 2019 – February 1, 2020

Robilant+Voena  
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Robilant+Voena is pleased to present Ena Swansea: New Paintings, the first exhibition at the gallery of American painter Ena Swansea, on view from December 28, 2019 onwards. The exhibition premieres a series of new paintings that blur the distinction between abstraction and figuration. Using the artist's own photographs of the world around her as source material, the large scale city scenes, rural studies and seascapes she paints have a fascinating, dreamlike quality. Swansea introduces effects that one associates with digital art and film (she did study film at the University of South Florida) and contrasts these elements with traditional painting techniques, producing works with a distinctive look that is hard to convey in words.

Ena Swansea says she is "interested in the way things look in the world", and this prolonged and in-depth investigation of how to capture and convey appearances is obviously a driving force in her practice. Ahead of the upcoming show I had the chance to talk to the artist about her work. As various resources make special mention of the graphite ground that creates the dark, reflective silver background of earlier paintings I began by asking about the materials she uses but the conversation soon turned to more fundamental notions of subject matter and artistic motivation.

*I feel that this is a very interesting moment to be a painter because there are so many art forms and right now nobody cares too much about painting. The spotlight is somewhere else, which gives artists working in this medium a lot of freedom, like teenagers when the parents are out of town and nobody is focused on what they are doing. I also believe there is a renaissance in painting happening today that will not be properly understood and written about until a later point in time, because it takes a while to understand the essence of something. Paintings change over time. Things come and go in terms of how they are perceived. My paintings from today would look very different if I carried them back in time 15 years. The same painting will seem different years from now because both the way we look at the world and the world itself changes. There are certain topics that I am interested in - water, snow, nightclubs... Water always looks different and is something I could spend the rest of my life painting again and again. Many painters have fallen into that hole. One thinks of Monet, filling canvas after canvas with his haystacks. I try to make paintings that people feel like they know what I am talking about. For me working with appearances is enough. Ultimately my work is about painting, trying to figure out 'What is contemporary painting?'*

Ena Swansea, December 2019

Ena Swansea was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1966 and lives and works in New York City. She is the recipient of a Hassam, Speicher, Betts and Symons Purchase Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Swansea's work has been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally at MoMA PS1; Saatchi Gallery, London; Sammlung Falckenberg; and the Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (MUDAM), Luxembourg. Her work is included in numerous public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Maramotti Collection, Reggio Emilia; Cornell University's Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Ithaca, NY; Colby College Museum, Waterville, ME; Boca Raton Museum of Art, Boca Raton, FL; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Dresden; Deichtorhallen Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg; and the Olbricht Collection, Berlin.

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