



NORAH LOVELL

RECONNAISSANCE: BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

## RECONNAISSANCE: BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

Norah Lovell's shrewd artworks engage with profound questions about how history is represented and who records it. Lovell, who returns to Callan Contemporary for her second solo exhibit, pays homage to forgotten female painters through her ambitious new series, "Reconnaissance: Battle of New Orleans" which consists of ten large-scale paintings, all created during her residency with the Joan Mitchell Foundation. The series places a feminist lens on this historical moment to reflect on how the identity and imagery of New Orleans has evolved.

Lovell's compositions are developed through a series of collages and then carefully hand drawn on the canvas and later painted with tremendous amount of detail. Her process is meticulous, which adds to the labyrinthine feeling of the works. One could fall into a painting and not come out for a very long time. In *Patrol of Choctaws* (2015) a river slowly winds around tableaux of women, soldiers, animals, and flora. Some of the imagery is taken from the murals of Ethel Magafan, a painter and WPA muralist. Lovell's research is also meticulous. Magafan was criticized for not accurately portraying the battlefield in her WPA Mural *Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans*. Lovell abstracts the idea of geography in her own work, in a sense agreeing with Magafan that history painting can be representative of the chorography, or the quality and sense of a place, rather than representing history from a uniform perspective of time and space.

Similar to Camille Henrot's piece *Grosse Fatigue* (2013), Lovell's paintings are made up of dense compositions that narrate origins and development, mutation and change in the 21st century. In *Inception: After Magafan* (2015) intricately layered compositions reflect the multivalent consciousness of the digital age. Old battle maps, silhouettes of soldiers and live oaks lush with Spanish moss are images repeated throughout many of the works. Portraits of the Magafan sisters are also recurrent. Lovell literally pulls the sisters from the river and resuscitates them, giving them the art historical credit they are due. Through repeated imagery, Lovell astutely suggests that history is made of many perspectives and stories, some which hide deep in the water.

Lovell has shown nationally at venues such as the Grand Rapids Art Museum, The Ogden Museum of Southern Art, The Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans and the Carlsbad Art Center, among others. This series, all shown for the first time at Callan Contemporary, indicates a prolific new phase of Lovell's career, one that is as provocative in its analysis of history as it is aesthetically lush and compelling.

Tori Bush

EXHIBITION DATES: APRIL 1<sup>st</sup> - APRIL 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**RECEPTION: APRIL 4<sup>th</sup> 6–9 PM**

Front Cover:

*King of Barataria (detail)*, gouache on panel, 48" x 36", 2015



*Inception: After Magafan, gouache on panel, 48" x 36", 2015*



Patrol of Choctaws, gouache on panel, 48" x 36", 2015



*King of Barataria*, gouache on panel, 48" x 36", 2015



Wreck of Hermes, gouache on panel, 48" x 36", 2015



*More Than One North Star, More Than One South Star*  
gouache on panel, 48" x 36", 2015

CALLAN CONTEMPORARY

518 Julia Street | New Orleans, LA 70130



*Inception: After Magafan*  
(detail), gouache on panel, 48" x 36", 2015

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