

Art & Museums

Rachel Feinstein



Adam and Eve

IN HIS 1976 book, *The Uses of Enchantment*, the Freudian psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim argued for the crucial role of traditional folktales in childhood development. As the Jewish Museum's terrific career survey shows, Rachel Feinstein exemplifies the lingering hold such stories have on grown-ups, demonstrating her long-held fascination with fractured fairy tales, and their darker subtexts, and using a prodigious range of mediums to explore them through a feminist lens.

An early Super 8 film, *Spring and Winter* (1994–96), sets the stage with a theatrical tableaux that appears equally indebted to Balanchine and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. The first scene, featuring the artist dressed as a paper doll as she awakens to the strains of "Someday My Prince Will Come," is soon followed by another of Feinstein as an old woman gathering firewood in the snow. The action concludes with her experiencing a vision of her younger self as a nude pinup resembling Marilyn Monroe. Rife with feminine stereotypes, *Spring and Winter* can seem confusing and even cringey at times, and yet it ultimately offers a story about the fleeting nature of youth that's both life-affirming and cautionary.

A surreal and unapologetically kitschy style marks Feinstein's sculptures, which are replete with

gender politics. In *The Orphan* (2009), for example, Feinstein evokes modernism's misogynistic streak with a constructivist rendering of a naked, supine woman; it looks like a cartoony hybrid of Alberto Giacometti's self-explanatory *Woman with Her Throat Cut* and Allen Jones's *Chair*, which plunks a seat cushion atop a woman on her back with her legs in the air. Feinstein is just as adroit with painting: A set of grisailles picturing elderly women as 18th-century aristocrats evinces the same taste for vanity-skewering caricatures that made her husband, John Currin, famous.

Surprisingly, religious themes factor into several pieces. One of them, *Crucifixion* (2003), an abstracted but disconcertingly earnest version of the subject, was created in the aftermath of 9/11: Its all-white surface appears ephemeral—paper-thin in places, melting in others—but its presence remains palpable.

Perhaps *Crucifixion* and similar offerings were inspired by Feinstein's mixed Catholic and Jewish background. Whatever her motivation, their old-fashioned spirituality comes almost as a shock in a show filled with multiple provocations; they demonstrate the artist's ability to manipulate emotions as adeptly as she does materials. ■ *Joseph R. Wollin*
→ The Jewish Museum (thejewishmuseum.org). Through Mar 22.

THE THREE ART SHOWS WE'RE LOVING



Roger Brown

Chicago Imagist Brown (1941–1997) painted vivid land- and cityscapes as wallpaperlike motifs. This exhibit presents a selection of his works, which mix Art Deco, Pop Art and outsider art to eerie effect.
→ *Venus Over Manhattan* (venusovermanhattan.com). Through Sat 11.



Outsider Art Fair

Far less commercialized than Frieze New York or the Armory Show, the Outsider Art Fair's roundup of self-taught artists always manages to astound with work that you haven't seen anywhere else.

→ Metropolitan Pavilion (outsiderartfair.com). Thu 16–Sun 19.



"Red Beans Grow in the South"

The inaugural show at Danish collector Jens Fauschou's self-named museum presents just a sample of his holdings in blue-chip art.

→ Fauschou Foundation (fauschou.com). Through Apr 11.