

# THE FEMALE FIGURE FROM A CANADIAN LENS

Informed by their northerly roots and kinship,  
Keer Tanchak and Janet Werner show concurrently at 12.26.

BY ANTHONY FALCON



Keer Tanchak, *Movie Version*, 2021, oil on aluminum. Photograph by Kevin Todora.



Janet Werner, *Orange Chair*, 2021, oil on canvas, 31 x 24 in. image courtesy of 12.26.

**O**n April 17, timed with Dallas Gallery Day, 12.26 will open *Romatik*, a two-person exhibition featuring Canadian-born artists Keer Tanchak, who now works in Dallas, and Janet Werner of Montreal. Having found friendship and similarities in each other's work, the two artists have continually explored and discussed the significance of being female figurative painters. Each offers her own unique perspective on female portraiture and pulls imagery from fashion magazines, pop culture, and history.

"What really attracts me to both Tanchak and Werner is that the women they depict are the protagonists of their own story. They aren't muses or sexual objects—they have control of their own narrative, and it's refreshing to see," gallery co-founder Hannah Fagadau remarks. "It's very much, for lack of a better word, a 'girl power' show. The women are not oversexualized or victims of circumstance." Co-founder Hilary Fagadau continues, "What I am most excited about is seeing how their continuous conversation over the last couple of years has had this amazing cross-pollination effect on their work. They've brilliantly weaved in and out of each other and produced an incredibly dynamic conversation."

*Romatik* marks the second two-person, two-woman exhibition at the gallery; the first featured Alex Olson and Nancy Shaver in *Waters*. When asked if the sisters see a reflection of themselves in the artists, Hannah responds, "Yes, we stand behind and totally believe in every artist that we show. I do think that it's important that we also

work with artists that we can learn from, even if we can't immediately identify with them or their experiences. That's how we grow as gallerists and more importantly, as human beings." Hilary follows, "I do think Hannah and I are inspired by that relationship between the two artists. Witnessing Tanchak and Werner work together to bring us this show over the course of almost two years shares many parallels to Hannah and my working relationship. Because my sister and I often have different viewpoints, we are always growing and expanding so we can open ourselves to other ideas."

In *Romatik* both Tanchak and Werner examine the idea of the male gaze, traditional female roles, and women as subjects through the lens of contemporary and historical canons. "In Werner's paintings, she generally deconstructs her women and subverts the viewer from gazing upon her subjects in the traditional way," Hilary says. "In contrast, Tanchak paints her subjects in a more traditional style of portraiture, but then places her figures in these unexplored worlds or voids, which gives power to the subject as they, and the artist, are the only ones who hold the key to unlocking these unknown spaces."

Hannah observes, "There is something about Werner's women that is very confrontational. They are confident, self-assured, and unapologetic in who they are. It feels as though they are daring the viewer to impose judgement or make assumptions. Tanchak's women, though still confident, have a bit more vulnerability or humility to them." *Romatik* will be on display April 17–May 15 at 12.26 in River Bend. **P**