

RHONA HOFFMAN PRESS RELEASE

Rhona Hoffman Gallery is pleased to present Martha Tuttle's third solo exhibition of new paintings and sculptures entitled *An ear, a hand, a mouth, an offering, an angel*. Tuttle's beautiful and ethereal woven paintings are composed of painted and colored silk organza, hand-spun wool, and sewn fabrics. The materials are often translucent, exposing the metal stretcher bars and their tensioning hardware. The sheer surfaces reveal the architecture of the textiles' support system, grounding the work as distinctly human-made. The visible bars further serve to identify the work as part of the tradition and history of painting.

The works that comprise *An ear, a hand, a mouth, an offering, an angel* were made with a particular painting in mind - *The Dream of Saint Helena* (1570) - by Italian Renaissance painter Paolo Veronese (1528-1588). Tuttle identified the three primary reasons for her captivation with the late Renaissance painting as being: the color palette, the composition, and the narrative of the main subject receiving a message from a dream. Tuttle was moved by this notion that specific forms can be intuited in this liminal dream state, similar to the way her compositions are built.

The rich oranges, pinks, yellows, and golds of Veronese's religious painting are reflected in several of Tuttle's new paintings. These paintings are composed of the marbly grays, chocolate browns, creamy whites, and saturated and translucent blacks evocative of past bodies of works. However several now also "pop" with a swath of rosy pink, the result of the natural pigment of Madder root. Tuttle's process of coloring the silks in shallow pools of pigment solution or dye vats often results in the simulation of not only texture but also topography, as is evidenced in *Thinking about Simone Weil*, for example.

Compositionally, Tuttle extracts inspiration from Veronese's painting through his geometric use of shapes, angles, and lines - particularly triangles. In making these paintings Tuttle notes how she "...enjoyed working with a ruler to map out the lines in

the Veronese painting and to make my drawings that ended up as the compositions.” The Dream of Saint Helena depicts Helena, the mother of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine, in a dream state. Interestingly the dreamer and her dream are concurrently visible. In Helena’s dream, two angels show her where the True Cross (the cross that Christ was crucified upon) was buried. Tuttle contemplates dreams in her artmaking and also identifies with the idea of a dream’s ability to disseminate messages.

Finally there are two floor installations of small objects in either corner of the room at the entrance of the exhibition. They directly relate to the title of the exhibition. These intimate installations read as offerings or altars, encouraging the viewer to crouch down to better identify the collection of rocks, clay, stone cast into glass, steel, bones, nuts, and other predominantly natural materials.