

speechless at e. gordon

by, Maria Stenina



Among its other delights, the recent remake of **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory** reminds us of the significance of the unreal and the tactility of imagination. Sensory experience brings forth a heightened

awareness of a disconnection between reality and *what could be*. Nuances rise to the surface and beckon, like mermaids. In artist Douglas Max Utter's words, "The oddness of real things" puzzles us. Perception shifts, associations feed the growth of the poem, or perhaps the dream.

Walking into **Speechless**, Utter's exhibit of recent works at **e.gordon gallery**, is a little like that. In one small painting, the facial features of *Violet Beauregard*, the trophy-winning bubblegum chewer in Roald Dahl's tale, are obscured by her pink bubble. The subjects of *Silence 1* and *2*, as well as in a larger painting (a study of a Cleveland Indians player) *Pitcher*, likewise show us a veil of color and form that want to tell us something, that want to transcend ordinary communication, replacing speech with texture and experience. "The paintings in **Speechless** are about silences, like breath or half-glimpsed, sudden movements, wrapped in burgeoning sheaths of becoming," writes Utter.

A tool of communication himself (a condition of the life of an artist), Utter "coaxes and impersonates the strangeness of perception as it bumps against knowledge." Rough meets smooth, light meets dark, good and bad intentions, private thoughts and public acts, the connection and disconnection between people in personal relationships meet on this fine line between construction and reality. Even the variation in physical texture veils the portrait and layers complexity. There are fresh, polished areas and deliciously milky colors, glinting under cracked varnishes. These textures obscure the subject and its painterly context, pushing a portrait that may have only one

clear feature or none at all, toward some kind of universality. Further, it is unclear whether these hard-to-pin-down faces have a relationship with each other, or with us. As in a dream, there is a glimpse of another world or frame of reference.

This, in essence, is the relationship between art and life, the ever-shifting struggle between the subconscious and what we "know" to be real. Within this struggle, it is apparent that Utter feels at home in his private world, a psychological space filled with varied textures of paint and mediums, subconscious brushstrokes, where we are

often drawn in and seduced by milky pools of color. Douglas Max Utter has, for years, fed a visual desire for texture, color, and veiled references to personal experience and humanity. This exhibition in particular seduces with the sweet, strange smells of places, people, and moments stored deep in memory.

SPEECHLESS

new works by Douglas Max Utter opens on Sept. 9th with a reception from 6pm to 10pm.

e.gordon gallery

2021 Murray Hill Rd. Cleveland, OH 44106 216.795.0971



Abduction #5



Sleep



American Idol



Silence #2