

ARTFORUM

Jocelyn Hobbie

KERRY SCHUSS / KS ART 73 Leonard Street

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Jocelyn Hobbie, *Entre Nous*, 2010, oil on canvas, 72 x 72”.

Jocelyn Hobbie’s oil on canvas paintings seem, on close scrutiny, to bear the matte flatness of tempera on panel, so thinly and evenly does she spread her paint. The imagery and style of her latest works echo entirely with that practice, redolent of old-master works. It is, however, more modern evocations of the technique that Hobbie’s work most strikingly evokes, whether the *Neue Sachlichkeit* of Otto Dix and Christian Schad, or Balthus’s eerie attempts at his self-proclaimed “Surrealism after Courbet.”

An old woman’s crimped, purple hair and spindly fingers in Hobbie’s *Mother and Daughter* (all works 2010) look like something right out of Dix’s parade of Weimar decadence. So, too, does the exhibition’s eponymous canvas, which evokes that same world with all the peculiar detail, moody lighting, and angst of magic realist painting at its best. Even the wistful doppelgängers of *Adventurers* sport hairstyles that envy little of the 1920s. That Hobbie uses traditional drawing techniques to prepare the canvases, rather than basing the works on photographs, underscores her dogged adherence to increasingly outmoded procedures. The love letter in the foreground of *H.C.’s Girlfriend* suggests that we are not in the realm of e-mail and Twitter here.

To be sure, there is something decidedly contemporary about the disaffection portrayed in this show, whether that resides in the proliferation of tattoos or something more ineffable. Still, these portrayals are not the stuff of portraits. Hobbie’s figures are types, glimpsed under a bell jar of cold detachment. The tension in works such as *Entre Nous* and *Mother and Daughter* reaches its most discordant heights precisely through the relative simplicity of depicted space, which sets into relief the moodiness of the figures. Hobbie’s work is strongest when it avoids the busy, overwrought backgrounds of *Adventurers* and *Acadia*. The mere play of shadows against the red curtain of *Entre Nous*—evincing a separate, strange world unto itself—suffices in its own right.

— Ara H. Merjian