



Wild Horses

**DANCER TURNED ARTIST LYDIA JANSSEN'S PAINTINGS OF SELF-DISCOVERY AT REDSEA GALLERY
BY TANYA MICHELE AMADOR**

American artist Lydia Janssen makes her Singapore debut with her latest body of works at REDSEA Gallery, located at Dempsey Hill, opening 27 January 2018 and running till 25 February 2018.

Appropriately titled 'All the King's Horses', the exhibition is an autobiographical series of short-story paintings presented on large canvases. Narrating the ongoing challenges of her artistic practice and personal development, this collection represents a passage of time spanning the last five years since the dancer-turned-artist relocated to Singapore from New York City.

As a former professional dancer with Merce Cunningham Studio in New York City who performed with modern dance troupes Pam Tanowitz Dance Company and Jordana Toback/POON Dance Company, Janssen suffered life-altering injuries which left her permanently unable to dance. She subsequently spent a year in the Graduate Fine Arts Department at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, before returning to New York to study at the Art Students League (2005-07). Finding solace in her new creative outlet, she began to spread her wings, and in her final year, won the prestigious Red Dot award for Excellence in Painting.

Likening her body and its movements to that of Humpty Dumpty, the creature of the English nursery rhyme who fell off the wall, her fluid brushstrokes on her canvas elucidate the raw and beautiful turmoil of attempting to put herself back together again after her injuries. Inviting the viewer to contemplate her emotional and corporeal journey from dancer to painter, 'All the King's Horses' is a heartfelt story about Janssen's relationship with her body and its moving parts, with the works taking on a life of their own which are at once powerful and meaningful.


A follower of strong women who lead the world of feminist artists, such as Cecily Brown and Tracy Emin, Janssen encourages the viewer to observe the disorder of her rebirth through a tangible authenticity. The use of earthy, clay-like, colour tones of ochre, amber and mustard, mixed with vivid shades of blues and greens, evoke a soft reminiscence of the cave-like drawings of Willem and Elaine de Kooning and illuminate a complex thought process.

Capturing the primal movements which she now plays out in her mind instead of her body, each work offers a rich tapestry of body parts. Breasts, arms, phalli and feet, animals including horses and cows, numbers, guns, and other seemingly arbitrary symbols of sex, relationships, and the soul of the artist as a separate

Left to right:
Lydia Janssen,
'La Jeune Homme
et la Mort',
2017; Portrait of
Lydia Janssen

being, just to name a few, are woven together in abstract expressionist form with figurative elements.

"Humpty gets up, falls again and so on, and so on.... learning lessons, finding beauty in the unbeautiful, order in the disarray, true grit, changing course and moving through life," Janssen notes, as the viewer is enticed to examine further ideas which are sometimes erotic or manic, but also delightful and moving, as they find their own meaning in Janssen's mad dance of personal discovery. Inspiringly, unlike Humpty Dumpty, she is putting herself back together again, without any help from the king's horses, or his men, one canvas at a time.

Janssen's work is held in private collections, and has been exhibited at several art fairs and gallery exhibits throughout the United States, Hong Kong, and Singapore. She is represented by the Susan Eley Fine Art Gallery in New York City and REDSEA Gallery in Singapore. 

More information at
redseagallery.com.