

Remnant Exposition

Janet Bruhn

Greasy leather roller skates, the Chlorine stained exit ladder at the city pool, and pin ball machines in the smoky recesses of a bowling alley are subjects I paint to explore recreation in America. What activities do people enjoy when they aren't working? What imagery defines the savory, olfactory and grazing? How can our collective cravings be brought together in a series of paintings?

County fairs and particularly the Wisconsin State Fair has been a rich resource to study when scouting content for my two main bodies of work, "Everyday" and "Recreation". These themes are veins that run side by side in my practice. "Recreation" is a remnant to the great Expositions of the 19th century, particularly the Columbian held in Chicago in 1893. The foundation remains of the first Ferris wheel, found at Mid-Way Airport in Chicago, inspired me to research parks and roller coasters found in the Mid-West.

Six Flags Great America is home to "American Eagle", an aging wooden roller coaster on the southern corner of the park. Faded white paint coats uncountable 2 x 4's that define the dramatic drops and slopes of the structure. In the painting, "American Eagle: Red Side Blue Side", triangles, diamonds, and horizontal patterns of dull hued paint are stacked to achieve the dizzying affect of the colossal structure. The "red" and "blue" sides of the ride are equal in height, dropping into uncertainty in the depths below. Repetition is utilized again in later works to describe mechanized foods such as cotton candy, pretzels and roasted corn.

The mundane of the everyday stirs people to explore vices out of the norm. Common senses are transformed, even just for fleeting moments. Banal becomes vivid, tactile and pulsing. Sticky, salty and buttery is paint and theme.

