

**AMBER BOARDMAN
REAL ESTATE RELIGION
27.09.22 - 15.10.22**

**SOPHIE
GANNON
GALLERY**



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THE IMPOSSIBLE ART OF CONTAINMENT: Paintings by Amber Boardman

By Lauren K. Watel

To enter the world of Amber Boardman's "Real Estate Religion" is to encounter, in thirteen vibrant and dynamic paintings, the fundamental human impulse to create order out of chaos, as well as the inevitable failure of these efforts. The show's title painting illustrates most overtly the motifs and formal elements that inform the work as a whole. Boardman creates a hybrid interior whose lower half resembles a kitchen, with all the appropriate appliances and accoutrements, while the canvas's center and upper half are dominated by the outsized Gothic pointed-arch window and soaring vaulted ceilings of a cathedral. Intense light pouring in from the window evokes holiness as depicted in traditional religious paintings, though in this case the rays of light usually haloing a saint instead emanate from the sink's curved faucet. Combining the aesthetics of a 17th-century Dutch painter like Pieter Saenredam and an upscale Airbnb photo, the image caricatures the capitalist worship of private ownership, in which the acquisition of property-as-sanctuary is the divine right of a privileged minority who can afford it.

Within Boardman's artistic vision, real estate religion references not only a reverence for property but also, more generally, a devotion to proprietary space or capacity. The title painting showcases a variety of surfaces, vessels and furnishings meant for the organization and display of objects, elements and spaces. Boardman here taps into the all-too-human impulse to control and contain an everchanging, disorderly environment by any means necessary. The countertops, cabinetry, shelving, open refrigerator and kitchen island of Real Estate Religion serve as holders for the many objects involved in food preparation, all of which glow in the kitchen's heavenly light. A single place setting and glass of wine, two eggs frying in a pan, and a cutting board with two pieces of bread sliced from a loaf point to an absent organizer, who will soon be consuming the sacred meal-for-one being prepared. The large cathedral-style window emphasizes the room's spiritual symbolism as organizing space, since its panes are dark, as if it's night outside, or as if there is no outside at all. The dramatic light, therefore, seems to come not through the window but from the window, as if the room itself were its source. Since architecture evolved to offer a haven against the wildness of nature, Boardman's kitchen depicts a human-made Eden, in which the garden itself is banished, a pair of small ceramic planters under the window and the leaves of a potted plant behind the refrigerator door the only evidence of the natural world outside.

At the same time that the painting reifies the compulsion to organize and contain, it also depicts the fruitlessness of those attempts at containment. The overall composition is rife with spatial anomalies, disjunctures, leakages and spillages. On closer inspection, the orderly assemblage of objects begins to fall apart, the items contained forever rebelling against the restraints meant to hold them. Melting wax spills over candlesticks, water drips from the haloed faucet and overflows the sink, the amorphous contents of the refrigerator seem to drip and smear, egg white overruns the side of the pan, which itself appears to be dissolving. A swathe of reddish fabric oozes out from under a candlestick and over the side of the microwave, which functions as the kitchen's "altar." The luminous white countertops slope toward the bottom of the frame; consequently, the objects rest uneasily on their surfaces, as though they could slide off at any moment. The light-colored top of the kitchen island also acts as a canvas within the canvas, on which the artist can explore painting itself as a medium. Juxtaposed with impressionistically painted-in stovetop heating elements, the sliced bread and glass of wine blend cartoony rendering with the detail and shadowing of a Renaissance still life.

Just as in Real Estate Religion, all the paintings in the show, one way or another, portray endeavors at containment and their futility. Boardman obsessively fills her canvases with tabletops, dishes and pitchers and jugs, shelving, and all manner of organizational receptacles. She organizes her interiors and even her exteriors with features of spatial demarcation: wainscoting, floorboards, windows, doors, fences, walls, pools, stairs and ladders. At the same time, whatever elements are meant to be confined by these assorted forms of restraint invariably seem to be rioting against their confinement, dripping, melting, overflowing, sliding off, floating, or distorting into abstraction. Stairs and ladders lead nowhere or disintegrate. In paintings like Sun-Drenched Real Estate Dictionary, Apartment Therapy, In-Law Dinner Alfresco and Gift Table Altar objects in brightly hued clusters sit precariously on tabletops, blend into the background, defy perspective and gravity, and blur into amorphous shapes. Water escapes from the pools meant to contain it in Knock Down Rebuild and Million Dollar View, the latter with its fleshy, sunset hues invoking a hubristic fantasy of walling off the ocean. Reckless Vessels shows paint rising up as if animated, spilling, pouring and splashing out of its containers, even toppling them off their shelves.

Four smaller paintings zero in on specific organizing systems: File Cabinet, Bag of Bags, Junk Drawer and Storage Unit. Each assortment of objects is bordered by or hovers over subtle frame-like elements, as if the act of organizing were akin to creating a painting. Indeed, one might say that these images implicitly compare the endlessly futile efforts to organize the chaos of human existence with the perennially imperfect attempts of the artist to capture reality in paint. Defying linear perspective, the items meant for organization seem to float on the surface of the canvas, rather than “inside” the drawer or bag or closet. Objects are rendered in brushwork so painterly that they veer from loose representation into abstraction—file folders as stripes and squiggles on a bright orange background; a plastic bag filled with bags as ghostly, jellyfish-like blob floating in moss-green and brown space; junk in a drawer as sketchy linework, smears and smudges, and colorful forms suggestive of household implements; a storage unit as compositional study of contrasting geometries, patterned verticals and horizontals, and primary colors with varied texturings and shadings.

Boardman’s universe of vigorous organizing and riotous objects leaves little room for the natural world. Interiors have either no windows, opaque windows or, in the case of Sun-Drenched Real Estate Dictionary, orange-hued windows, through which one can see only the vague outlines of other houses. Cut flowers in a vase and potted plants constitute the few traces of life indoors, whereas in the exteriors one gets glimpses of greenery bordered by fences and walls. With the exception of two tiny insect-like swimmers in Million Dollar View, humans are entirely absent. God’s Printer, the show’s single landscape featuring undomesticated greenery, imagines God as the divine organizer, with His latter-day organizational tool, a giant printer, spitting out the images that will form heaven and earth.

In this postmodern take on the biblical creation story, Boardman likens the act of divine creation to the work of the painter, whose very practice involves organizing reality onto the real estate of the canvas with nothing more than paint and a brush. Along with the show’s other paintings, this work both playfully and forcefully reminds us of the glorious folly of all our organizational endeavors against the larger tumultuous forces—of global capitalism, class and racial inequities, climate change, rising authoritarianism and the simple but elemental passage of time.

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Amber Boardman
File Cabinet
2022
oil on panel
60 x 60 cm
\$4,500 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Bags of Bags
2022
oil on panel
60 x 60 cm
\$4,500 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Storage Unit
2022
oil on panel
60 x 60 cm
\$4,500 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
God's Printer
2022
oil on panel
60 x 60 cm
\$4,500 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Knock Down Rebuild
2022
oil on canvas
152.4 x 121.9 cm
\$10,000 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
In-Law Dinner Alfresco
2022
oil on canvas
121.9 x 152.4 cm
\$10,000 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Gift Table Alter
2022
oil on canvas
121.9 x 152.4 cm
\$10,000 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Reckless Vessels
2022
oil on canvas
152.4 x 121.9 cm
\$10,000 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Apartment Therapy
2022
oil on canvas
121.9 x 152.4 cm
\$10,000 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Real Estate Religion
2022
oil on canvas
182.9 x 152.4 cm
\$13,000 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Sun-Drenched Real Estate Dictionary
2022
oil on canvas
182.9 x 152.4 cm
\$13,000 incl. GST



Amber Boardman
Million Dollar View
2022
oil on linen
182.9 x 182.9 cm
\$14,000 incl. GST

AMBER BOARDMAN

EDUCATION

2018	PhD, Fine Art, University of New South Wales, Sydney
2009	MFA, Fine Art, School of Visual Arts, Fine Art, New York, NY
2003	BFA, Fine Art, Georgia State University, Studio Art, Atlanta, GA

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021	Real Estate Religion, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne
2021	Decision Fatigue, Chalk Horse, Sydney
2020	Amber Boardman, 333 Projects, Clayton Utz, Sydney
2019	Crowd Scenes, Chalk Horse, Sydney
2018	@jadefad: a social media feed in paint, Kudos Gallery, Sydney
2017	Regrowth, Sandler Hudson Gallery, Atlanta
2016	Titlist, Chalk Horse, Sydney
	Sitcom Studies, Ivy Brown Gallery, New York, NY
2015	Expansion, Edwina Corlette Gallery, Brisbane Australia
	Permission, Chalk Horse Gallery, Sydney
2011	FAV (Flute and Video), multiple locations, Atlanta
	STILL, Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta
2010	A Sampling, Millsaps College, Jackson, MS
2004	Painting, Drawing, and Animation, Barbara Archer Gallery, Atlanta

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2022	Grace Cossington Smith Art Award, Sydney
2021	Northern Beaches Art Prize, Manly Art Gallery and Museum, Sydney
	Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown NSW
2020	BODYWORK, Fremantle Arts Centre, Perth (with Kaylene Whiskey and Tarryn Gill)
	Here I Am: Art by Great Women, amBUSH Gallery, Canberra
	This is America, UK Art Museum, Lexington, KY
	Out of Touch, Subliminal Projects, Los Angeles
2019	McGivern Prize, Melbourne
	Paddington Art Prize, Sydney
	Willoughby Visual Arts Biennial, Sydney
	Bayside Acquisitive Prize, Melbourne
2018	We Are, Postmasters Gallery, Rome Italy
	Personal Best, Verge Gallery, Sydney
	Beyond Reason, QUT Art Museum, Brisbane
	Archibald Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
	Up In Arms, University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington, KY
	Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, Geelong
2016	Julie Spoke Softly Under Her Long Skinny Nose, Curated by Paulina Bebecka, Field Projects, New York, NY
	Methods for Making Eye Contact, Amber Boardman and Teelah George, First Draft, Sydney
	13.04.16, Home@735, Sydney Australia
2015	Porque No 2, Gaffa, Sydney Australia
	Art Month Sydney, Creative Live Work Space, Sydney Australia

2014 Ingenious Inhabitants, William Street Windows, Sydney Australia
 Summer Studio Salon, Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA
 Steal This Bike, Mint Gallery, Atlanta GA
 2013 The Wagner Experience, Koblenz, Duisburg, Arnhem, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Rotterdam
 2012 FLUX 2012, Public Art Festival, Atlanta, GA
 2011 Paint it Black, The Shirey, Brooklyn, NY
 Everyday Charms, O Cinema, Miami, FL
 New Media from the Permanent Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta, GA
 Animation Block Party, BAM, Brooklyn, NY
 2010 BAM Next Wave Festival, curated by Dan Cameron, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY
 Portrait Concert with Masanori Oishi, Tokyo, Japan
 On the Outside, with AURA Contemporary Ensemble, San Jacinto College, Houston, TX
 Concert with Sonic Generator, Georgia Tech University, Atlanta, GA
 Visual Mischief, The Front, New Orleans, LA
 The Body Machine, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA
 Losing Yourself in the 21st Century, Maryland Art Place, Baltimore, MD
 2009 Losing Yourself in the 21st Century, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
 A New Currency, curated by Dan Cameron, 55 Delancey St, New York, NY
 Cardsharper, curated by Lauren Ross, Visual Arts Gallery, New York, NY
 About Time, Visual Arts Gallery, New York, NY
 My Eyes, Ad Neseam Lyceum, New York, NY
 2008 This Just In, Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA
 2007 Click/Shift/Enter, Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA
 Atlanta Biennial, curated by Stuart Horodner, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, GA
 2004 Going Up, Sundial, Curated by Fifth Class, Atlanta, GA
 2003 Atlanta Film Festival, Rialto Center for the Performing Arts, Atlanta, GA
 2002 all small video night: Short Short Shorts, Eyedrum, Atlanta, GA
 Fresh, Curated by Fifth Class, Atlanta, GA

COLLECTIONS

High Museum of Art
 University of Kentucky Art Museum
 Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia
 Artbank Australia
 City of Sydney
 Private collections in USA and Australia

FAIRS

2018 Sydney Contemporary, Chalk Horse, Carriageworks, Sydney
 2015 Sydney Contemporary, Edwina Corlette Gallery, Carriageworks, Sydney
 2011 Prettier Than Everything, Fountain Art Fair, Miami, FL
 2007 Year 07, Marcia Wood Gallery, London
 ArtNow, Miami
 Flow, Marcia Wood Gallery, Miami

AWARDS, GRANTS & RESIDENCIES

2022	Grace Cossington Smith Art Award, Finalist
2021	Northern Beaches Art Prize, Manly Art Gallery and Museum, Finalist Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Finalist
2020	Create NSW Small Projects Grant City of Sydney, Creative Fellowships Fund
2019	Paddington Art Prize, Finalist McGivern Prize, Finalist Australian National University, Artist in Residence Bayside Acquisitive Prize, Finalist
2018	Archibald Prize, Finalist Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, Finalist
2016	Paddington Art Prize, Finalist Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Finalist Noosa Art Award, Finalist John Fries Award, Shortlist
2015	Manning Art Prize, Finalist Warringah Art Prize, Finalist Australian Postgraduate Award, University of New South Wales, Sydney Australia
2014	Visual Arts Grant, Joan Sutherland Fund, Australia America Association, New York NY William Street Creative Live/Work Residency, Sydney
2013	Creative Capital – On Our Radar, New York, NY Artspace Residency, Sydney
2012	Creative Capital Grant Semi-Finalist, New York, NY Flux Projects grant, Atlanta, GA
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2010	Flux Projects grant, Atlanta, GA
2009	Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant Nominee. New York, NY
2007	Most Provocative, Atlanta Biennial, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, GA
2002	The Utrecht Fine Art Award, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA

