

Thomas Erben Gallery



Grandma Jean #11, 2024. Oil on panel, 5 x 7 inches.

Janice Nowinski *Mirrors*

January 16 - February 22, 2025

Opens Thursday, January 16, 2025, 6 - 8:30pm

Thomas Erben is thrilled to present *Mirrors*, Janice Nowinski's third exhibition with the gallery. Accompanied by a compact survey catalogue with an essay by Charity Coleman, the show comprises new paintings, complemented by earlier works to further insights into the artist's practice.

Using 19th century postcards of female nudes in erotic poses or occasionally canonical paintings as compositional devices, it is Nowinski's process that transforms these tropes – without denying the artist's deep engagement with painting's history – in a freshly contemporaneous way. Though her paintings may be modest and often surprisingly small in scale, it is the concentration, conceptual clarity and time invested that imbues them with a presence far greater than their physical size.

Nowinski's most recent works reveal an increased engagement with color, such as the bright hues of yellow and orange in *Nude in Front of Mirror*, which complement her usual palette of richly varied earthy or fleshy midtones. There is also an increased spatial complexity in the hinted-at domestic spaces her nudes inhabit, and most importantly, an introduction of subtraction. Wiping off rather than continuously adding paint makes the works retain a more disintegrated, "unfinished" though simultaneously layered quality, furthering their contemporary appearance. A painting like *Grandma Jean #11* thus displays an enigmatic quality as the smear distorting the subject's facial features invites interpretation as a veil, a psychic state, or merely a painterly – though quite deliberate, lucid – convulsion of paint.

Again and again, sometimes over years, Nowinski returns to the same, often rudimentary photos as they jolt renewed interest, leading to works that constitute series without actually being serial. In an enterprise of increasing depth, the artist holds history at bay through a level of conscious brutality and irreverence. Add to this her acute attention to what reveals itself in the painting process, and we are witnessing an oeuvre managing to be simultaneously aware and free, not dissimilar to the nudes themselves, once subservient to a lustful gaze, who now look back to us – through the alchemy of paint and painting – in possession of their own bodily exuberance and gleeful autonomy.

Janice Nowinski (b. 1959, Manhattan) is a Brooklyn based artist who received her MFA in Painting from Yale University in 1987.

Her 2021 exhibition at Thomas Erben represented a breakthrough – garnering double reviews in Artforum and Hyperallergic, as well as critical takes in The Hudson Review, Painting Perceptions and Two Coats of Paint. It also led to inclusions in exhibitions at the **American Academy of Arts and Letters**, **Venus over Manhattan**, **DC Moore** (all New York), Joe Bradley and Valentina Akerman's **Galerie Sardine** (Amangansett), **Fahrenheit** (Madrid), as well as a forthcoming solo show at **Eleni Koroneou Gallery** (Athens, Greece).

Nowinski was awarded a **Guggenheim Fellowship** in 2022 and was an awardee of the **Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program** in 2022/23.