

# Antoine Levi

LOUIS FRATINO

*Heirloom*

January 26<sup>th</sup> – March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## **Flesh-ornament-vulnerability-hotness-intimacy-orchids**

A toe is sucked, belly buttons and buttocks framed with tiny tendrils of hair billow, ancient eyes with unfurling lashes caress the limbs of their subjects lovingly. The hot movements of the laden brush strokes flow eagerly between and fondle the limbs of the figures they depict, mimicking a sense of urgency to transmit unselfconscious desires between bodies in love, or lustful rapture. The warm fuzz of wool blankets pressed into flesh against flesh is conjured. The languorous minglings of domestic objects, skin, body hair and fluids feel as though they are encased in these paintings under the window of an endless sun bleached afternoon, stolen hours on a living room sofa, or in the privacy of a flat share bedroom.

Elsewhere a group of humans (perhaps a family or friendship group) sit around a candle lit table, where another type of more filial intimacy is captured between the painted stokes. These pieces seem to expose the source or provide a larger framework for the feelings of tenderness and joyful exchanges in the more erotically charged pieces. The switch of modes between friends and lovers and the way the way in which these relationships can seep into and become confused with one another springs to mind.

Soft action, and interior moments are captured with a hotness that tumbles through each vignette of Louis Fratino's paintings. The paintings flit focus between time periods and styles in a way that seems at once personal and archetypal, so that one is unsure if they are depicting a family member, lover, or a more generalized depiction of the body conjured from art historical references.

I am very drawn to the sense of closeness captured in Louis's works, the feeling of touching and warmth. Within the paintings he seems to embellish and accentuate certain parts of each of the subjects body such as; the hairs, eyes, spinal cords and belly buttons, which all become dislocated from the main of the figure to take on the quality of motifs in their own right. These dislocated parts seem to act as signifiers for the vulnerabilities and personalities of each individual subject as well taking on the forms of abstracted patterns.

When I look at Louis's works I think about painting as an act of capturing a charged moment in subject/object relations. The artist fully embraces and revels in the sensuality of the medium, using this dimension to embellish his figures with increasingly sensual vigour. There's a palpable feeling of the pleasure in his strokes, which enhances the sense of liveliness slipping between the figures and surfaces of the canvas. The works have an affinity with some of Chaim Soutine's paintings of service staff and cooks from early C20th Parisian hotels and restaurants. Soutine renders his young, mainly male subjects within similarly cropped almost bodily interior environments, allowing the flesh and warmth of their sitters to bleed into the fabric of their garments and surroundings in a pleasing and visceral way.

This idea of the boundaries of the self and the other, paint, limbs, soft furnishings, and foodstuffs all bleeding into one another is an emblem that seems to run throughout Louis's works. The artist considers his practice as 'one long changing body' and this seems a perfect analogy for what is happening on the canvas, for the vignettes of life we are privy to, as well as those which we imagine taking place out of the frame that we are not.

In a time where so much of our experience of touching, looking and interacting is mediated through technology and thus stripped of certain sensations related to taste, smell and mutual touch. Louis's paintings feel like a welcome slither of fleshy intimacy. It feels like these works have the scent of skin and joyful fluids entrapped between their licks of paint.

- Zoe Williams, 2018

Louis Fratino (USA, 1993) lives and works in New York City. *Heirloom* is his first solo exhibition at Antoine Levi. Recent exhibitions include *Matisse + Fratino*, Cabinet Printemps, Düsseldorf, 2018 (group); *So I've got you*, Thierry Goldberg, New York, 2017 (solo); *Own, Only*, Monya Rowe Gallery, Saint-Augustine, 2017 (solo); *Practice in Leisure*, Galería Mascota, Mexico DF, 2017 (group); *Embodiment*, D.C. Moore Gallery, New York, 2017 (group); *Life's Rich Pageant*, Jeff Bailey Gallery, Hudson, 2017 (solo) *Reasons*, Platform Gallery, Baltimore, 2016 (solo).