

## EMPIRE OF THE SENSELESS

Nina Chanel Abney | Francesca DiMattio | Sara-Vide Ericson | Natalie Frank | Kristina Jansson | Rosa Loy

On View February 26 – March 28, 2015

Opening reception: 6-8 pm, Thursday, February 26

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Sara Vide-Ericson, *The Rapture*, 2014  
Oil on canvas  
63 x 47 inches (160 x 120 cm)

*Perhaps if human desire is said out loud, the urban planes, the prisons, the architectural mirrors will take off, as airplanes do. The black planes will take off into the night air and the night winds, sliding past and behind each other, zooming, turning and turning in the redness of the winds, living, never to return.*

- Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless*, 1988

Punk icon Kathy Acker begins with an “Elegy for the World of Our Fathers” in her pivotal 1988 novel *Empire of the Senseless*. And an elegy it is – a dark, grotesquely candid, screaming requiem to the romanticism of the patriarchy. In the world Acker fashions, a decaying earth is populated by anesthetized part-human, part-robots. Their brutal apathy, a product of the naked cruelty of civilization, becomes a type of freedom. It is here they find autonomy.

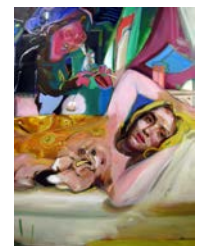
Friedman Benda is pleased to announce *Empire of the Senseless*, opening February 26 and on view through March 28, 2015. Using Acker’s work as a jumping off point, Curator and Director Thorsten Albertz has invited six artists to use painting to reflect on their unique explorations of reality.

The show encourages taking a moment of pause to view our current internet-age, machine-based, violence-infused culture and how it has affected one’s emotional output. Can we view one’s persona as a form of drag? What happens when different, conflicting symbols are combined? Where does the self exist in an era of the masses?

**Nina Chanel Abney’s** (b. 1982, Chicago) work features bare colors and stark geometry. She mutes powerful symbols by employing the language of machinery: gender becomes androgyny, race is rendered irrelevant, letters and numbers are merely shapes, and arrows lead to nowhere. The tension of the work, both humorous and beautiful, turns chaos into order.



**Natalie Frank** (b. 1980, Austin) delves into the uncertainty of reality. Her painting is lush and full of rich coloration, producing an almost stained glass quality. Immersed in these colors is an identifiable yet abstract existence. For this show, Frank paints women with animals, ambiguous in relationship (one woman lies naked with a dog, another is simultaneously kissing or devouring a bird) and ambiguous in form (the flesh toned dog blends into the woman’s breast, while the woman blends into the floral sofa). Like Acker, Frank examines power, narrative, and the perversity of the imagination.



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**Sara-Vide Ericson** (b. 1983, Sweden) draws us into the wilderness. Her paintings, displayed here as a triptych, all have the artist's likeness as the centerpiece. The things around her shift – clothing, scenery, time – however, her identity remains central. Ericson uses thick strokes and soft, glowing colors to create a quiet, dreamlike world. With our eyes following her through her private space, the viewer becomes the voyeur.

**Kristina Jansson** (b. 1967, Sweden) frames fragments of a modern world. Bluntly sparse with impartially luminous colors, all areas of a piece are given the same systematic treatment. A world of technology, science, and people blend together as one.

Dreams are further explored in **Rosa Loy's** (b. 1958, Leipzig) paintings. Fantastical tableaux, each piece features female figures in various pursuits: using tools, swinging from trees, picking fruit. Typically similar in likenesses, the women become a kind of ever-shifting identity. Providing an old-fashioned feel to contemporary imagery, Loy utilizes casein, a brittle and antiquated paint material made from milk protein, to achieve a stiff and traditional composition.



The work of **Francesca DiMattio** (b. 1981, New York) removes the figure and focuses instead on the remnants of personhood. She weaves together contrasting surfaces and conflicting histories by deriving textures, patterns, and shapes from domestic objects. Traditionally feminine images are subverted and transformed through excess and rough application. Her piece, *Appliqué*, ultimately grafts together contradictory identities.

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