

CHARLES CAMPBELL GALLERY

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Vonn Cummings Sumner

Statement

The figures in my paintings are based on my friends, family, favorite artists, and my self. I do not think of the paintings as portraits in a traditional sense; I am interested in the fictionalization of reality, rather than the representation of it. The figures are often costumed, mostly on their heads, as an attempt to make visible their internal and psychological states. They move through my paintings as actors in a personal and ambiguous narrative.

I try to create characters that convey a feeling of strangeness and absurdity. I think of them as people from another world who have just dropped down into ours- destined to misunderstand what they find. They are alarmed to find themselves in a world where people are capable of that which they are capable. When presented with the choice they choose madness, weirdness, freedom. They choose to let go, to loose their mind.

On one level these paintings are an attempt to bring together my love of color field painting with my need to draw and build forms in a fictional space. I want to couple the emotive possibilities of the one with the felt experience of the other.

While the final products are oil paintings, there is an element of performance in my process: dressing up in costumes, staging photo shoots, using images of actors and performers. I have begun to view a painting as a stage where mini-operas or film stills can exist. I am always trying to find the area of greatest artistic freedom, while still knowing that freedom and creativity may only be possible within a system of rules.