

Susan Eley  
Fine Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 26, 2020

**AMERICANA Part I**

***Charles Buckley, Rachel Burgess, James Isherwood and Maria Passarotti***

June 11 – July 24, 2020



Curated by Emily Miraglia

Online Exclusive Exhibition

---

*"The United States of America is such a glorious mess of contradiction, such a crazy quilt of competing themes, such a fecund mishmash of people and ideas, that defining us is pretty much pointless. There is, of course, a kind of faded notion of "Americana", one that concerns Route 66, diners, freak rock formations, and the like—but even in its halcyon days this "roadside attraction" version of America was never an accurate or nuanced distillation of our massively complicated culture. There are scenes and places, wattages and personages, that belong—inextricably, unmistakably—to this country alone. There is an American quality, a tone, an energy ... instantly recognizable ..."*

-- Hampton Sides, American historian

Susan Eley Fine Art is pleased to announce 'AMERICANA', a four-person group exhibition of SEFA-represented artists, debuting online Thursday, June 11, 2020 and closing on July 24. 'AMERICANA' will be a two-part exhibition with Part II opening on July 28, 2020.

Americana denotes a certain type of nostalgia for the 'good old days.' Material items including old cars, sturdy wooden furniture and red, white and blue memorabilia immediately come to mind. Americana includes a series of collective memories that everyone can relate to, yet they somehow feel specific in each mind of the remember-er. Diners with vinyl seats and chrome

detailing. Unattended roadside stands with fruit for sale and a box with a slit for cash. Sticky summers at the public pool. Were times really that much better, easier and clearer? Americana also encompasses the intangible 'American Dream' and its values. Blood, sweat and tears. Thinkers, doers and go-getters. Pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. With hard enough work, you can achieve anything. This nebulous cloud that surrounds '*Americana*' includes physical items, memories, ideas and people larger than life.

Charles Buckley sources images from the fifties and using acrylic ink, carefully renders familiar scenes of the everyday with lines of varying thicknesses. The subjects run the gamut from elated to unbothered, relaxed to joyful, not knowing that they would become an idea that people long for to this day. Even Buckley's interiors have a sense of simpler times—a single flower arrangement or a modest living room.

Rachel Burgess' brushy depictions of fragmented landscapes offer another idyllic view of Americana—this one includes undisturbed riverfront scenes with very little signs of human life, save for a distant lighthouse or ship. The rich, vibrant colors paint a picturesque America. The diptych (sometimes triptych) format that Burgess employs presents the work through a sort of windowpane. The viewer can stare out and lose themselves in these tableaux.

At first glance, James Isherwood's paintings seem to embrace the themes of Americana. In fact, they almost feel like memories you just can't place. Vast, unknown landscapes with structures placed in the middle. Did people settle in, staking claim and laying down roots? Or, have these houses since been abandoned, the land recovering what once rightfully belonged to itself? The saturated colors of the sky and other naturally occurring elements force the viewer to question the notion of place, reflection and their own personal navigation of public and private.

Maria Passarotti's photographs depict small towns out west dotted with signs of life—a field with windmills generating power, a main street with a few cars parked outside of the "Sawtooth Club" and vast expanses of land dwarfing the buildings below it. There's a sense of satisfaction in the photographs, that man did not only settle on these lands, but conquered them. The skies couldn't be bluer, and the images seem to convey quintessential ideas of Americana: small, old-fashioned and proud of itself.