

ARTFORUM

Judith Linhares

EDWARD THORP GALLERY

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In Judith Linhares's painting *Picnic Rock*, 2008, two naked women loll on a blanket *en plein air*, enjoying a feast of chicken and layer cake. Nearby is a simple log cabin, and in the background a snow-capped mountain. It's an idyllic scene, but watching the pair from a tree is a third female nude, her skin tinted purple by shadow. Is she a benign or malevolent figure? What is her relationship to the diners? Are they even aware of being observed? The artist leaves the answers up to us. The ambiguity of *Picnic Rock* is typical of Linhares, whose application, while bold and bright, nonetheless allows for an engaging narrative tension and whose compositions, though outwardly simple, allow for a deceptive breadth of affect.

Linhares is a veteran of 1978's storied "Bad Painting" exhibition at the New Museum, but her broad, faux-naïf brushstrokes and juxtaposition of richly hued *luxe, calme et volupté* with a purposeful sense of awkwardness and unease align her with several younger artists, from Dana Schutz to George Condo. The large figure paintings in the current show, "Riptide," are punctuated by several studies of animals, and even the most cartoonish of these—the drooling wolf in *Hunger*, for example, or the red-eyed subject of *Arctic Hare* (both 2010)—are more than a little grotesque. Attracting us with a sensual concentration on sex, food, and the great outdoors, and lulling us into a false sense of security via their lush, likable style, these are pictures with surprising bite.



Judith Linhares, *Hunger*, 2010, oil on linen, 22 x 26".

— Michael Wilson

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