

Esther Pearl Watson: Generating Auras

October 25 – December 20, 2024

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to present *Generating Auras*, our second solo exhibition for Esther Pearl Watson. The gallery held two previous exhibitions featuring the artist, *Guardian of Eden* (solo, 2022) and *April 14, 1561* (group, 2018-19).

The paintings featured in this exhibition were inspired by the artist's stay in Italy this past summer, caring for her father in his hometown of Ferno.

*This past year, my father who is eight-seven, was in a motorbike accident in Italy. He spent three months in the hospital, and I found myself traveling back and forth as a long-distance caregiver. There is a painting in the show, *Generates Auras*, that features a large stoic donkey. Donkeys are often used as guardians of herds, bonding with them and protecting them from predators. I have to be a guardian for my dad.*

Watson grew up in a string of small Texan towns watching her father, Gene—an Italian immigrant who was adopted by an American family when he was seven—attempt to build a functional flying saucer. The amateur engineer, who might also be deemed an outsider artist, hoped to sell his homegrown spacecraft to NASA and use the earnings to alleviate financial hardship.

Watson's new paintings evoke a sweet optimism for the land and this country, evoking scenes by twentieth century folk artists like Grandma Moses, Mattie Lou O'Kelley, and Ralph Fasanella. Children play freely on lawns and in parking lots while in the background landscapes teem with fast food outlets and gas stations. Watson takes care to include even the most humdrum features—a Cheetos bag, a loose sock, snares of wire. These are richly embellished compositions with comet-streaked, celestial skies, and the artist's glittering flying saucers hovering overhead.

Lately, I've thought a lot about comets. The auras they create are spectacular. There is a comet called the 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko, which is surrounded by its own nebulous aura or coma—an envelope of gas and dust. In his own way, my father is like this comet, generating his own aura, shaped by the changes in his body and mind. Just as a comet emits invisible light, he radiates a presence and energy that is deeply felt but not always seen, creating his own aura through this transformation.

Esther Pearl Watson (b. 1973) received her MFA in 2012 from the California Institute of the Arts and a BFA in 1995 from the ArtCenter College of Design. Recent exhibitions include solos shows at Vielmetter, Los Angeles (2023), and Maureen Paley, Marina Di Luna (Hove, UK, 2022), *Safer at Home: Pandemic Paintings*, at the Richmond Center for Visual Arts at Western Michigan University (2021), and *Dust it Off* (2021) at Webb Gallery (Waxahachie, TX). She also published an award-winning graphic novel, *Unlovable* (Fantagraphics, 2009). She currently teaches at the ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena.