

READER

Lane, S. Nicole. "‘Fete Galante’ invites us to celebrate lavishly - An Art Party of Woman Artists Opens at Heaven Gallery," *Chicago Reader*, Oct. 6, 2020.



Sophie Treppendahl
"Sunday Morning," 2021
Oil on canvas
60 x 60 inches

A *fête galante* is a depiction of a courtship party painting most properly in the French Academy during the 1700s. There are various types of scenes—either in natural grassy hills or in masquerades in a large hall—that comprise the painting style. Watteau's painting style would ultimately go out of fashion—one of his paintings was even used for target practice. The public saw his work as flippant and meaningless.

Zabicki dealt with her own contentions from galleries. "I think that the idea of the *fête galante* felt too frivolous for many people, considering the work being done by other artists to address the nightmare of our current political reality, social injustice, and income inequality (not to mention the pandemic that we are living through). But I still insist that this is an important show," she says. After several years of proposing the show, it's finally found a home at Heaven Gallery. She urges the idea that folks need an occasional break. "All I want to do is go to a party or an art opening and be packed in a room with my friends, but that will have to wait until it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we can remember that we will see our friends again someday, there will be dinner parties and flirtation and joy."

"*Fête Galante*"—the exhibition and the painting style—celebrates the satins, elaborate feasts, flirtations on the dance floors, and whispering sweet nothings. It's a celebration of many things that we've lost in the past six months.

Zabicki found several of the artists on Instagram, some on Painters Table, and a few she knows from the Chicago art scene. I'm immediately drawn to *Power Couple* by Katarina Janeckova. A figure is facing the viewer with their ass up in the air as a creature rests on her backside reading a book or examining her body—I'm not entirely sure. It's the most overtly sexual piece in the exhibition with others more subtle and soft, like Karen Azarnia's *In the Garden II* showing two figures holding hands.

Many of the works have similar details that tie them together, like Aubrey Levinthal's *Zoom Birthday Party* and Aglaé Bassens's *Sweet Nothings*, which both include cherries. *Fodder* by Melissa Murray and *Socially Distanced Picnic* by Sophie Treppendahl are picnic scenes, each displaying a large spread of food eaten in the sun. They all look at human connection, intimacy, and the thrill of those interactions. I leave the show wanting to hug my friends. I want to dance under a disco ball. But, for now, I'm content at seeing the party come alive on the walls of a gallery.

(excerpted)