

## Lorser Feitelson: Allegorical Confessions, 1943-1945

October 10 – December 23, 2020

Los Angeles, CA. Louis Stern Fine Arts is pleased to present *Lorser Feitelson: Allegorical Confessions, 1943-1945*. Often referred to as Feitelson's "Romantic Paintings," the artist himself described this wartime series of works as "Allegorical Confessions." Tender, moody, and sensual, these introspective works mine familiar archetypes, myths, and classical references to explore the complexities of the artist's relationships and desires.

Turning away from the monumental, plainspoken public murals the artist had created for the WPA, Feitelson's *Confessions* pick up the thread of his Post-Surrealist work of the 1930s. Rather than seeking to guide the viewer to a deeper meaning, however, the focus of these autobiographical paintings is shifted back upon the artist. The paintings are self-referential, depicting paintings within paintings and ambiguous perspectives in which Feitelson is rendered both observer and subject, artist and model.

Longing, passion, joy, and loss suffuse these works, which are focused primarily on the romantic concerns of the artist's life at the time. *Allegory of the Golden Apple*, 1943 alludes to the Judgement of Paris, in which the Trojan prince judges Aphrodite the fairest of three goddesses in exchange for the world's most beautiful woman, Helen of Sparta. As in the myth, Feitelson chose his own Helen – fellow artist Helen Lundeberg, whom he would later marry – in the midst of another serious affair and an ailing marriage coming to a close. Aphrodite looms most prominent of the three figures, depicted as the larger-than-life subject of a painting within the painting, signed by the artist in declaration of his choice to award the apple to her.

*Paolo and Francesca*, 1943 references the eponymous star-crossed couple depicted in Dante's *Inferno*. A man and woman, possibly Feitelson and Lundeberg, contemplate a set of paintings depicting romantic and physical love: Eros poised to loose an arrow and a couple tangled in a passionate tryst. The undulating figures in the paintings reflect the fates of Paolo and Francesca: doomed by their forbidden love to flit as restless wraiths in an eternal storm. The painting perhaps reflects Feitelson's yearnings and anxieties surrounding his complicated love life as his relationship with Lundeberg continued to evolve.

These vulnerable and intimate paintings offer a glimpse into a visual diary of sorts. Honest and raw, steeped in the ache of loss and the elation of new love, Feitelson's *Allegorical Confessions* feel as relevant today as the day they were painted.

Works by Lorser Feitelson are included in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among numerous other public and private collections.

Louis Stern Fine Arts is the exclusive representative of the Estate of Lorser Feitelson.