

ARTIST IN FOCUS



Farm Aid The Endangered Livestock of Lily Stockman

Pink L

Speckle in the Desert

Stockman in her studio

Rooster Chicken

Fluffy Chicken

BY SANDRA SCHULMAN

How did a fresh faced farm gal from Rhode Island end up in the Mojave?

Via Mongolia.

Lily Stockman was studying painting at Harvard when she received a grant from National Geographic to trek across the barren plains of Mongolia and study nomadic steppe culture. There was also a short lived flaxiz involved, but the harsh trip accompanied by a severe bout of dysentery killed that romance in all senses.

"When I was living in Mongolia my survival was wholly dependant upon the beauty of animals. Anything with four hooves was fair game for milking, eating, and riding, and the ancestral way in which Mongolians live off their animals has really influenced my thinking about our relationship to what we eat. I also learned what it was like to just completely lose your dignity on that trip," Lily says laughing. "We even had to give back the money since we couldn't finish the project."

But before leaving for Mongolia, Lily had met the guy who was to be her future husband. Back in NY, she reconnected with him, married him, and kept painting. He joined the Marines, which is how the couple landed in Joshua Tree.

As soon as they settled in he was deployed to Iraq for 7 months, leaving Lily

to seek out the local arts community. She immediately connected with her ancestral paintings of endangered farm animal species - cows, chickens, pigs, goats - a vast departure from the coyotes, turtles, and scorpions most desert dwellers were creating.

"I'm interested in the great, un-lip tradition of the 19th century animal paintings like Anshon and Stubbs, the parables of human folly portrayed in Walton Ford's epic, contemporary animal paintings, the hip-hop appropriation of French rococo portraiture à la Kehinde Wiley, and the flat minimalism achieved in American modernism Milton Avery's landscape paintings," she says. "I'm always trying to find a balance between bold, gestural mark-making and a quiet economy of brushstrokes. I want the making of the image to be as interesting as the image itself, and I'm slowly learning that one painting at a time. Growing up near farms just made me have an affinity for those animals, and in my studies I found a lot of these species have been out bred as they don't fit into the mass-farming for one use animals. For example the Cotton Patch Goose, also called the Goosey Goose, was most useful for weeding cotton fields, but modern technology made that unnecessary."



My Beauty is My Dishes



Deep South



Cremation



Then Here



Sick End



Wore



Mojave ups



Here I

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Farm Aid

Lily often combines the portraits with background wallpaper type patterns that connect with the time period the animal was first catalogued. But viewers don't need all this information to appreciate the paintings.

"I'm interested in looking at these animals as relics of American agricultural, social, and gastronomic history. They are symbols of regional American identity. In the midst of the progressive food culture of California, I am hoping they inspire people to think about their food in the context of cultural identity."

The beguiling question becomes whether these are ironic or just what they appear to be? Is that purple pig pissed off? What's with that semi-evil blue bunny? How can a greasy goose be so angelic?

Lily just laughs at the interpretations.

"The paintings at first glance might look like visual one-liners: portraits of rare breeds of livestock. But I'm using these animals as emblems of our collective history of consumption. Take the painting of the American rabbit, which is nearly extinct now; it was the most popular pelt rabbit from the 1920s through the early 50s. If your grandmother had a blue sable fur coat, chances are it came from an

American rabbit. It also happens to be an extremely delicious, refined meat-rabbit, and I had this vision of a woman eating stewed

some teachers and critics once be very harsh on this type of work but the fact that they were so impassioned about it that convinced me to just keep doing what I'm doing. I employ a real economy of brushstrokes too, a thick smooth stroke to keep clean lines."

Lily has another series of work currently on display in Bakersfield of homestead cabins, but again, hers are not the meticulous plank by plank recreations other painters employ. They are more sweeping swirls of color and flattened horizon, not exact landscape from photos.

She has been painting "like a madwoman" in a colorful Joshua Tree space once used as a recording studio by musician/owner Tim Easton. Her two shelter dogs – a Dalmation mix and a spunky Corgi – keep her company. Lily will be showing ten new paintings, bringing her bizarre little Farmville to Joshua Tree.

From There From Here Series #2: Featuring Works by Kay Tuttle (Denver) & Lily Stockman (Joshua Tree)

Opening Reception with the Artists: Saturday, March 6, 6:30 pm
Red Arrow Gallery, 61597 29 Palms Hwy, Joshua Tree



Stockman in her studio.

rabbit at La Grenouille in New York while wearing pearls and a rabbit fur coat. I think of the American rabbit as a perfect symbol of prewar patricianism." she sighs. "I had

