

## SURVEY

## Janet Werner

MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTRÉAL

Opens October 31

*A compact survey of 10 years of Werner's production, this exhibition sees the seamlessness of her portraiture loosen, to show the labour behind the paintings.*

**JANET WERNER:** After painting faces for 20 years, it became more interesting for me to deface the image. I've always been looking for a way to undo the fiction of the portrait and to interrupt it. The bodies of the women are collages constructed from various source materials and, in the newer works, if there is a body with a head that doesn't belong to it you actually see the division. I pull inspiration from fashion magazines, and a characteristic of fashion models is that they have to be blank canvases for us to project upon. That's one of the reasons they have served me: I can give the figures a level of complexity and subjectivity that's not there in the original context. They have to embody some kind of contradiction or complication. Stains or drips or tears on the image have become interesting to me, in terms of mark-making and how they reveal the materiality of the paint. The relationship between photography and painting is a difficult one—if you're using photographs they can sort of hold a grip on you, and not let go. I've been wrestling against that, and this has become a new way to loosen the grip of the photograph. In some pieces, like *Hover (The Distance Between Here and There)*, I'm referencing the studio in the painting itself, which opens up the process, revealing the making. I used fragments of images as an anchor and I kept overpainting. It was built very differently; it's more abstract and improvisational.

Janet Werner *Hover (The Distance Between Here and There)* 2017  
COURTESY NATIONAL BANK ART COLLECTION PHOTO GUY L'HEUREUX



## BACKSTORY

## Sreshta Rit Premnath

CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY, VANCOUVER

Opens October 11

*In "Those Who Wait," the New York artist explores how detention facilities and bureaucratic processes are made to keep people physically and psychologically stuck.*

**SRESHTA RIT PREMNATH:** There's something about the humiliation of bureaucracy that is very personal to me. Despite recently becoming an American citizen, I'm still a brown person; I always get pulled into those secondary security procedures at airports. I started volunteering with New Sanctuary Coalition, a non-profit that organizes accompaniment for people going through immigration or asylum processes, not necessarily to intervene, but just to be there with them. I recently accompanied someone to a court hearing; nothing traumatic happened, but I observed a real sense of helplessness. There's little space to sit, so people line up in the hallways and are constantly corralled by security. The whole process is about waiting but the space doesn't really account for it. In my new work, the figures support each other, rather than only being supported by the architecture. I'm thinking about waiting from an embodied and physical viewpoint—the discomfort of standing for a long time, feeling the weight of one's body and needing another's support. Those in power use time as a weapon, to keep people stuck in situations of stasis. I want to produce a feeling of the stoppage of time. ■

Sreshta Rit Premnath *Those Who Wait* 2019 PHOTO THORSTEN ARENDT