

SEPTEMBER 16–
DECEMBER 27, 2015

Becky Suss
Gallery Guide

The Eleanor Biddle
Lloyd Gallery

Becky Suss presents selections from her most recent body of work in her first solo museum exhibition. These meditative, large-scale paintings—augmented by smaller studies in oil and ceramic—reimagine the domestic spaces of her relatives with a focus on her late grandparents’ midcentury suburban home.

With their flattened architecture and exaggerated perspective, Suss’s canvases memorialize collected art and objects through an intimate, archaeological process that opens familial narratives to class, politics, and religion.

Echoed in these works are the migratory shifts and political climates of Cold War America, from the Red Scare to suburban sprawl. Psychic and physical space is conflated as Suss works through memories and mythologies embedded within these interiors. For her ICA exhibition, she expands this inquiry with several new canvases and experiments in larger, more labor-intensive ceramics.

Objects roam within Suss’s work, appearing as stand-alone sculptures or compressed within the two-dimensional space of a painting. She has chosen materials that evoke her childhood memories and family history, stories coalescing within real and imagined interiors. A pillow, a coffee cup, a vacation photo—these curated mementos morph through various sizes and colors, often appearing in multiple canvases. An uncle’s artwork is both painted into the corner of *Dining Room (Verve magazine, vol. 1, nos. 1 and 2)* (2015) and refabricated in ceramic form. Images from his 1937/1938 issues of *Verve* magazine—the modernist Parisian arts publication—evolve through the exhibition from small gilded canvases to a framed print in

1919 Chestnut (Three Cities, The Mother, Kiddush Hashem, Salvation, The Apostle, Mary, Nazarene) (2015) to a periodical on a dining room table in *Dining Room (Verve magazine, vol. 1, nos. 1 and 2)* (2015). Read as relics, they suggest a timeline that spans half a century, revealing both the intended and hidden narratives that our lived spaces speak.

In an interview with ICA’s Becky Huff Hunter available at icaphila.org, Suss elaborates on this history in relation to the painting *Living Room (six paintings, four plates)* (2015):



Becky Suss, *Living Room (six paintings, four plates)*, 2015, oil on linen, 84 × 108 inches. Courtesy the artist and Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia.

This painting is a pretty straightforward recreation of a wall that actually existed in my grandparents’ home. The top painting depicted third from the right is by the artist Jack Levine. Levine, like my grandparents, was the son of eastern European Jewish immigrants. He made paintings

that were highly critical of the powerful and corrupt in both business and government, and in the 1950s was targeted by the House Un-American Activities Committee. My grandparents were leftist activists at Brooklyn College in the 1940s and my grandmother was even called to testify before the Rapp-Coudert Committee (a New York State Legislature group whose project was to measure the depth of communist influence in New York's public schools). This Jack Levine painting recalls that history for me, and reminds me of the conflict that my grandparents felt later in life. Although they maintained their progressive left-leaning ideologies throughout their lives, they did very well financially. While they certainly valued the stability that monetary success offered them, they did not make lavish purchases, with the exception of their house and a handful of art objects, including this painting by Jack Levine.

Read more here:

<http://icaphila.org/posts/7583/q-a-becky-suss>

The way Suss positions interiors and exteriors, windows and mirrors, and the fenced-in framed wildness of the backyard allows her playful mastery of foliage to encroach on her figureless rooms, bringing curvaceous, lumpy life into the midcentury modern uniformity of these spaces. This tension is spectacularly manifest

in her use of wallpaper from the Beverly Hills Hotel for *Bedroom (Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám)* (2015). The objects that fill this fantasy room include her mother's girlhood lamp and an elaborately bound book of poetry that fascinated Suss as a child. Books appear and reappear in many of her interiors. They are Suss's ideal inhabitants, a culturally loaded yet hauntingly human presence within her work.

— Kate Kraczon, Associate Curator

Becky Suss (born 1980, Philadelphia; lives Philadelphia) received an MFA from the University of California, Berkeley, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Suss is a former member of celebrated Philadelphia artist collectives Vox Populi and Space 1026, where she has had several solo shows. Her work has been featured in group exhibitions at spaces in Philadelphia and beyond, including Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia; the Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia; UC Berkeley Art Museum; and Kunsthalle Galapagos, Brooklyn.



Related Programming

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16
5PM

Private Preview (ICA Members Only)
With the artist and curator Kate Kraczon

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28
6:30PM

Word and Song: Jim Shepard and Mary Lattimore

Image: Becky Suss, *Bedroom (Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám)*, 2015, oil on canvas,
84 × 60 inches. Courtesy the artist and Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia.

Support for Becky Suss has been provided by the Nancy E. and Leonard M. Amoroso Exhibition Fund and Fleisher/Ollman Gallery. This exhibition is organized by ICA Associate Curator Kate Kraczon and will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue.

ICA is always Free For All. Free admission is courtesy of Amanda and Glenn Fuhrman.

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Image: Becky Suss, *Dining Room* (*Verve magazine*, vol. 1, nos. 1 and 2), 2015, oil on canvas, 84 x 108 inches.
Courtesy the artist and Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia.