A Release of 8 New Kitchen Interiors by Melanie Parke Garvey|Simon Gallery

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Melanie Parke’s recent and ongoing series of oil paintings of interior spaces consider the kitchen as a container for emotional comfort, reflection, memory and desire.

In an era of recovery and trauma, social trepidation, when hugs and handshakes continue to find pause, when every conversation and gesture still has a nuance of risk and is weirdly touched by politics, a warm inviting kitchen represents an escape.

Intimate nooks, window ledges, breakfast tables, antique cupboards filled with decorative china, kitchen hearths, some washed in light, some on the edge of day, subjects tinged with historical residue center the narrative of this most recent release. Each 20x16 painting sets up a distinct space for respite and contemplation.

Melanie is not much of a cook but says she loves scrolling images of kitchens, a habit formed while designing her own Japandi style home during the early Covid years “I’m a sucker for clean counter tops,” she says, “but not too clean. I like a space that includes a shelf for the cookbook library, bowls of fruit and handmade ceramics, flowers and a teapot, I love a deep woods cabin kitchen, where the wood stove also heats up the kettle, or one accompanied by an English fireplace, with a cupboard of grandma-china, flowery tablecloths, and doors wide open to the breeze.”

Looking for images that prompt something in her, she then reassembles the furniture, sets the table for tea, embellishes the walls with pattern, redecorates and reconstructs to assert her own utopia.”

Melanie had a grandmother that provided an escape from her own trauma. A small cottage filled with music, art books, floral patterns galore, gold velvet cushions trimmed and tasseled, dark, curving armchairs with wicker backs. Her grandmother gave her a petite set of scissors that fit perfectly in her small child hands and encouraged her to draw. Later when Melanie became a teen, her grandmother spoke enthusiastically about romance and poetry, and pulled out a well worn black and white album of her own childhood home with painted murals and elegant china.

“It was as if we put the color back into those rooms, with her storytelling, and my imagining,” Parke recalls.