



JASON SEELEY • PILES • May 17 to June 28, 2013

LIST OF WORKS (front to back): Backpack (det. 2013), Backpack 2 (2013),
Barriers (2013), Baby Boom (2011), Backpack (2013), Give Me Some Credit (2013).
All works acrylic on canvas.

JASON SEELEY was born in New Milford CT, and grew up in the suburbs of Boston MA.
In 2008, he received his BFA from Ringling School of Art and Design,
followed by his MFA from the University at Buffalo in 2011. His work has been seen nationally and internationally,
at venues including Schwartz Gallery in London, Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto,
and the Zhou B Art Center in Chicago. In 2011 He participated in Buffalo's Fluid Culture series with his installation "Bed".
Seeley's work was also featured in the 98th edition of New American Paintings in 2012. He lives and works in Buffalo, NY.

Hallwalls' visual arts program is supported by generous grants from Erie County Arts & Cultural Funding,
the City of Buffalo, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.
Major grant and underwriting support for Hallwalls' 2012-2013 programming season has been provided by
the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

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The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

JASON SEELEY
PILES



Life of Piles

In the work of Buffalo artist Jason Seeley, figurative forms are the predominant imagery. They are astutely rendered in a photo-realist style, but they evade conventional figurative allusions through a unique and isolated treatment and, often, an oddity to the form and presentation of the figures. Highly personalized, they are also generalized into more universal symbols that are readily and immediately recognizable to anyone who has a family, a partner, children, or siblings.

In two new paintings, various family members are piled atop each other, a humorous depiction of the loving crush of responsibility. Seeley effectively obscures the position of limbs, without any fakery or exaggeration, such that the family melts into a single hybrid organism, weighted down by itself but gamely inching forward. At first glance, one might think, well yes, that's what kids feel like, all piled on top of you with their needs. However, closer examination reveals that in both paintings, it is one of Seeley's sons who is on the bottom of the family mosh pit. He very subtly introduces the potent idea that children are not a burden, but exactly the opposite, the thing that lifts you up and sustains you.

In another painting, his children as infants sit astride their mother's thighs as though they were melee weapons for Lara Croft. Locked and loaded. Their mother's "Draw, partner!" stance only emphasizes the underlying notion that children are empowering entities that may drain you of sleep and youth but offer other forms of potent ammunition. Even in a painting that perhaps emphasizes the desire to safeguard his children, as they stand there wearing hazmat suits, they have a confident swagger, an aura that suggest a fearless confidence.

It's a swagger not shared by everyone. Seeley paints himself in a frighteningly naked portrait, attached to a hovering pile of medical equipment, helpless, with a glazed over, near-deathly look on his face. Some of the equipment advertises "constant care" while digital readouts seem to evoke birth and death dates. Seeley's isolated white background here operates as an antiseptic zone of abject fear. It's one of many gigantic parental nightmares, illness so substantial one is unable to care for one's family.

In a new painting of red flags receding into the blank horizon, we are immediately connected to the immensity of military graveyards, but also to the notion of a red flag, a warning, that thing to take note of, to be cautious about. The allusion in this context is, like most of Seeley's works, direct and unambiguous—life (and family) can sometimes feel like a series of red flags, those potentially dangerous scenarios that life seems to offer in abundant supply and which are intensified in the context of family, that circle of love beyond yourself that you aspire to protect.



Curiously, another of Seeley's newer paintings, a large work depicting two concrete barriers colliding into each other complement his other works with a more complex layer of meaning. Formally, the barriers are figurative as well and their pairing mimics that in other paintings that specifically depict his children. And while more than a few people will read the work as the familiar collision of sibling rivalry, they are broader symbols as well. The barriers have not only collided but have begun to pile atop each other—the crush of kids on kids, yes, but also the collision of responsibilities, desires, and anxieties. Using concrete barriers as a pictorial allusion to family and life in general sounds ominous, but it's worth noting that the barriers are not crumbled or broken.

Solidly deformed, but still solid. There is a strength that abides beyond conflict.

John Massier
Visual Arts Curator

