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GALLERIES

Robert Feintuch's airy conundrums



By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 11, 2015

Robert Feintuch's paintings spin around skinny legs, broad backs, and red, averted faces. In some of those works, now on view at Miller Yezerski Gallery, the pivot point is a single hand, pointing.

In "Legs Up," for instance, a man lies in the clouds, his feet jutting into the air, his torso nearly immersed in a whipped-cream froth of cumulus clouds. He's been sundered like Wile E. Coyote. The slapstick posture makes a delicious counterpoint to the heavenly setting. The man's hand points downward, as if the cause of his fall lies below.

The hand reminded me of Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam," although this fellow's gesture, with fingers tucked into palm, is not as open as God's or Adam's. Indeed, it's accusatory, not generative. The pointing hand adds vinegar to the scene. The figure in "Legs Up" might be man or God, beaten one too many times by humanity's failures.

Feintuch's a terrific painter, whatever the subject. These paintings glow. The pinks soak up sun even in a darkened room, and they have the dry, fine-grained quality of frescoes. Influences include Gothic portrayals of heaven, the discomfort and vulnerability in the fleshy, up-close-and-personal photographs of John Coplans, and the hybrid critters sculpted by Feintuch's wife, Rona Pondick.

In "Assumption," two pink feet stick out from the bottom of a cloud. The protagonist is being assumed into heaven like Mary, but there's apparently a clog in the system and he's gotten stuck halfway there. These works wrestle with the debilitations and humiliations mortality imposes on us, but also with the possibility of grace, which we find in beauty and in hope.