Reclaiming the centerfold

Suzannah Sinclair borrows images from vintage men's magazines of the 1970s for her watercolor paintings on birch panel at Samson. She is, in her way, reclaiming the centerfold. She paints nude women (and one clothed one), stereotypically reclining on the grass or cavorting with a feather boa in front of a mirror.

What's different is in the women's eyes. They don't have the quasi-confrontational come-hither gaze of the Playboy centerfold. Rather, they appear to have an inner life. It's intentionally hard to tell what's going on with them emotionally. Even sitting naked in a forest stream, as is the woman in "Easy Living," she's not exactly there for the taking, as she looks sadly down at her own reflection.

The paintings are gorgeously crafted. The transparent watercolor reveals the wood grain beneath, suggesting that these images are just shimmers, here and gone, passing as quickly as a desire sated. Sinclair imbues her work with a vivid push-pull effect, deploying strategies of objectification even as she recovers some of her subjects' subjectivity. Clearly, this artist loves beauty, but as she revels in it with her forms and materials, she also questions its costs.