

Yael Brotman

At Loop Gallery

Artist's Statement

## Off in the distance

One of the few stories of hope that came out of the Tsunami devastation tells of a woman who was swept down a river holding baby twins. She grabbed onto a floating tree. The tree turned out to be a giant water snake that swam to the shore, dropped off its human cargo and then swam away. This is probably an Indonesian version of an urban myth.

Urban myths, legends, epics, fairy tales, and gossip are all versions of storytelling. And storytelling is what I investigate through my art practice. In this installation a string of small blue paintings creates a non-linear non-verbal narrative. The images are culled from emblems found in traditional fairytales, from photographs and advertisements in newspapers and magazines, and from my own sketches and photographs. The narrative, though an open-ended one, does have rhythm and phrases with sad sections separate from sections that are whimsical or hopeful.

Every so often the narrative of the small paintings is interrupted by large paintings of chandeliers. I conceived of the chandelier pieces as precious stones set along the trajectory of a beaded necklace. If the little paintings are details in the story of the everyday, then the chandelier paintings are the big, glorious spectacles, outside of ourselves, that ignite our imaginations.

One such event that I witnessed took place while I was on an artist residency in Dawson City, Yukon. During a camping trip there, I saw white northern lights flashing and glowing across the inky sky. The image of a chandelier came to me. During that residency I also researched stories and photos of the Klondike gold rush. It seemed that as soon as a frontier town established itself, the townspeople built a big hall for genteel activities, like formal balls, and outfitted it with an imported crystal chandelier. I thought of all the towns in the west and north of Canada joined like a necklace by their sparkly chandeliers. On the other side of town, in contrast, were the lampshades of the saloons and brothels. I am drawn to such dichotomies: gentility versus utility; elegance/violence; wisdom versus folly; order/chaos. In my narrative, I juxtapose them to create a dynamic of emotional engagement that is the essence of a story well told or a life well lived.