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**Irish artist GENIEVE FIGGIS has just released a self-titled book, the first publication comprised solely of her work. Issued by Rizzoli in conjunction with Half Gallery, the some 150 pages chronicle her serie, yet comical oil and acrylic paintings between 2013 — when she completed art school and was first discovered by Richard Prince on Twitter — until today.**

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — What is the art community like in Dublin?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — I don't get out very much because I'm working. But if it's something very special, I'll go out. The last show I saw was in the National Gallery of Ireland. They had put together a show of Vermeer. But I would never go to openings or anything like that. I just want to see the work when it's quiet. I think that's better. It's more important for me. I don't want to drink wine and hang out. It's all about who's there and I don't know anybody.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — You grew up in Ireland?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — Yeah, I was born in Dublin. I got my degree at the Gorey School of Art in Wexford when I was 30. I had my daughter at 21 so I didn't get the chance to go to art college until later. So when my children were small, I applied to the art course and got in. I really enjoyed every day of that whole experience. I'd been given that sort of second chance. So it was really important to me and I had a great time. I commuted up to Dublin from Wexford for my fourth-year honors degree. Then I took some time off, we moved back to Dublin and I started my Masters in fine art in painting in 2010. And then a year after graduating, I was found on Twitter by Richard Prince. I didn't have a gallery in Ireland and he took an interest in me and was very supportive. He bought some of my work.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — That's like the Father Art shining down on you.

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — I'd like to think I've been given so much support that it has given me the balls to do what I'm doing now. And I think that my work is improving. I go into the studio every day knowing that today might be the day that I get better. I'm constantly trying to improve. And I'm learning all of the time. I don't think an artist should feel like they've arrived anywhere or that they've accomplished everything ... what I've been trying to accomplish with paint for over a decade and seriously people thought I was from the nuthouse, because I had to destroy a lot of work in order to try to do what I'm doing. It took me over a decade and some days it feels like it's coming together and others it feels like it's falling apart. A bit like the work itself.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — What exactly do you mean by improving?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — I now understand that what I'm making needs more preparation. And when I'm lucky enough in the winter, I have longer periods of time to complete a work. So when I come back the next day, revived, I get the chance to walk back into another painting that's still wet. I only work when the paint is wet. It feels to me that I'm not quite sure what will happen as far as my process. Usually I get more ideas as I go on and that feels very exciting to me. I love making a lot of work.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — You mentioned before that you go into each painting without any idea of what it will be?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — Most of the time, yeah. The paint makes shapes and the shapes give you ideas. I use my imagination. Sometimes I'll start with an image, but it always ends up completely different. It's just like a starting point. I suppose, it's more something to inspire me. You know, like the images from the Internet, movies, books, magazines — and sometimes it's just mixing the paint and preparing the work, listening to songs. I just start and I'm always surprised how easily it will form. On a bad day, it can take four or five hours for me to begin something. But as soon as I start, it's just fantastic. It's more liberating and more freeing. I think the image can be very restrictive and it can hold you back. That's why I don't take any commissions. I like to have freedom in my work. That's the whole point for me. I can't please what someone has in their mind.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — So I assume that you also don't take on any direction for an upcoming show either?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — I don't really think about shows. I just think about work. I put the shows at the back of my head. I can only work to what I want to make. But I'm very grateful to have a place to show my work when I'm finished it. I try not to put too much pressure on myself when I think of a strict idea of a show. I can't be restricted in any way. I'll freak out.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — What's an example of an image that will inspire you to begin a painting?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — I had done this Manet painting, Olympia, and it ended up being very quirky and comical. Manet's painting was highly controversial at the time — still is — and these old paintings really whisk you away to another world entirely. That's often what inspires me. I use my work to escape. I did a painting of my grandmother, when she was younger, playing the piano. I've only seen her playing the piano in the nursing home where she died. She was 86. So I wanted to make a painting of her playing the piano when she was young. I have no pictures of her when she was young, so I had to make it up. It was called Eileen's Song.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — What do you think it is that draws you to 18th century aesthetics?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — I like the costumes, the history and the paintings that were made in this period because they are theatrical. I use painting as a way of exploring different periods of history.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — Your paintings are often sexual and maybe a bit spooky as well.

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — My experience of growing up in Ireland in the 1970s felt like the Catholic Church had a lot of power and influence on every aspect of our lives. There was usually a hidden and forbidden element to conversation and choices that we made. Sometimes in my work I like to explore these forbidden topics.

And the process can make the work look a bit unearthly in that it's not a solid thing. The acrylic has a lot of water added and can be very loose and translucent at times. I love the unreliability of the material. The chance happening. The surprise element of painting.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — I love where the dogs come in. They're like this added comical element — like in *Bathtime* where your character is bathing with her pet.

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — Some of them are joke paintings. I laugh at them all. You know, I kind of go, "How'd I come up with that?" The spontaneity of it all is kind of funny. I have four dogs and I like to laugh at them as well. I can see the similarities to humans in how they interact with each other in our home. I like watching them and I enjoy watching people as well.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — Tell me about the book. How did you like the final presentation?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — I cringe when I look at my own work. It's like when you see actors being interviewed and they don't watch their own movies. It's the same thing. I mean I'm very happy when I send my paintings off. Some are personal and they're hard to look at in that way. That's what fuels the work. That's what gets you up the next day: you want to do better and you want to make more. If I was completely happy with my work I probably wouldn't go into the studio at all. I'd be so busy thinking about how fabulous I am.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — Were you always focused on painting?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — I was always drawing my friends. Making little caricatures of them and little stories. Making them birthday cards, things like that. I was involved in my children's school play, making the costumes. I decorated the house. Until I finally got the chance to go back to college and do my degree.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — What'd your parents do when you were growing up?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — My mum stayed at home and my dad had a workshop at the side of the house. He worked with tiny sculptures using the lost-wax method. He was doing all sorts of adventurous things. But we didn't think of him as an artist, though he was. He was always busy making furniture and stuff. If we didn't have a table, he'd go and build one.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — Did you ever join him?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — We worked together on a few engineering projects — I'd done engineering and woodworking in secondary school. He used to always offer advice and had the tools I needed. Obviously my projects always looked different to everyone else's cause we used completely different materials. I had more time to make stuff in my home than in a one-hour class at school. I made a periscope and different silly things that you'd make in school.

**PAIGE SILVERIA** — What does your studio look like?

**GENIEVE FIGGIS** — My studio at the moment is a large industrial space. I drive about fifteen minutes from my house every day to get to it. There are green fields with sheep and cows and the sea is in the distance.