

Artforum: 'Genieve Figgis' by Kathleen Madden, July 23 2014

Genieve Figgis
07.23.14

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07.05.14-08.08.14 Harper's Books

In "Yes Captain," the surfaces of Genieve Figgis's paintings resonate with fetishistic effect—they are charged with erotic force and replete with lascivious, decadent content. An implied narrative permeates these intimately scaled works. In the exhibition's eponymous piece, a dominant figure seems to be in a Peter the Great-era costume: In a rich crimson velvet ruched coat, he is caught in flagrante delicto with a woman bent at the waist and daubed with fleshy pigments. The imperiousness of power is revealed in the quivering surfaces of these paintings, where faint wisps of color are like distortions at dusk, haunted by ambiguity. He is truncated, painted without a head, while she is corporally whole, yet in the submissive position. The fluid profile of the woman is slightly averted and echoed in the treatment of the paint, which is marbled like endpapers in old books. Blots of paint create abstractions within the figuration, at one moment suggesting a garter on the woman's slender thigh. Ultimately, it is the viewer who is conquered by Figgis; her amorphous intrigues and painterly surfaces of orgasmic indulgence entice one to look deeper into these mesmerizing works.

Other paintings expose more hesitant gestures and postures. The figures in *People from the Village*, 2014, look like the mentally ill subjects in Diane Arbus's photographs; they appear as heavy bodies lurking in a landscape of color fields, in which lurid green from below and clean blue from above merge like indiscrete arrangements. A thick crest of hair from one figure drifts to blend with the swaths of color, while dense brushstrokes portray clutching hands. Populated by exquisite personalities that commingle in suggestive iterations, these paintings provoke thoughtful investigations into the dynamics of image production.