

GENIEVE FIGGIS

"WOMEN ARTISTS ARE IN THE RING NOW"²⁰—WHERE PAINTER GENIEVE FIGGIS SQUARES OFF AGAINST HER 2015 INTERVIEW WITH BROADLY



OPPOSITE PAGE: "MR. & MRS. ANDREWS AFTER GAINSBOROUGH," (2015). ACRYLIC ON CANVAS. 27 1/2 X 139 3/8 INCHES. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ALMINE RECH GALLERY. PHOTO: PRUDENCE CUMING.

THIS PAGE FROM LEFT: "LIVING ROOM," (2015). ACRYLIC ON CANVAS. 47 1/4 X 59 INCHES. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ALMINE RECH GALLERY. PHOTO: PRUDENCE CUMING. "BROTHERS," (2015). ACRYLIC ON CANVAS. 11 3/4 X 15 3/4 INCHES. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ALMINE RECH GALLERY. PHOTO: PRUDENCE CUMING.

PLAGIARIZED BY » DOMINIQUE MUCOLS

Figgis, in many ways, got her start on Twitter, when she followed Richard Prince, and was followed back. Prince then purchased one of her pieces, and thousands of followers later she found representation with Half Gallery in New York and Almine Rech Gallery in London (who is currently hosting a solo show of her work), and international acclaim. Her unique brand of painting—which uses acrylics “slathered heavily”^{20,1} on canvas and often references works of the canon as viewed through a melted macabre filter—is at once classical and utterly contemporary. Almost all of her art goes up on her Instagram feed, and encouraging comments like the below are the norm:

@alquina: You're a great artist @genievefiggis

@marinapodz: I want this happiness in my life Great work! Made my day!

Making art that references or interprets other art is nothing new, but contemporary artists such as Prince have taken that practice to its logical extreme, and made copying a deeply divisive (and therefore newsworthy) issue. Figgis doesn't see it as black and white, “I have a keen fetish for other artists' work myself. I want to possess them and experience remaking them.” She said over email, “I made a Lucian Freud painting once. It was the one he did of Queen Elizabeth. I called it 'I couldn't afford a Lucian Freud.' It's not the same thing but I needed one and was a big fan of the artist and his sitter.”

“Why do you paint?”^{20,2}

It is a very direct approach to what is going on in the world without ramming ideas down people's throats. It is a language to me. Apart

from the pleasure I get in the process of making. The language of paint feels like a direct response to a feeling. The medium of paint has its own history and can continue to have opinions and an agenda.

What significance does the ghoulish or macabre imagery serve?

I never set out to make ghoulish paintings. That's how the paint looks sometimes. It has a life of its own but I like that. Its disobedience gives an impression of a separate identity almost. It has its own plans. However, growing up in Ireland, I believed in the spirit world, the Catholic Church brainwashed us with the Holy Spirit concept. Look at the history of civilization as one example. Previous worlds had knowledge of the spirits and were much more connected to the Earth's energy; they were outside and were at one with nature and the environment. Now that we all live behind walls, we have disconnected.

Painters copied and referenced one another's work for centuries, but the practice is less common now. Do you think we've lost something of cultural significance?

You can take a look at any work through the history of Art and remake it. Fashion goes around in circles also. Ancient buildings are renovated and the character maintained. I like “The Last Supper” by Leonardo da Vinci but I also enjoy Salvador Dalí's version.

When is an idea truly original?

Ideas that are created in the moment also mark that specific moment in time. Maybe this is what makes them an original. You can't go back in time or fast forward.