

Janet Werner

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In this comprehensive overview, visitors will have an opportunity to gauge the scope of Montreal-based painter Janet Werner's practice; since the 1990s she has developed a unique genre of fictional portraits featuring invented subjects. References to pop culture, humour, and the carnivalesque mingle with an aura of strangeness in Werner's works, many of which are executed in cadavre exquis manner, from collages of found, folded, and rearranged fashion photographs, coming mostly from contemporary fashion magazines. Since 2015, she has also been giving increased attention to the paintings' production context, representing the studio as work site, with source photographs and paintings cohabiting in a *mise en abyme* that even occasionally disposes of the figure altogether.

A major figure in Canadian painting who has played a prominent role in updating the portrait genre, Werner blurs the lines between abstraction and realism, between real and imaginary, to the spectator's delight.

Since the 1990s, Janet Werner has been developing her own, distinct brand of fictional portraiture, using found, fashion photographs (mostly of women), which she routinely cuts up in the manner of cadavre exquis, before recombining parts and transforming the figures in paint via further stylistic operations.

The resulting, composite characters have been said to address issues of gender and representation, ideological conditioning and psychological vulnerability (beauty, or prettiness, being often pitted against destruction), while simultaneously appealing to humour, fantasy and seduction.

The solo exhibition is a compact survey of the last decade of the artist's work, during which such references to humour and the carnivalesque have tended to recede somewhat, in favour of a more measured approach. Since 2015, Werner has also been giving increased attention to the paintings' production context, representing the studio as work site, with source photographs and paintings cohabiting in a *mise en abyme* that even occasionally disposes of the figure altogether.