ALMINE RECH

Genieve Figgis
Drama Club

Apr 14 — Sep 25, 2026 | Monaco

Almine Rech Monaco is pleased to present 'Drama Club,' Genieve Figgis' ninth solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from April 14 to September 25, 2026.

Theatricality lies at the heart of Genieve Figgis' practice. Often pushed to frothy extremes, her paintings reimagine art history with sharp wit and a lush command of color and texture.

The artist has a longstanding fascination with the eighteenth century—the age of absolutism holds both aesthetic and thematic allure for Figgis, who notes: "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."

But Figgis' references are not limited to the 18th century, she also turns to the rites and rituals of more recent eras for inspiration, as seen in this new body of work, where several periods are revisited. If the past is a foreign country, Figgis is an intrepid, expert traveler. A true collector at heart, the artist finds intrigue and inspiration in an ever-expanding range of sources, from film and television to advertisements, from photographs to historical paintings. This magpie-like tendency of gathering material wherever it can be found is a distinguishing feature of Figgis' process. Guided by her singular imagination and artistic language, these diverse interests coalesce into richly layered works that speak across centuries.

Encountering these paintings, one is first struck by the ornament of these worlds and the people who inhabit them, what Henry James described as the "panelled rooms, of precious mahogany, of portraits of women dead, of coloured china glimmering through glass doors and delicate silver reflected on bared tables." Figures primp, they dine, they seduce each other, they interact in theatrical tableaux that would surely have pleased Denis Diderot. Figgis' sumptuous style relishes in material splendor, accentuating texture and color through copious, dexterous brushstrokes. Vibrant drips and dabs of paint swirl together, suggesting beauty's inherent tendency towards disorder.

Next comes a desire to dig deeper, for Figgis goes beyond merely representing the jet set of yesteryear. Further contemplation reveals the complex psychology behind this world of leisure, revealing the interplay of seduction, power, and control that undergird each work. The dining scenes, a new subject for the artist, pay particular attention to the intersection of materiality and social atmosphere. Then there are Figgis's women. Unlike much of the art of the past, these women are by no means ornamental. They are not simply there to be looked at; instead, they look back, addressing us with their own agency. If Manet's women were a turning point through their frank confrontation of the spectator, Figgis seems to be continuing this legacy, bringing a modern sensibility while remaining firmly rooted in her engagement with the past.

In Figgis' world, contradictions abound. Beneath the glamorous lies the ghastly, beneath self-serious artifice, irony. Her paintings are intentionally and delightfully off-kilter, populated by shifting figures, one moment hauntingly beautiful, the next terrifying. And just when we begin to lose our footing, the artist draws us back in, guiding us through her strange and splendid realm. The new body of work presented in 'Drama Club' continues Figgis' examination of theatrical excess through striking, memorable compositions.

— Louisa Mahoney, Researcher