ALMINE RECH

Genieve Figgis
Floating World

Sep 20 — Oct 19, 2019 | Shanghai

Almine Rech Shanghai is pleased to present *Floating world,* an exhibition of recent work by Irish artist Genieve Figgis, on view from September 20 to October 19, 2019.

Figgis' first solo exhibition at Almine Rech Shanghai – her fourth with the Gallery – brings together new pieces very much in line with her previous work, focused on painting idyllic and romantic scenes (polished interiors, lavish costumes) and characterised by her unique technique in which the colour pigments are both richly textured and free-flowing.

"Time travel is a genre of storytelling that Figgis has mastered - fictions that are often born out of her love for the materiality of paint." - Alison M. Gingeras

"A phantasmagorical haute bourgeoisie supplies the main storylines in Figgis's work, whether they be landed Anglo-Irish gentry, royal (British) subjects or generic ladies in waiting, perhaps 'lifted' and reworked from a famous painting by Goya or Fragonard." - Alison M. Gingeras

The artist draws inspiration from the luxurious lifestyle of the Court, so popular with the great masters of figurative tradition that Figgis references. Paintings like *Lady with a dog (after Gainsborough)* succeed in both mocking and paying tribute to Rococo preciousness.

The selection shown at Almine Rech Shanghai is an overview of the Grand Siècle, a period during which painting turned to the "fêtes galantes", as evidenced in *17th Century Party*.

In the bucolic *Castle Picnic*, a majestic castle overlooks a group of lovers as they turn into zombie-like creatures melting before our eyes.

In a nod to fashion designers with whom she has recently worked, Figgis graces us with an assortment of outfits and accessories worthy of a catwalk show, as in *Tapestry banquet* (2019) where the tapestry is the heart of the painting. Figgis's painstaking work with texture makes her a true designer, toying majestically with her own sets and costumes.

Figgis's work strikes a balance between abstraction and figuration, horror and humour. Her work is total; it plunges us into a troubled world, between film set and party venue. Viewers are immersed in a mirror game and cannot help but wonder if they are inside or outside her paintings.

Scenes of life in stately homes form the core of the exhibition and are complemented with outdoor scenes. The pieces in the *Tropical Forest* series invite us to partake in the moist atmosphere of a romantic stroll. No detail is left to chance, not even the presence of small, brightly-coloured birds dotted across *Lovers kiss with birds*.

Her pieces *Lady with a Cat* or *Lady with a Lion* conjure up another essential theme: for painters of the time, as for Figgis, animals are a medium for colours, shapes and motion. The animal is shown in a conventional setting, where its function is decorative; it essentially serves to glorify the aristocrats and royals depicted.[1]

Genieve Figgis's art escapes categorization, because it associates thoroughly classical themes with an almost psychedelic treatment. Her deformed and anachronistic landscapes are unique and unconcerned with affected aristocratic preciousness.

[1] Jean-Luc Guichet, *L'animal dans la peinture de Chardin*, in: *Dix-huitième Siècle*, n°36, 2004, Femmes des Lumières, under the direction of Sylvain Menant. pp. 547-556.