ALMINE RECH

Genieve Figgis
Drama Party

Apr 15 — Jun 4, 2023 | M WOODS, Beijing, China

"Painting is about pleasure. If it weren't pleasurable, I wouldn't do it." - Genieve Figgis

M WOODS is proud to announce the first solo museum exhibition in Asia by Irish artist Genieve Figgis (b. 1972). The exhibition “Drama Party” will present a comprehensive mid-career overview of Figgis' artistic practice from the early years of her career to the present day, featuring around forty paintings among which several new works created this year will be shown to the public for the first time.

Figgis’ works often feature elaborately dressed protagonists- whether well-known members of royalty and aristocracy or generic subjects of the genteel class – engaging in leisurely activities such as feasting, country outing or attending parties in sumptuous stately manors or idyllic natural landscapes. The exhibition will be divided into six different sections: “Phantasy”, “‘After’ Series”, “the Royal”, “Interior Scene”, “Fête Galante” and “Social Portraiture”, exploring major themes and scenarios the artist constantly returns to.

Taking a keen interest in the European art and aesthetics of the 18th century such as the Rococo style and the English “conversation piece”, Figgis reinterpreted and reimagined famous paintings by the Old Masters, such as Fragonard, Boucher, Gainsborough and Goya. The artist created what she refers to as the “cover versions” of their works with her signature swirling brushstroke and fluid pigment.

Working flat on low tables or the floor and pouring diluted acrylic paint on canvases, Figgis lets gravity play as much role as her brush does. She enjoys immersing herself in the process with unpredictable outcomes dictated by chance. As a result, her work straddles between figuration and abstraction, in which colors mingle and forms dissolve into each other. With blurring body contours melting into exuberantly painted backgrounds where swaths of paint dribble and flow, they reveal the experimental nature of the artist's working process.

In Figgis’ work, the characters appear as phantom or clown-like creatures whose deformed visages and twisted expressions exude an air of psychedelic humor, creating a mysterious ambience reminiscent of Gothic literature which the artist has been particularly fond of. As if seen through the surface of rippling water, her lavish scenes with their distorted forms reveal an ethereal unreality, like a mirage or dream about to dissipate into air. Figgis’ work oscillates between fantasy and grotesque, absurdity and horror, homage and subversion.

Though painting has always been part of her life, Figgis chose an unconventional path of starting her family first as mother and wife before fully settling into the art world. The artist received recognition initially through social media and since then, her work has reached a wider audience and has been exhibited internationally.