

Alexis Marguerite Teplin - One foot in the past



Alexis Marguerite Teplin - Tittle Tattle Tuttle

Alexis Marguerite Teplin's work brings together art history and pop culture to explore notions of desire and the feminine. Rosalie Doubal talks to the artist who refuses to make aesthetic compromises

Voluptuous, salacious and lavishly overshooting the decorative, Alexis Marguerite Teplin's paintings are as visually arresting as they are referentially dense. Boundless pleasures can be sourced from the unpacking of their rich montages, and the Californian-born London-based artist's new body of work should enjoy great

attention, for in her exploration of history, desire and the feminine, Teplin unusually avoids aesthetic compromises. Her works are Rococo at root with an early modernist veneer, and while her collaged works on paper make kaleidoscopic references to her forbearers – artistic and literary – her brushwork is consistently colourful and animated.

'In the new body of work I'm bringing back some of my earliest references', Teplin explains. 'I will be linking Joseph Beuys, Robert Morris and Robert Barker's Panoramic Paintings with the reoccurring painting themes of Fragonard, Matisse, Joan Mitchell and Sickert, while incorporating newer references of Blinky Palermo, Martha Graham and Anthon Beeke.'

Time and again Teplin returns to the question of the figure and where it fits inside the artwork, and this new body of work presents no deviation from this fervent line of enquiry. Referencing Barker's early immersive paintings that were hung in the round, an unstretched canvas will take centre stage in this exhibition. Likened to a theatrical backdrop, the loose figure-less fabric will hang from a freestanding stretcher. Although her works on canvas will highlight the absence of a figure, Teplin also revisits provocative figurations from the annals of art history. She has painted over copies of Beeke's controversial 1971 Naked Ladies Alphabet, in which the letters are rendered using only the naked female form, and a new sculptural work nods to the work of minimalist Morris, for whom masculine industrial materials came to stand in for the figure. Consolidating her interest in the body, Teplin also includes telling found objects – a pair of leather shoes and a first edition book by pioneering modern dancer and choreographer Martha Graham – in her sculptural works.

Central piece 5cm higher – the largest painting being exhibited – lays reference to a remark once made by German artist Joseph Beuys. 'My idea was to nod to Beuys' political statement about the aesthetics of the Berlin Wall, as a way to think about the aesthetics and politics of the feminine in relationship to painting,' Teplin continues, 'to bring up a history of aesthetics and politics, but also to propose something more intimate and personal – the hem of a woman's skirt or the height at which the painting is hung.'

Teplin will also be re-staging a performance of her work *The Party*, as part of Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art in April. Written and directed by Teplin, and starring the artist herself, the play, which premiered at London's Serpentine gallery last year, was conceived as a collaborative project in the tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd and includes in its cast list the characters of an artist, designer, critic and ingénue.

'I think *The Party* functions as a performative index to my practice,' declares Teplin. 'All of my work is centred upon similar concerns: the history of art and painting, the position of the feminine and the artist as muse, and the play between abstraction and sensuality.'

Alexis Marguerite Teplin: 5cm Higher, Mary Mary, Glasgow, Sat 6 Feb–Sat 27 Mar.