

## Press Release

**Jasmine Gregory**

**Mommie Dearest: A Sword That Cuts Both Ways**

**13 April - 14 May 2022**

**Opening Tuesday, 12 April 2022, 6 - 8 pm**

Karma International is pleased to present Jasmine Gregory's solo show *Mommie Dearest: A Sword That Cuts Both Ways*, first exhibited at Istituto Svizzero, Milan in 2022, and now traveling to the gallery in its second iteration.

When I think of Jasmine Gregory's work, I think of a dog with human hands and long green and pink, pointy gel nails. A bit snooty, a bit bored, its face turned slightly to the side and almost hidden under the wide brim of a purple hat — this same dog now looks back at us in Jasmine Gregory's exhibition in Milan. *Call Me Ms. Bitch, Because I Don't Miss, Bitch* is what the artist calls the painting. She came across the quote on Instagram, it echoes a line from a song by the rapper Nicki Minaj, while the composition is reminiscent of a baroque portrait.

In early January, I visited Jasmine Gregory in her studio on the northern outskirts of Zurich.

An unexpected snowstorm clouds the view of the world. We discuss our views on art, which may not be clouded, but certainly socially determined. The dog portrait leans against the wall, already packed, while we look at the triptych *Self Giving Birth Ever Miscarried*. The two works, both created last year, clearly attest to the range of Jasmine Gregory's painting and her fascination with the medium, its cultural and historical connotations and societal impact. Figurative painting holds as much fascination for her as the rapid brushstrokes and colours of more abstract approaches. «Maybe I'm a conceptual painter», the artist muses, and maybe these stylistic labels are not that relevant when considering her work. Let us return to her studio and the triptych — which in its symmetries evokes a Rorschach test, and whose centre canvas shows a tool, representing a moment of disruption for the artist. Meanwhile, the fluorescent green might refer to the “green screen” compositing technique used in film and video to combine a background image (also digitally animated) with a different foreground. In fact, the two large canvases — just like the folding images of the Rorschach test — were created using a transfer process. Their similarities with the Rorschach test — a tool used in psychology to analyse a person's personality, in which the subject interprets pictures associatively — go beyond the visual level. What interests Jasmine Gregory is how images are perceived, how social conditioning impacts how we view and interpret paintings, questions of references and localization, and the tensions between “copy” and “original”. This brings us to the heart, or perhaps the bowels, of the discourses not only of contemporary painting but of contemporary art in general.

Educated at art schools in Europe and the United States, Jasmine Gregory is more than familiar with the Western art discourse. At the same time, she tells me, she also knows the social contexts in which artworks (and, perhaps, copies of famous paintings) serve mainly as decoration and are not part of said discourse, which can sometimes be laborious and theory-laden. Her work *War Diaries: Will to Adorn*, in which the canvas is barely recognizable as such, might well be a nod to this understanding.

The same could be said of the rhinestones and glitter that Jasmine Gregory uses, things that are generally excluded or abjected (to hint at her confrontation with the notion of the abject) from the realms of so-called “high” art. The artist plays with references in a manner as virtuosic and precise as it is tongue-in-cheek. And she adds that her works with fabric — *War Diaries: Will to Adorn* and *Struggle Porn* are references to David Hammons and Thornton Dial.

At the same time, Jasmine Gregory's painting also reveals her critical distance. A distance to a western, white, and male art historiography and image production. A distance to a context that is still insanely dominant, which

goes hand in hand with a reflection on her own position as a young female painter. Knowing that everything we think, say, or indeed paint is determined by the reality of our lives and that the long-present idea of a (mostly male) creativity that somehow springs from nothing is slowly but surely becoming obsolete, Jasmine Gregory radically expands her horizon of references. She sometimes uses stock images, which she digitally modifies, or photographs she encounters on social media. The detailed Martini glass painting is succinctly titled *A Thing Among Things*, and a (slightly adapted) line from Oscar Wilde's novel about art and self-dramatization, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, serves as the title for the painting made with oil, cellophane, and rhinestones: *Never Trust a Woman Who Wears Mauve, It Always Means That They Have a History* — says the hedonistic, somewhat cynical Lord Henry Wotton.

Gioia Dal Molin, February 2022