

TEMLON

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ODA JAUNE

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Oda Jaune's Daydreams Mingle With Reality



G like Guerrilla Girl, 2023. Photo: Laurent Edeline. © Courtesy the artist and TEMPLON, Paris — Brussels — New York

Oda Jaune occasionally goes to bed early. The intense dreams she finds herself immersed in tempts the artist to sneak between the sheets with the anticipation of a resolution. “Most of the time, I don’t remember the dreams,” she laments to *Elephant*, but the after-feeling lingers into the subconsciousness, following Jaune around her London studio which was once a backdrop factory. Dreams may be liquid, and even effervescent, but the painter does not take their influence on her for granted. She hints at them in a nude’s coyly tilted head, or a snake’s vicious gaze at a girl—her hazy brushstrokes across the canvas are not unlike the impressions of the mind’s slippery paths. “I might be carrying them with me while painting,” she says about her nocturnal journeys, “because when I start a work, I don’t know where I will end up.”

The paintings in Jaune’s new solo exhibition *Miss Understand* at Templon gallery in New York possess traits of her open-mindedness towards where intuitions guide her. She doesn’t start with sketches and rather continuously adds onto the figures, towards a destination the artist only recognizes when she sees it. “If you peel off the layers, you may find other paintings,” she confesses about her process of altering her existing juxtapositions. “Very little,” she says, “is often times remained from my initial idea.”



B Like Barbie, 2023. Photo: Laurent Edeline. © Courtesy the artist and TEMPLON, Paris — Brussels — New York



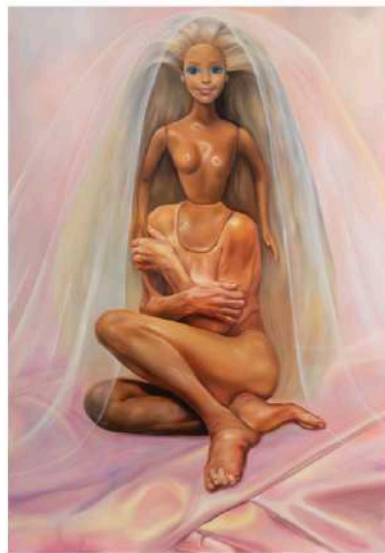
F Like Flame, 2023. Photo: Laurent Edeline. © Courtesy the artist and TEMPLON, Paris — Brussels — New York

B Like Barbie shows the lower body of an elderly nude woman, perched over the floor and shielding with limbs her wrinkled body. Above her shoulders, she metamorphoses into a plastic doll, a monumental Barbie with a giant deadpan smile and massive hair. “If I knew the result, I probably wouldn’t start at all,” Jaune believes about her trust to the unknown, such as the transition between the ages and skins in the life-size painting. An urge to paint a doll’s perfect likeness at the studio was ensued by contemplations on time’s passage and its irreversibility. The chase led to the romantically-painted work at the artist’s solo show in New York.

The nude female figures across the Chelsea galley are slightly larger than life size, surrounding the onlooker with powdery renderings of capricious musings. Foaming backgrounds blend into gestural bodies, caressed by danger and threatened by beauty. In *F Like Flame*, a gushing fire swallows a body, not unlike the way dogs and puppies surround it in *B Like Bitch*. Scale is “very much a feeling,” for Jaune who renders her nudes rather slightly larger than the actual human proportions. “There is an illusion for the eye that a body in one-to-one scale looks smaller,” she believes. “A longing for reality,” the Bulgarian-born artist explains her paintings which flirt with the absurd and even fully plunge into the infinite possibilities of the surreal. The densely hairy chest of a woman in *M Like Milk* yields a drop of milk from her nipple; *A Like Apple* turns her torso into a giant iPhone whose apple logo substitutes for her missing heart, and of the device’s three cameral lenses, one is lit, shining like an angel’s halo.



A like Apple, 2023. Photo: Laurent Edeline. © Courtesy the artist and TEMPLON, Paris — Brussels — New York



B like Barbie, 2023. Photo: Laurent Edeline. © Courtesy the artist and TEMPLON, Paris — Brussels — New York

Reality was in a state of transformation while growing up in Soviet-run Bulgaria, and its impact has been slowly catching up with Jaune. Growing up in a loving family yet surrounded by the weight of a communist regime, she found refuge in imagining her own version of the reality. "I created my own ideas of what religion or freedom could be," she remembers. And, when the freedom actually arrived at the end of the 1980s, her child eyes saw ideas and beliefs being poured onto the streets. "The preciousness of being able to say what you think out loud," is a value Jaune learned back then and has since carried into her boundlessly imaginative universe. Another jewel she has since held onto is a passion of ceramics. During her trips to the Balkan mountains as a child with her gardening parents, she would pass time by making ceramic bits from the earth. She would dry her creations under the sun and even paint them. The attempts of those childhood days tie today to the bedroom installation at the gallery basement where a ceramic table and a group of chairs sit by a large unnamed bed. A lover of dreams herself, Jaune orchestrated the bedroom of her fictional character Miss Understand during the sleepy week between Christmas and New Year's Eve. The pink-hued room is imbued with a lovelorn soundtrack that features "Love Me Tender" by Elvis Presley and Nancy Sinatra's "Bang Bang." A constellation of small paintings and photographs crown the bygone hostess's bed, invitingly soft yet marked with its owner's ghostly absence. The ceramic chairs with bodily forms as well as the table have been freshly formed by the artist who also covered the walls with moody murals of the sky. She even added a coloring book by the bed as a nod to her own childhood, as well as Miss Understand's.

This past summer, Jaune was adding hues to her own watercolors which are hung adjacent to the bedroom installation. She made them within a month and a half sojourn on the Greek island of Hydra in search of pushing the surreal imagination of the paintings upstairs to new heights. A child has a breast hat, or a bulging eye owns a pair of legs—then, a penis is chopped like a sausage. "Watercolor is a very honest medium," she says, "there is nothing you can hide in them." Similarly, there is no lying in dreams.

Written by Osman Can Yerebakan



Portrait 2024 © Charles Rousset