

GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

ANNA GASKELL

October 26 - December 21, 2019

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to announce its sixth solo exhibition of new works by Anna Gaskell (*1969 in Des Moines, Iowa).

The New York-based artist works with the media of film, photography, and drawing. In her works, Anna Gaskell creates the suggestion of a narration that seems enigmatic and mysterious despite the clearly recognizable, representational pictorial language. The main protagonists are often girls or young women whose actions remain diffuse and undissolved.

The exhibition at Galerie Gisela Capitain focuses on Gaskell's graphic work. While Gaskell's photographic series often refer to concrete literary or cinematic sources of inspiration, in the group of drawings on view, she uses the aesthetics of the 1940s and 1950s to illuminate the role of women from various perspectives. The images are the result of the artist's personal experiences and memories, which merge with fiction. Gestures, hairstyles, body types, and clothing of Gaskell's female figures harken back to the idealized feminized fashion of the 1940s and 1950s. The female figures are displayed in partly surreal-looking, theatrical settings: in a dollhouse, in a drive-in movie theatre, behind curtains opening up to an Emergency Room drama, in front of photography backdrops that show a bedroom, in a spacious bathroom that is staged to form a baptistery, in a dressing room, on a playground, in a sports arena, on the roof of a house, or in a Masonic lodge to which women are actually forbidden access.

The actions of the women depicted are not clearly legible. The figures seem isolated, out of place or unsettling, the situations enigmatic, disturbing to comical. The persons in these drawings seem like cut out models that cannot act. All the women are dropped in or inserted into the theatrical settings – implying that the women are characters frozen in a one-dimensional story – a superficial view of their capabilities, stuck in restricted roles. Some of the women are represented half-bared, whereas in another drawing the protagonist is the only person dressed in public bath. A woman stands on the roof of a house with a thoughtful expression on her face, or points a rifle at a target, while the carpet on which she stands with concentric circles turns her into a target herself.

Gaskell's style of drawing is characterized by an accentuated two-dimensional representation. Opaque colors and heavy outlines exaggerate the flatness of the drawings. Pastel girly-like colors poke fun at the derogatory palette used in 1950's advertising to manage the roles of women during the postwar period – that time between the first and second feminist movements.

In her drawings, Anna Gaskell deliberately refers to the artificial character of the strikingly depicted scenes. The viewer has the feeling that something uncanny is lurking beneath the beautiful surface, however splendid, luminous and colorful this surface may be. Gaskell's work is based on implications rather than descriptions. It refers to something that takes place outside the depiction. The titles of the works trigger a line of thought, but the depicted remains ambivalent and ambiguous.

The role of women, their inner conflicts, the search for one's identity, are topics to which Anna Gaskell consistently dedicates herself throughout her work. Her drawings contain a subtle commentary on the current state of emancipation, on power struggles and competition among women, on the expectations women have of themselves or are still brought to them by society.