

Light Holding

Jenna Gribbon

20.01.2022
26.02.2022

MASSIMODECARLO is delighted to present *Light Holding*, Jenna Gribbon's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The paintings question the feelings and implications of seeing and being seen through their exploration of performative, constructed and real intimacy. Occupying the artist's point of view in the scenes, we are encouraged not only to look at the subject but invited to view Gribbon's own experience of looking at them. Forced into this position, we become aware of our place in the triumvirate relationship between artist, subject and viewer.

Although all the works in *Light Holding* explore the close relationships between Gribbon and her partner Mackenzie Scott and her son, the exhibition can be divided into three series, dictated by scale, style, and the role played by the subject, artist and viewer. Paint, which Gribbon handles deftly and succinctly, is also applied with variety between the works, with brushstrokes loosening and widening in tandem with their growing scale.

The truest portrayals of intimacy are found in the smallest works: unflinchingly real tableaux from domestic life. Scott appears unaware of her role as a subject, surrendering them to a feeling of authentic reality. The lack of performance in the scenes transforms viewer into voyeur, while their soft lighting adds to their unstaged nature. The size of the paintings forces us to intrude as we must stand uncomfortably close to peer into a life that is not our own. Scott's palpable physical discomfort in the scenes, such as the irritation to her eye (*Something in her eye*, 2021), mirrors the disquieting sense of being unwittingly watched.

The *scape* works are larger than life constructions of faux-intimate moments, based in both real and imaginary worlds. Their size and energized visible brushstrokes render Scott statuesque and imposing, giving her the agency that she is denied in the smaller works; she watches you, almost daring you, to take part in the pair's intimacy. The presence of the artist's body in the foreground pulls the viewer in to occupy her position intertwined with Scott, but their physical formations are hard to decipher and are seemingly improbable, if not impossible, poses. The places and art historical tropes that provide the couple's

backdrop are allusions that correspondingly occupy space at the back of the artist's mind. Though the viewer is presented here with a moment of staged intimacy, Gribbon is more honest with her own point of view in these works: the conglomerate titles making explicit the amalgamated construction of the works, as blended moments drawn from physical and metaphysical places in Gribbon's life.

Opposingly, the *clamp light* works present a deconstruction. They are grammatical studies, breaking down the roles of the artist, viewer and subject and the relationship between them. The importance placed on slight in these works feels instantly theatrical and performative and plays with the traditional formal role of light affecting color. Light does not cast its dramatic glow from beyond the canvas but is brought to centre-stage, revealing the process used to compose the works with a simple clamp light. Whoever is holding the light plays the active role: it is a physical manifestation of the gaze. When pointed by the artist, the light illuminates yet imposes the subject as they squint and shield themselves from the discomfort it causes; when the subject holds the light, the vision of the artist, and viewer, is obscured as full comprehension of the scene is denied. With the spotlight pointed at the viewer the balance is flipped as we squirm under the gaze of surveillance, making it impossible to ignore the question of whether we are truly wanted, or needed, in the scene.

Jenna Gribbon (b.1978, Knoxville, Tennessee) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, US.

Solo exhibitions include: *Uscapes*, Fredericks & Freiser, New York, US (2021); *The Artist Eroticized*, Tennis Elbow, The Journal Gallery, New York, US (2020); *Regarding Me Regarding You*, GNYP Gallery, Berlin, Germany (2020); *GAY, GAY, GAY!*, Howard's Gallery, Athens, Georgia (2020); *When I Looked at You the Light Changed*, Fredericks & Freiser, New York, NY (2019); *I promise I won't paint you while you're sleeping*, Modern Love Club, New York, US (2017); *re: The Mirrored Veil*, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, US (2010).

Group exhibitions include: *Women Painting Women*, curated by Andrea Karnes, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX, US (upcoming); *Living Histories: Queer Views and Old Masters*, The Frick Collection, New York, US (2022); *Female Body: The view of the feminine from Albrecht Dürer to Marina Abramović*, Kurpfälzisches Museum Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany (2021); *Mother and Child*, curated by Micki Meng, Friends Indeed Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US (2021); *Towards a More Beautiful Oblivion*, Fredericks & Freiser, New York, US (2021); *Portraiture One Century Apart*, MASSIMODECARLO, London, UK (2021); *Portraiture One Century Apart*, MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique, Paris, France (2021); *Women in Paris*, curated by Henry Relph, William Leung and Michael Dupouy, Hussenot Gallery, Paris, France (2021); *Equal Affections*, curated by Edwin Oostmeijer, GRIMM, Amsterdam, Holland (2021); *I Care Because You Do*, curated by Matt Black, The Mass, Tokyo, Japan (2021).