

# A Domestic Cast

Jenna Gribbon

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MASSIMODECARLO is delighted to present Jenna Gribbon's first solo exhibition in Hong Kong, and third exhibition with the gallery, *A Domestic Cast*. Gribbon's work focuses on depicting the actions of seeing and being seen and capturing the layered dynamic that exists between artist, subject and viewer. The title *A Domestic Cast* reflects the personal aspect of her work, 'domestic' meaning related to the home and family. The word 'cast' has a double meaning, referencing both the theatrical 'cast' that populate Gribbon's works, her wife and son, and the importance of how, and at whom, light is 'cast' in her paintings. The question of what is truly an insight into the artist's daily life, and what is a constructed scene of apparent intimacy runs throughout the exhibition, as the viewer is asked to wonder what is real and what is fake.

The smallest work *Cast in a surprising light*, introduces us to the main setting of the works in the exhibition, Gribbon's home. The artist refers to these domestic sized paintings as 'documentary paintings', depicting snatched, unstaged moments from her daily life. As we peer into a home and life that is not our own, its size forces us to stand close to the painting, physically replicating our role as an intruder. We sit in Gribbon's seat at her kitchen table, as we catch her wife, Mackenzie Scott, off guard at the rare and liminal moment between obliviousness and awareness that she is being surveyed. It is in this instant that Mackenzie transitions into her role as the artist's subject. The larger portrait works are, by contrast, clearly staged for our consumption, the subjects look straight out at the viewer, fully conscious that they are being looked at and in command of their role. *The mirror is out of frame* is a rare instance in the artist's work of a double portrait. Often Gribbon's presence is merely implied or hinted at through shadows or reflections but in this painting she stares out at the viewer, asserting herself as a member of the cast rather than as the director of the scene.

The two still life works in the exhibition act as scene settings for the cast, the items, or props, they have chosen and interact with every day. *Real flowers in my kitchen and Fake flowers in my kitchen* directly address the artwork as a construction. *Still lives are inherently artificial, they are items arranged into a particular order to create a tableau.*

While their references to 'fake' and 'real' flowers points out that, unless we were told, there is no way the viewer would know the difference. Gribbon's painterly technique, which relishes in the rapidity of loose brushstrokes, porosity of forms and the instability of vision reinstates that what we are seeing is a construction, and not a hyperreal documentation.

Light is a preoccupation for Gribbon in her painting, who it is cast at, where it is cast from and what type of light it is. For an exhibition preoccupied with familial and intimate moments, the use of a very bright, cool toned light is jarring, seeming more appropriate to the stage than a domestic setting. In the three paintings of Gribbon's son his eyes appear to water or wince under the glare of spotlights pointed towards him, recalling the effect of dramatic spotlighting. This pointed theatricality is evident in Gribbon's ongoing use of the motif of green screens. Her subjects are placed in improbable settings, as in *S in (green screen) bad weather* and the green screen itself is revealed draping behind the couple in *The mirror is out of the frame*. A home is not the environment where you expect to find a green screen, nor its bold colour which, along with a similarly vivid blue, dominate the palette of the exhibition.

The influence of Impressionism, specifically 'Les Trois Grandes Dames' Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot and Marie Bracquemond, is particularly tangible in this body of work. These female Impressionists, who were generally confined to the domestic sphere, depicted their daily life: still lives in their homes, their children and predominantly female subjects. The Impressionists were preoccupied with the effects of natural light and how to capture its subtleties and gentle nuance. Gribbon similarly investigates the importance of light in painting but explores its role beyond just the visual, focussing on its conceptual meaning as well. In *A Domestic Cast* light is used as a tool beyond mere depiction,

Gribbon harnesses its ability to command the viewer's attention, to personify the gaze and emphasises its artificiality to remind us of painting's nature as a subjective medium that creates a mediated image which, though convincing, may not necessarily be truthful.

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

Solo exhibitions include: *Light Holding*, MASSIMODECARLO, London, UK; *Mirages*, Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy; *Empowerment*, Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg, Germany (2022); *Uscapes*, Fredericks & Freiser, New York, US (2021); *The Artist Eroticized*, Tennis Elbow, The Journal Gallery, New York, US (2020); *Regarding Me Regarding You*, GNYF 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; *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).