

# France-Lise McGurn

## Strawberry

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MASSIMODECARLO is delighted to announce *Strawberry*, the first solo exhibition by Scottish artist France-Lise McGurn with the gallery. *Strawberry* delves into the contrasts that shape McGurn's work.

For *Strawberry* her first solo exhibition with the gallery, France-Lise McGurn will show new paintings, the artist will also work directly in the space and display some furniture as a readymade element of the installation.

Preferring to work quickly and intuitively in both the studio process and installation, McGurn's approach is fundamentally sensual, as though under the covers or on a dancefloor three wines deep: relationships, love, grief and joy play out, not *depicting* but *embodying* and mirroring intimacy and behaviour.

McGurn's interest in sensuality as an approach to painting, is clear in the title *Strawberry* irreverently cute and sexy, this reading is ultimately superficial. As the artist says, "everything is strawberry flavour, it's the sweetener", medicine, vapes, condoms, ice cream, ectos, lip gloss.

Here sweet strawberries are the symbol of desire, pleasure and sexuality whilst subverting ideas around the erotics of painting, psychosexual imagery, Britishness (think strawberries and cream) and different facets of contemporary living. These are the echoes McGurn retrieves, reimagined on large-scale canvases that feature fluid, sensuous figures, familiar yet elusive, almost ascetic in their simplicity. These figures barely sketched and seemingly in motion, hover somewhere between reality and the imaginary, like fleeting thoughts or half-remembered dreams.

Rose McDowall of the 90s Glasgow band Strawberry Switchblade said of the band name she felt both "strawberry and switchblade". This quote resonates here, in both the visual sources which inform the work, and in the process, a brush mark is like a cut, a knife edge as well as a shorthand. The play here is between sugar and spice and puppy dog tails, ideas around sex and desire are subverted through repeated motifs and symbols.

A deer figure is newly present in these works, again multifaceted the doe recalls *Bambi*, a film known for being one of the first palpable depictions of grief in early children's film and the Babycham deer, a drink devised to de-demonise female drinkers, colliding an infantilised and sexualised iconography as a shorthand.

McGurn draws from a large collection of visual sources and objects. For this presentation, some of these include: a large poster of a half-naked Abi Titmuss, sketches of Bambi and Faline from the 1942 Disney film, Mary Gaitskill's essay *This Is Pleasure*, 1970s alcohol advertisements, the band Dee-Lite, the 1970 film *The Strawberry Statement*, and tête-à-tête chairs. While these materials may seem diverse, they share common themes of sex, advertising, and subculture, all unified by stylistic tropes.

One visual theme always present in McGurn's work and in particular this group of sources is repetition or mirroring which suggests movement and also interaction. The tête-à-tête chairs, which will be displayed alongside the paintings, are worn and used. These represent not only the physical union of bodies, echoing the overlapping limbs in McGurn's work but also operate in a metaphysical sense, disrupting the temporality of the show. Like the temporary wall paintings, the chairs seem to repeat themselves as if caught in a time loop, transitioning from night to day, day to night, and from the personal to the private. These dualities play out in repetitions and mirrored shapes.

McGurn's *Strawberry* juxtaposes irony with sharp observation, challenging the constraints of traditional fine art. The exhibition combines a sun-bleached, nostalgic palette with the seductive overtones of 80s sexploitation cinema. The result is a bold commentary that reinvents artistic boundaries and leaves a lasting impression of both critique and celebration.

On September 18 at 6:30 PM, the gallery will host a conversation between France-Lise McGurn and New Contemporaries Director and curator, Kiera Blakey.

### **France-Lise McGurn**

France-Lise McGurn was born in Glasgow, UK in 1983.

Evading the boundaries of the traditional picture plane, McGurn often eschews the limits of her canvases by extending the imagery directly onto the gallery walls and furniture brought into the space, displacing her subject and creating an immersive environment. Instead of approaching a static painting, the artist activates the composition allowing the figures and forms to be seen as though in a field of vision. Occasionally confrontational, sometimes passive, sometimes ecstatic, these characters shift through these emotions constantly reforming their personas.

Key themes in McGurn's work include music, dreams, memory and popular culture. Her visual sources have included 70s film stills, Janus fetish magazine, Botticelli prints and celebrity autographs. The works are developed intuitively via the artist's use of swift calligraphic brush marks and attention to the human form. Repeated lines and movement recall antiquity but are similarly influenced by Glasgow's post-industrial city aesthetic. With her paintings, McGurn builds loops through pastel colours, speed and fluid motion. Playing with ideas around circadian rhythms and familiarity her works un-stagnate and are experienced rather than seen.