

Annette Bezor: *Speaking Silences*

PRESS RELEASE

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Opening Friday 8 May 6 – 8 pm

Annette Bezor's long-standing concern is with the roles, identities and psychological and emotional states of women, which she examines by analysing images of women in popular and classical culture. Bezor appropriates imagery from numerous sources, including classical painting, contemporary decorative art and even porn magazines to draw attention to their power and impact. She then reworks these images as stylised icons and locates them in a composition that represents a psychological space inhabited by women whose identity has been suppressed by the demands of a society that fetishises women.

In this exhibition, **Bezor** shows works from her *Entanglement* series. Critical, quizzical and psychologically layered paintings often with an autobiographical element and characterised by complex, disparate imagery drawn from a variety of sources. She also shows works that are less complex and use more stylised imagery to draw attention to the nature of contemporary culture. In the latter works, she again considers the turban, a piece of headgear that can take many forms and carry many connotations. In *Turbanised*, the turban is transmuted into a blindfold, which variously suggests abduction and captivity, rose-coloured spectacles and the veil. The face that appears in *Turbanised* also stares at us from *Lifetimes in Disguise*, where the model's emblematic lipstick-mouth overlaps the figure in the foreground. The mouth signifies female sexuality and is also now a decorative, *transactable* motif that can be applied to any surface, a trace of the longed-for kiss. In the background of *Lifetimes in Disguise* are other female figures floating like chimera, overlapping dreams or fantasies.

The title work, *Speaking Silences* shows an image of traditional Geisha, appropriated from an early photograph, in a worn, torn and traumatised landscape of memory and loss. The stylised figures appear in intimate contact, their intimacy circumscribed by the manners and mores of their culture — they appear emblematic and untouchable, and express the death of selfhood and the crisis of identity. A ghostlike figure is in the background, watching.

Bezor has also used devices that deconstruct the nature of painting itself. A new development in this exhibition is the use of a method of reductive painting that results in multiple overlays of paint and imagery giving the impression of transparency of the images – for example, two stylised images overlap each other to create a third image (as in *Second Nature*). This technique emphasises the power and the ambiguity of all three images, thus alluding to the illusory nature of visual imagery generally and revealing the subjectivity and complicity of the viewer in comprehending visual images.

Chris Reid
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