

Amanda Clyne
Nicole Collins
Odran Edward
Brendan Flanagan
Luke Painter
Anna Pantchev
Rebecca Fin Simonetti
Red Carpet
Curated by Anda Kubis

September 10 - October 2, 2010
Opening Friday, September 10
6:00 - 9:00 pm



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Red Carpet – a painting exhibition inspired by the Toronto International Film Festival

“Celebrities and pop culture are how we deal with the world as it is, a world of gorgeous little things and extreme danger, in which human beings are worshipped and expendable, and no one knows what’s coming. They are the religion we have conjured out of the shallowness of our deepest selves.”

Stephen Marche, *The Glittering Skull: Celebrity Culture as World Religion*,
Queen’s Quarterly 117/1 (Spring 2010)

“We live in the age of the image” Barry Schwabsky observes. How interesting that painters have chosen to process celebrity culture using the very materials that should have faded long ago due to the technological revolution we live in now. It’s as though the spilling, pouring and fine manipulation of paint, pencils and pixels gives the artist an opportunity to slow the world down, to externalize our well-permeated relationship with pop culture. Red Carpet reflects on celebrity through the original form that immortalized the individual – the painted picture.

The historical European portrait of royalty is the visual root of our celebrity culture today. In the past Amanda Clyne has taken inspiration from Velazquez. In *Looking Glass*, a glamorous pouting digitally-manipulated model is deftly painted in a three-part sequence. She meets our gaze and then withdraws. While the mind attempts to piece the picture together, a malaise sets in. Clyne puts us face to face with the insatiable thirst for timeless female beauty.

Anna Pantchev’s painting makes a departure from portraiture too. With swooping ribbons of technicolour brushstroke her people are bound up in a shadow of presence. There is no individual here, just an assertion of energy. The gesture is awkward, perhaps it’s a pose. Layers of

association to the conventions of portraiture, fashion and abstraction are expressed through exacting yet impulsive mark making. Single or coupled, Pantchev’s heads merge and implode into a hybrid identity – for both the subject and the painting.

Luke Painter and Brendan Flanagan like to steal the scene. With completely differing approaches both painters use charged mediated images to elicit an emotional response. Through layers of associative reference their viewer is encouraged to use memory and imagination to create their own narrative. In *Friend of Brokeback Painter* intentionally mixes high and low by slyly alluding to a recent (and somewhat controversial) Academy Award nominated film. But what’s really there? Our eyes, drawn to the fine digital rendering and a landscape with the flattest baby pink background... here we realize our own desires.

Likewise Brendan Flanagan teases us with the pregnant moment. This time with a scale and physicality that must be reckoned with. The spills and pours swirl and coalesce into referential and vaguely figurative forms. These forms streamed from their online sources verge on the cliché but are resurrected by the alarming material deposit of a process gone wild. Where so much of the work in this exhibition emerges from the proverbial ether Flanagan’s work gives real physical substance to this psychological realm.

A dire warning emanates from Agamemnon, the charred seductive remains of Nicole Collins’ visceral encaustic surface. Who dares to traverse the crimson path? Collins has created a physical embodiment of the collective dangers the red carpet entails. In fame all the attention and accolades possess a dark side. The volcanic intensity of Agamemnon reminds us all – one could get burned.

Simonetti’s fatal girls have been burned. Like the starlets who’s wreckage we love to follow in the tabloids – Simonetti’s diminutive paintings describe an all too common tragedy. Depressed and unable to emerge from their self-absorption these girls are drawn with painful, raw, scratchy colour. Simonetti’s subjects illuminate the contradictions of feminism wrapped up in the trappings of longing and mass media appeal. Lost in the compulsion to reveal – their signs and symptoms draw us into a delirious underworld.

Passed through a hallucinogenic, hypnotic colour palette Odran Edward’s paintings radiate languishing pieties and promiscuous women. There’s no distinction here. They come from the same image bank that has stripped these pictures of their hierarchical meanings. The belief system is played out in the paint. The paintings create a glib, passionate atmosphere of alluring artifice, the work of an aesthete for the social media set.

In an amnesiac age, caught in the perpetual present, artists perform the cultural duty of making connections – to the past, present and future. Saturated by information and visual convention it’s believed that overcoming this bombardment is impossible. Far from distracted, the artists in *Red Carpet* make a play of this rich territory. It’s not a weight for them – it’s there to exploit. What’s obvious is the sophisticated manipulation of spectacle – resulting in work that is firmly positioned within the culture of the day. These paintings are not sequestered from the bright lights, they feed off it – growing more relevant by riffing, remixing, and materially working with it to create art that is a full-fledged performer in the contemporary drama. So trite, so attractive... so deeply serious.

Anda Kubis, Toronto, 2010