

ARTILLERY

Ariana Papademetropoulos by Leanna Robinson

A surreal dreamscape exists inside Ariana Papademetropoulos' mind. In the current paradoxical time of digital vintage filters on technological apps, Papademetropoulos' work is a picturesque merger of past and present, with large-scale colorful oil paintings created from vintage photographs. The paintings— many of which appear to be images obscured by a translucent film, others resembling torn pages pasted on top of each other—reveal the interpolated world that Papademetropoulos exists in. With clear inspirations of vintage aesthetics—be it patters, color palettes, or floral motifs—Papademetropoulos still manages to be current with her re-appropriations of these themes.

Many of the paintings are suggestive in nature, with risqué scenes of BDSM domination in “Angel of Disobedience” (2016) and a clandestine portrait of a woman in fishnet stockings in “Hello, Gloria” (2016). Typical representations of 1960's and 1980's erotic imagery are prevalent in Papademetropoulos' work. These sexual images are a direct contrast to other images in the show like “All Flesh is Grass” (2016) which depict a cut and paste depiction of vintage living rooms.

This juxtaposition of sexuality and home-life images seems to be a birds-eye view of the deviance that often exists beneath picturesque conceptions of American society. The discernment of how civilized culture is represented versus the sexually repressed undercurrent of suburban life is present in Papademetropoulos' work, and while it can seem like merely a regurgitation of vintage themes and colors, the sexual-political messages prevail.

Most exciting is the installation portion of the exhibition—a dreamlike bedroom with uncanny details like a chess board on the floor with lipsticks instead of chess pieces, a bizarre board game called “Strip Tac Toe,” and a painting resembling a poster (Just Before the Horror, 2016). Papademetropoulos' vision of the present as inspired by the past is exciting as represented in the installation and paintings, and is both intellectually and aesthetically exciting.

Ariana Papademetropoulos, “Wonderland Avenue,” March 12 – April 23, 2016, at MAMA Gallery, 1242 Palmetto Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013, www.mama.gallery.