

ART • WEEKEND

A Painter Shows Her Resentment Through Satire

The five extraordinary paintings that comprise Alissa McKendrick's *Resentment* combine a revitalized figuration with a satiric sensibility.



Alfred Mac Adam June 29, 2019



Installation view of *Resentment*, 2019, team (gallery, inc.), 83 Grand St, New York (all images courtesy of team (gallery, inc.))

Alissa McKendrick titles her current show *Resentment*. A complex idea, the subject of heated philosophic discourse, resentment summarizes a relationship. It defines our sense of powerlessness, when all we possess is anger, which we direct equally to others and to ourselves. In art, this anger often takes the form of caricature, which demolishes revered icons from the past. In the case of McKendrick, resentment inspires her to reconfigure a particular style, inverting its original meaning.



Alissa McKendrick, "Untitled" (2018), flashe and oil on canvas, 44 x 28 inches

The five extraordinary paintings that comprise *Resentment* combine a revitalized figuration with a satiric sensibility McKendrick shares with several women artists who have emerged over the past 20 years. McKendrick takes cues from fashion drawings of the kind that appeared in *Vogue* in the 1930s and '40s. In "Untitled" (2018), a 60 by 48-inch work in oil and flashe, a vinyl-based paint, we see an undefined red

field in which a Katherine Hepburn-like figure poses insouciantly, dressed to a T in her stylish blouse, slacks, and heels. Two apes stare at her; she is framed in their line of vision. A spoof of fashionista narcissism to be sure, it may also be a reminder that the utopia of the fashion photo is a means of hemming women into stereotypes and positioning them as objects of a voyeuristic gaze. If the resentment in this image arises from the apes' gaze, it also comes from the fact that there is no apparent escape from the red field, there is no alternative.

McKendrick develops more of a narrative in another untitled painting from 2018, a 60 by 40-inch flashe and oil. In the upper left, a man in a car ogles a woman holding a child in her arms while in the lower right the car has overturned and the ogler is pinned under it. Female figures in the painting cavort on motorbikes, owners of their own destiny, free because they possess their own agency. Vehicular freedom reappears in another "Untitled" from 2018 in which a posed model is stared at by a tiny, naked female grotesque driving a car that looks like a stiletto heel. The painting suggests that transcending resentment is only possible when one has the reins in one's hands, when one is the driver. This is underscored in an untitled painting of an open road, the broad pink highway standing out against the muddy, greenish-brown ground, seemingly merging vaginal and phallic sexuality.



Alissa McKendrick, "Untitled" (2018), flashe and oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches



Alissa McKendrick, "Untitled" (2019), oil on canvas, 14 x 10 inches

The most enigmatic painting in the show is a small untitled oil on canvas from 2019. Here, a fiendish figure wearing a decadent Aubrey Beardsley-style robe, revealing small breasts, and holding a cat in a purse seems about to take a decisive step. The figure poses against a bubblegum-pink backdrop; another cat in the background raises its tail and bares its anus. Close inspection of the figure shows the face to be strongly reminiscent of pioneering drag artist Divine. Is Divine an object of resentment or another object of the gaze, but one who refused to be caged in by clichés of beauty and propriety — one who offered an alternative freedom to women and men alike?

Like all good satire, McKendrick's superb paintings are deliberately enigmatic, luscious fields of color, dotted with figures imbued with bottled up resentment. One wonders when they will plot their escapes and who will be wrapped up in the wreckage.

[Alissa McKendrick: Resentment continues at team \(gallery, inc.\)](#) (83 Grand Street, Manhattan) through July 26.