



"You produce work and want to run for cover": Celina Teague on versus armchair activism

Just before the opening of her new show, "I Think Therefore I #", the artist Celina Teague talks about the difficulty of producing the effect that social media has on the way we absorb news.

BY [LIV CONSTABLE-MAXWELL](#) | PUBLISHED 16 JULY, 2015 - 18:30

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The beginning of 2015 saw a number of global scale events. The most memorable of these, for the artist Celina Teague at least, were the Charlie Hebdo killings and the continued executions by Isis terrorists. They flooded the media, and dominated headlines until the next big story came along.

At this point, Teague was preparing for her summer show: "I was gonna do something domestic, about this last couple of years, you know when you get married and have kids. But then at the beginning of the year there was just f**king horrible news".

Teague, during our conversation, keeps coming back to the haunting images that drive her work: "It's the images that are really affecting. It's just the imagery. Images really affect. Text can too, but I'll never forget seeing that picture [of the Jordanian pilot]. Everything is so image-based at the moment."

"I am nothing just a little vagina". Photo: Jessica Johnston

The news plays a major part in Teague's work, particular for its short-lived extremes. "We just absorb all this stuff," she says, explaining to me about the effect of the violence we see on the television. "How is it changing us collectively?"

"L'Amour Plus Fort Que La Haine". Photo: Jessica Johnston

She adds: "I find it so intensely upsetting that I feel like I need to process it. I just wanted to spend some time before I move on with these horrible stories. I because it's almost like taking time to stand back."

One example of Teague trying to "process" the world around her deals with the abduction of the girls in Chibok, and the #bringbackourgirls campaign. "There because that's how many girls went, and it's in the shape of a uterus. There was this poem called 'I am nothing just a little Girl' written in the aftermath. I ch nothing just a little vagina' because I think it's so often the women who suffer the most."

Teague has always been an activist. After leaving Central Saint Martins she joined forces with a friend, and organised impromptu debates and events around I discussed the issues that they cared strongly about.

Increasingly though, Teague seems torn between her passionate feelings as an activist and an awareness that approaching such controversial subjects you can

"Half of art is being in a studio alone with your work. But eventually you want to get it out there and have some sort of reaction and discussion. My intention never to be provocative and insulting just for the sake of it," she tells me. "But when your subject matter is quite political a lot of the time, how do you back y to defend my work."

"I Think Therefore I #". Photo: Jessica Johnston

"I go into painting, and everything I do is introspective and personal. Then you put it out there in a show, and it's always nervewracking because you never re are going to be read. With a lot of art, you produce work and just want to run for cover."

The political element is challenging, and familiar images such as Charlie Hebdo cartoons are contrasted with familiar facets of social media activism: emojis, well-known hashtags. The exhibition's title piece, "I Think Therefore I #", refers to the busy intersection of hard-hitting current political affairs and the vapid

"I painted a girl stuck in a room but with all of these images and lame quotes. I did take a lot of these from my friends and famous people's instagrams – the these. It's armchair activism – but I did use mine too."

She adds: "I'm very aware that I am a social stereotype as well."

"The Last Sharpenings". Photo: Jessica Johnston

"We are pedalling extremes," she tells me. "And the space in between is what I'm trying to explore with my paintings. There is so much shitty news that we ha moment. So you want something vacuous, totally easy – something fun. Maybe we are turning the camera on ourselves because it's easier, more palatable, bec so..." she trails off. She doesn't really need to finish the sentence.





Celina Teague's show, "I Think therefore I #", will be showing at the Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery from 5th August 2015 to 5th September 2015.

