

Not for The Kid's Room

16 Nov – 22 Dec 2018 at the Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London, United Kingdom

19 NOVEMBER 2018



Not for The Kid's Room. Courtesy of Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

It's not easy to shock anyone in today's world. We've seen it all.

(Celina Teague)

Streams of red dots flow across Celina Teague's canvases in the shape blood cells. Each dot represents a fatality — be it human or animal — carefully mapped and plotted by the artist according to online statistics that attempt to quantify death. The question being asked is: how can these digital numbers ever accurately represent the physical and emotional impact? Dubai-based artist Celina Teague returns for her third show at the Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery London with a new body of politically charged work titled *Not for The Kid's Room*.

Working with bold colours and striking imagery, Teague lures the viewer into a complex, layered narrative that reveals itself slowly, through concentration and focus. This is a play on the contemporary reading of digital news in which the reader skims and flits between articles at such a rapid pace that it becomes impossible to process the facts that are being presented. Instead, through the static medium of paint on a canvas, Teague dares us to stand still and properly absorb what's in front of us.

We might, for example, consider the centrepiece of the show: four large canvases scattered with paintings of Elmo, Pikachu, teddy bears, dolls, and dinosaurs. Immediately recognisable and imbued with nostalgia, we feel safe in the presence of these images. We know how to view them, and yet, they're partly obscured, partly hidden behind a net of red dots, which our eyes are forced to pass through and acknowledge. These works are part of an ongoing project by the artist, documenting the fatalities of the Syrian war — a canvas for each year — and in this context, the toys become corpses themselves, reminding us of the childhoods' that have been denied and brutally destroyed.

"The truth is," commented Teague, "I feel guilty enjoying my privileged life while listening to stories about refugees fighting — and often losing — the battle to a better life. I have children and we get to sleep safely at night, but not that far away from us, there are mothers who don't know if their families will survive till morning." This guilt manifests itself in an emphasis on quantity — discarded toys and familiar products elsewhere in the exhibition — and is a powerful illustration of the modern world's excessive and often, careless consumption.

Teague's anxieties reach further still to the environmental consequences of human action. The painting "Palm Spoils" targets the nasty truths of the palm oil industry, recalling a political-style poster in which a withered, grey Orangutan hand functions as a representation of hopelessness as opposed to power. Surrounded by everyday indulgences that contain the product, such as Nutella toast, cosmetics and biscuits, Teague forces us to align our consumption with the devastating effects. Similarly, in "One year in the Bush" and "Decade in the Bush" we again see Teague's use of statistic mapping, but here the marks could almost be mistaken for ancient bush paintings or tribal patterned fabrics, which call our attention to the environmental impact of tourism. "The Physical Impossibility of Imagining 5 Minutes in the Sea" also deals

with the death of sharks; the title is a nod to Damien Hirst's preserved shark ("The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living"), which was killed to order. Thus Teague's painting works on another level to question the worth and meaning of artistic output.

This is where Teague's work begins to take on an acute level of self awareness. "I really want people, myself included, to wake up to what we are doing to our planet," commented the artist. "It is so easy to not give a shit. Or to give one, but still do nothing. I am guilty of this too. Armchair activism. Like most of us, I'm well meaning, but also hypocritical." In collecting statistics and creating these artworks, Teague is aware that she is, in some ways, also distancing herself from the issues that she is considering. We see this in the painting of an iPhone screen, which displays a miniature collage of the all the imagery in the exhibition upholstered and perched on an armchair, whilst skeletal-like fingers lurk at the side as if poised to swipe or click. An unsettling portrait of our times.

Even the title Not For the Kid's Room speaks powerfully of contemporary culture, our lack of awareness and the information that we regularly consume. On the one hand, we are desperate to protect our kids from suffering and pain, and yet they are, just as we are, exposed to and part of that suffering, and those complex narratives. Behind all the colours, innocence and fun, Teague makes us aware of the realities that we choose to ignore.

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Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery quickly gained recognition in the contemporary art world for showing a roster of innovative, international artists, both emerging and established, with strong theoretical and aesthetic bases.

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Location London, United Kingdom
 Founded in 2012



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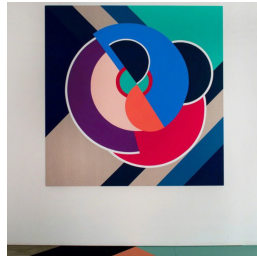
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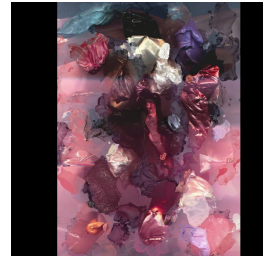
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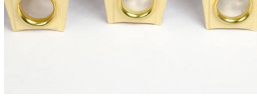
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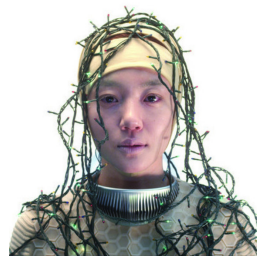
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