

CLAERWEN JAMES

19 MARCH - 18 APRIL 2015

PRIVATE VIEW
WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 6 - 8PM

21 Cork Street
 London W1S 3LZ

T: (0)20 7439 7766
 F: (0)20 7439 7733

info@flowersgallery.com
 www.flowersgallery.com

Flowers Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Claerwen James. James is known for her painted portraits of young female subjects, which explore the private moments captured by photographic snapshots. By painting directly from photographs, the artist keeps a deliberate distance between herself and the sitter, in order to observe more closely what may be simultaneously revealed and withheld within the frozen moment in time.

James's photographic sources vary from family pictures and photographs taken by the artist herself, to anonymous images, sourced from car boot sales, junk shops, the pages of magazines and from film stills. In all cases, they are not portraits in the usual sense of the word. The identity of each sitter is either unknown or irrelevant to James, who scours the images for a particular quality or presence held within the image itself - a self-contained narrative forever separated from the flow.

Quietly enigmatic, the sitters gaze outwards towards an unseen photographer. Her subjects – girls and young women, whose beings are in a continual state of transformation - invite the viewer's interpretation of their narratives to extend both before and after the photographic event. As James says:

"Thresholds of one kind or another are approaching. Perhaps they are here. Perhaps they are already past. A photograph is fraught with the sense of time passing – the impassable gulf between that instant and this. Unfulfilled potential and paths not taken."

James cites Corot, Degas and early Picasso as unfailing sources of ideas and provocations, and in several new works this influence is made explicit by the appropriation of their subject matter. *Girl without a Basket of Flowers* pays homage to Picasso's painting *Young girl with a basket of flowers*, 1905, refiguring the child's awkward posture and brooding countenance in its present day incarnation: *Girl without a Basket of Flowers 2*.

Two paintings featuring older female subjects *Visitation 1 (After Raverat)* and *Visitation 2 (still from a short film by C.B.)*, which refers to a film by Cordelia Beresford, convey their tenderness by a strikingly simple arrangement of shapes and subdued tones. In both, James was drawn to the two female protagonists, who are involved intensely in one another and the present moment they inhabit.



Girl with Pale Hair, 4, 2014, Oil on canvas, 162.5 x 142.3 cm, 64 x 56 1/8 in

James's minimal reduction of the image reflects the fragmented nature of the photographed subject; backgrounds are replaced by atmospheric voids, tell-tale signs of clothing are flattened, and colours are muted. In 2006, Francis Spufford wrote: *"All the emotional work of the painting has gone into modelling as distinct and economical a sense as possible of the measure of what vanished with the original moment: into a tender and disturbing statement of what gets lost with lost time."*

ABOUT CLAERWEN JAMES

Claerwen James, born in 1970, originally trained as a molecular biologist at Oxford University, University College London and Cold Spring Harbor, NY. She graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2003. James has won various awards such as the Prince's Drawing School Graduate Bursary; the Arts Club Excellence in Drawing Award; and most notably the Slade School's own Melvill Nettleship Prize for Figure Composition - previous winners include Gwen John and Gwen Raverat. She has gone on to have numerous exhibitions in the UK and the US. Her work is included in the collection of Jesus College, Cambridge.



Girl in White with a Pink Chair, 2015, Oil on canvas,
127 x 117 cm / 50 x 46 1/8 in

NOTESTO EDITORS

Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm

Image Credits: *Images courtesy of Flowers Gallery, London and New York*

For further information and images please contact Hannah Hughes - Hannah@flowersgallery.com / 0207 920 7777



Girl without a Basket of Flowers, 2014, Oil on canvas,
127.5 x 117 cm / 50 1/4 x 46 1/8 in



Girl without a Basket of Flowers, 2, 2014, Oil on canvas,
162.5 x 142.3 cm / 64 x 56 1/8 in