

Jessica Wilson – *Boyfriends*

Boyfriends is Jessica Wilson's challenge to her previous monumental work inspired by Pontormo's *Visitation* and exhibited at *ArtVerona* in October this year: *I knew you were trouble when you walked in*. The poetics of the 6 x 2-meter canvas presented in Verona is here completely reversed in a series of intimate-looking works displayed in a utopian domestic setting that highlights their sensual dimension.

These medium-format works bring the seriousness of art history and culture to the plane of irony. This series recalls the masters from which Jessica Wilson transforms her personal poetics: from the Italian Renaissance of Paolo Uccello and Botticelli to the evolution of Minimalism of Ellsworth Kelly and Mary Heilmann, from Abstract Expressionism – to which it is also linked through a “gestural” painting technique – to the primitivism-soaked Neo-Expressionism of A. R. Penck and the unconventional sculptures of Franz West. These are the “ancestors” who, with a witty *sense of humor*, become flirtations, lovers, boyfriends; in this way the apparent aesthetic abstraction of the works immediately becomes fervid figurativeness.

The artist stretches the fibers of her work to the breaking point: intimate personal moments – sometimes made explicit in the titles – intercept the audience's imagination through a sharp and forthright dexterity expressed through the technical knowledge of her predecessors. The work is made using a *wet-on-wet* technique – also called “*alla prima*” painting – in which the pictorial layer is applied to the canvas before the underlying layer dries, as in a kind of wet palimpsest. Jan van Eyck in the *Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Arnolfini*, Diego Velazquez, Claude Monet, Chaïm Soutine, Willem de Kooning just a few among the illustrious predecessors of this technique.

To the pictorial part, then, Jessica Wilson connects the desire to create visitable, human-scale spaces, also creating furniture capable of making the exhibition space both dynamic and welcoming. These objects as lively and ironic as her paintings serve as a three-dimensional counterpart to her poetics, through which the aesthetic and visual qualities of her work are amplified.

Thus, immediate and disruptive but equally sensual, Jessica Wilson's colorful motifs hide, behind the apparent simplicity of the stroke, a dynamic universe of meanings coming from the most varied stimuli: creative impulse, a sensual experience, a temporal phenomenon, a musical event or an emotional manifestation, touching on personal biographical backgrounds, until reaching the multifaceted world of public interpretation. Filtered by memory and art history, the single autobiographical episode touches, in an ironic way, the strings of the spectator's imagination to transport them into the intimacy of their own self: sensuality and sexuality, everyday and dreamlike, abstract and concrete alternate in the ironic and devious play of the unconscious.

My aim is to inscribe my paintings with an art historical anamnesis, with subtle associations to works of other painters of the 20th century, that also triggers the viewers' personal recollections. My thoughts about the works of other artists mingle with subjective motifs from my own biography. It is, so to speak, a dual memory that not only recounts the history of abstraction but also an autobiographical medium

[Jessica Wilson]

Born in Bedfordshire County in 1986, Jessica Wilson first studied Fine Art at University College Falmouth, then at the experimental art school Turps Banana Painting Program in London. She co-founded and directed, in 2013, *The Juncture*, an initiative that encourages artistic dialogue in a space between studio and gallery. She was a finalist in the 2015 Discerning Eye Drawing Bursary and in the same year participated in the two-person exhibition *Lonely Long Feet, Standpoint*, London. In 2016 she began a master's program at Glasgow School of Art, where she fully developed her minimalist and colourist visual language. She has participated in numerous exhibitions between London and Glasgow, curating in 2017 *Steal the Show* at Bentinck Street, Glasgow.

In 2017 she had the solo exhibition *Mary, Blinky, Jessica, Yay!* at Gerald Moore Gallery and the first encounter with Galleria d'Arte Niccoli: social media images of the British artist's works often appear suggested in the gallery's profile feed, and so where fate does not reach, an algorithm's cross-referencing of data arrives. From this repeated visual suggestion comes the idea of a contact, the first trip to Glasgow, the acquisition of an exhibition and subsequently a substantial block of works by Galleria Niccoli, giving rise to an association that has now lasted more than five years.

In 2019 she participated in the exhibition *Surface Tension* at the Steve Turner Gallery in Los Angeles, while in 2021 she received the Glasgow Visual Arts & Crafts Maker Award. In 2022 she received a public grant from Creative Scotland to produce a new body of work; earlier that year she produced the solo exhibition *I wish people liked me more* at Glasgow Pavilion Pavilion and took part in the four person curated booth created by Galleria d'Arte Niccoli as part of *Arte Fiera Bologna*. In the fall of the same 2022, the artist produced a solo booth with Galleria Niccoli at *ArtVerona*.

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