

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 29, 2016

Inman Gallery is pleased to present
the exhibition:

Emily Joyce
The Masks

January 13 – March 4, 2017

Opening Reception:
Friday, January 13th, 6 – 8 pm

Inman Gallery is pleased to present **Emily Joyce:**
The Masks in the Main Gallery. In the South
Gallery we present **Tomory Dodge**, an exhibition
of paintings. This is Dodge's first solo show with
Inman Gallery. Both shows open Friday, January
13, with a reception from 6 to 8 pm, and continue
through March 4.



Emily Joyce, *Harlequin*, 2015, custom printed Lycra fabric,
22 ½ x 19 inches

The Masks is Joyce's seventh solo exhibition at Inman Gallery. Joyce is an artist who explores the space between vernacular visual idioms and geometric abstraction through various combinations of mediums and formats. In *The Masks*, a theatrical mix of painting and sculpture populate the exhibition, with works that mine twentieth century art history, universal symbols, and the 16th century Italian theater form *commedia dell'arte*, all in one breath. The works in the exhibition reference components of a set or characters in a play; portals, mirrors and frames set the stage, with works titled as characters such as *La Mere*, *La Pere*, *Juggler*, *Pantomime*, *Harlequin* and *Leonora*. The tension between repetition and improvisation are central to the exhibition.

With a precise hand and a judicious combination of the old/accepted and the new/improvised, works such as the painting *Sunset Portal* call to mind a Frank Stella painting writ small, only with more humanity and with the outside world let in; a prismatic opening allows for the landscape within the painting, and the portal, with its gradated hues from dark to light grey, suggests a crystal or an energy vortex. Similarly, *Rainbow Hammock Portal* explicitly lets the painting act as an aperture to transport the viewer to another realm. As Joyce writes of the relationship between the theater and her work,

"in *commedia del'arte*, most of the action was improvised, however the most basic elements...were rehearsed interludes of comic stage business, music, acrobatics, or fighting—often unrelated to the development of the scenario. How similar this is to painting, with it's set formal parameters—the skin, support, structure, color, and form—and from within these constraints the artist can then perform gestures or "tricks" and deliberately circumvent and play with the viewer's presumptions."

We see this tension between structure and improvisation in works such as *Reflected Mime*, where a hot pink wash of acrylic is framed by a heavy black border. Bits of aluminum foil, a material that evokes both domestic and pseudo-scientific uses, dance around the canvas, and the work interestingly collapses notions of high and low, informal and formal, and noise and silence through a double reference of tradition and contemporary vernacular idioms. The mime as a reliable performer is absent, leaving only a signifier of his theatrical performance, filtered through the 20th and 21st century material culture.

Within the theatricality of Joyce's work, narrative, self-consciousness, improvisation and humor also have important roles. Throughout the exhibition, the everyday nature of objects is given equal weight with formal and intellectual exercises. The custom printed Lycra work, *Harlequin*, bounces between worlds. The diamond-pattern presents the clothing worn by the mute character famously depicted by Picasso. However, Joyce renders it in Lycra, a cheap fabric designed for comfort, fit and movement usually associated with stretchy pants and Halloween costumes.

"Landscape" as a theatrical construct is a constant theme in this exhibition as it has been throughout Joyce's career. We see a familiar representation of landscape through paintings, but the landscape manifests itself in unexpected ways: mirrors reflect it back to us, a rock is a sculpture in *Leonora*, river stones are propped up in a neat row on the top edge of the work *Snowflake*, and the very edge of a large canvas becomes the landscape/horizon line for a solid copper ball to rest on in *Juggler*.



Emily Joyce, *Leonora*, 2015, rock and false eye lashes mounted on mirror on steel base, 33 x 5 x 5 in.

Joyce's sculptures in the exhibition are made from everyday objects the artist encounters in her studio practice, such as shells, matches, tennis balls. They are combined in deceptively simple forms that oscillate between the biomorphic and the minimal, the familiar and the uncanny. References to the Surrealist sculptures abound (*Leonora* is a reference to surrealist painter Leonora Carrington, for example), and it is important to Joyce that the sculptures convey personalities in the way that the two-dimensional works function as characters. Joyce's love of juxtaposing materiality and chance is evidenced as well; in *M. Swann*, a stacked structure of burnt matches is topped with a porcelain ink dish. The clean, fragile, white and blue porcelain dish is carefully posed atop disposable matches — permanent and value relies on those objects that have outlived their function. Like a play on words, Joyce's sculptures convey a carefully calibrated wink within the seriousness of her artistic practice. An Italian tourist attraction is melded with an ancient

parable about humanity in *Leaning Tower of Babel*. The adhesive measuring tape coils around itself, sitting on a mirror with a small sand pile. Joyce employs the ancient tale, a Robert Smithson sculpture and all the discomfiting associations with "measuring up" or being measured in a concise and circular form of logic. *Leonora* is a masterfully simple combination in the vein of Meret Oppenheim's *Object*. The uncanny is balanced with an unsettling sense of humor. *The Masks*, as the title itself suggests, is much about peeling back layers of meaning through theatricality and performance; Joyce allows for a direct sense of controlled performance by both the sculptures and the paintings in the exhibition.

Emily Joyce (born 1976, Arlington Heights, IL) lives and works in Los Angeles. After earning a BFA (1998) at Rhode Island School of Design, Joyce participated in the Core Artist in Residency program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Other residencies have included Le Pavillon, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Ucross Foundation (Clearmont, WY), Bemis Center for Contemporary Art (Omaha, NE), and the Harwood Museum of Art residency (Taos, NM). Joyce's work is in many public and private collections, including the Hammer Museum, (Los Angeles), the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN), the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ulrich Museum of Art, (Wichita, KS), and the Plains Art Museum (Fargo, ND).

For more information, please contact the gallery at (713) 526-7800 or at info@inmangallery.com.