



I Think Therefore I #: Celina Teague responds to the dialogues of social media

Posted August 3, 2015 by Emily Rae Pellerin

It would be easy to read painter Celina Teague's new show at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London, *I think therefore I #*, as a cynic's dense iteration of the ephemerality and frivolity of social media and its lexicons. The collection of works, all interpretations of recent tragedies from across the world, are beget from the mires of that medium's characteristic visual styles and dictions, and seem luridly sardonic, almost condescending.

But that is misplaced criticism, which would be relevant if the pieces were a shallower depiction of the times; they would be relevant if not for Teague's own self-awareness, self-critique, and breadth of understanding for not only the medium, but also the content, from which her work is sourced. She takes a refreshingly approachable stance on the issues of mass "hashtag activism" or "slacktivism": "Everyone wants to tell a story – you, me, journalists, Isis – we all want to play with this new system of editing and uploading our story to an instant audience," she says.

Further redemptive of her criticisms is her acknowledgement about the larger (and realer) picture: Social media is not inherently a venal beast (nor is its user). It is an evolving, voluble, incendiary tool, with the capabilities to maneuver in the name of interpersonal and civil triumph. "Social media will be instrumental. It can pull us together more than it divides," she says. She recognizes, too, the natural human inclination to partake in frivolity. "The most followed person on Instagram is Kim Kardashian... Given the awful news that always pokes its head at us, is it any wonder that we seek the other extreme of picture perfect, easy breezy living, some light relief?"

The paintings themselves, colorful, ostentatious, and chaotic, could be seen as musings on the social world at large (which, perhaps, is at this point in modernity all-encompassed within the dialogues of social media, anyway).

The show is made all the more robust by both the conversations the art itself instigates, and the foiling humanisation of the artist in her humility to confess the very social participation her art so chastises. Despite her humility, however, the show is nonetheless a pointed, concentrated, and robust criticism of the linguistics and formulas of the digital age, in its dealings with politics, culture, society, and, perhaps most dauntingly, the user themselves.



I Am Nothing Just a Little Vagina, 2015



I Think Therefore I #, 2015



L'amour Plus Fort Que La Haine, 2015



The Last Sharpenings, 2015



The Tower of Fable 2015

by *Emily Rae Pellerin*

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Opening this Wednesday August 5, I think therefore I # is on until September 5 at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, 533 Old York Rd, London SW18 1TG.

Tel: 020 8875 0110. For more information, visit the gallery site [here](#).

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