

TEMPLON



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ODA JAUNE
Miss Understand
January 11 – March 9, 2024



G Like Guerrilla Girl, 2023, oil on canvas, 47 × 67 × 1 in.

For her first solo exhibition in the United States, the rare and uncanny Oda Jaune unveils a challenging exhibition in New York. “Miss Understand” offers a series of nearly 25 new oil paintings and dozens of watercolors, on a singular perception of the woman in our time.

Oda Jaune, Bulgarian in origin and trained in Germany, has for nearly 15 years been among the most intriguing figures on the European art scene with a body of work freed from any pictorial convention. Poetic, sensual, and expansive, her painting ignites conversation and explores, without inhibition, the depth of femininity today.

At the core of this new exhibition is a spectacular and large canvas. The work captivates and challenges. A baby is cradled in a nurturing embrace within softly curvaceous, winged forms, floating upon a fleshy landscape. The audience is reminded that all life emerges through the womb as a unique being. A single eye, nestled in the heart of a fetal composition, secretes tender tears – an intimate window into the sacrifices made upon becoming a mother. Just as memories of this rite of passage are non-linear, little by little, this intriguing enigma unfolds an ode to motherhood that is as poignant as it is astonishing.

The exhibition then unfolds in a constellation of medium and small format watercolors. On the first floor of the gallery, the visitor is introduced to the feminine in its full complexity. Jaune holds up a distorted mirror, presenting unexplored potentials of how the feminine is perceived – historically and today: Eve portrayed as an innocent child, holding an apple whilst perched on an anatomical tree with softly bowing branches; Barbie who,

far from being unchanging in her expression, posture and age, represents the metamorphosis of the female as she cycles through the archetypes (from Maiden to Crone), her skin creasing into wrinkles as our eyes descend the canvas; and the body of a woman in the prime of life topped with a primate head, a discreet homage to the Guerrilla Girls. The theme of morphing identities continues in *A like Apple* (part-woman part-iPhone), suggesting that our phones become an artificial extension of ourselves, both anatomically and metaphorically. The cold, blue light surrounding her exposes the extroversion on social media that often masks our insecurities. Another woman squats powerfully, enduring the flames that attempt to devour her.

Behind a technique that appears singular and complex, these hybrid bodies in states of metamorphosis raise questions. The exhibition opens a dialogue around the polarities that divide society today, such as good and evil, young and old, authentic and fake, innocent and guilty, light and shadow, tame and “Man Eater”.

Downstairs, the visitor is immersed in the minimalist, womb-like realm of “Miss Understand”. Her chair, TV, bed, fridge and rug are all soft. Tiny paintings of watchful eyes are stationed around her bed, creating windows to souls she perhaps knew in a past lifetime, or wishes she could know in another.

The artist explains: “ I was always moved by all that cannot be told by words, for me when words end painting begins...art goes further. We don't need to understand everything, but we shouldn't stop feeling, as it's a way of deepening our understanding. I feel it's time we move away from all the classifications, preconceptions and stigma that women are given. I feel it's time we expand our understanding... ”.

Born in 1979 in Bulgaria, Oda Jaune today lives and works between Paris and London. She has exhibited in numerous exhibitions in Europe and the United States, including recently in *Immortelle* at MO.CO Montpellier Contemporain (2023), *Heart – Romanticism in Contemporary Art* at the Musée de la Vie Romantique in Paris (2020); *Hands – Solo Show* at SEEN in Antwerp, Belgium (2019); *Painting, she said, chap. 2*, Museum of Fine Arts of Dôle (2017), *Intriguing uncertainties*, Museum of modern and contemporary art of Saint-Etienne (2016), *Painting, she says*, Departmental museum of contemporary art of Rochechouart (2015), *Confrontation with Félicien Rops*, Musée Rops de Namur (2011), *Tous cannibales, La maison rouge, Paris and Me Collectors room*, Berlin (2011). In 2018, the National Gallery in Sofia dedicated a major solo exhibition to him, *Heartland*. Oda Jaune has been represented by the Templon gallery since 2009, and *Miss Understand* is the artist's ninth exhibition.