

KENDALL KOPPE

SEVINA TZANOU

The great Disastress

29 September — 11 November 2023

πυρ, γυνή και θάλασσα (fire, woman and sea)

Women are an act of God in the disaster stakes.

This morning a storm is coming, felt only a breath away. A man, as always, lingers in the doorway of the shop where I am buying some daily needs. Laughing, he says, 'you never hear of a storm named after a man doing this harm. It's always women. Says a lot, doesn't it?' It's clear that this is not an actual question; men never seem that bothered for questions, it's not in their nature. The very act of questioning is too much of a flighty inconvenience for them.

The woman-storm causes three power outages in a row; the breaks in the circuit cause security alarms to rattle down the street. The wind whips up the trees into quivering wrecks. It's high drama; pathetic, really. The woman is coming, histrionics shaking from her every limb. True to form, the malicious gremlins that women are. Sirens of catastrophe.

There is nothing more magnetic than a woman who twinkles like a chandelier, a manifestation of razzle-dazzle for the lads. Underneath her dewy pallor, a green goblin bitch ready to mislead and misuse. So we are told.

It's unfair to make this all about men, or about men at all. They are only mentioned for their imposition of opinion, their desperate proclamations that women are only akin to violent elements of water and fire. These elements, when they think, are also a life source, a necessity for survival.

In *The great Disastress* Tzanou makes much of this projected mythology. Figures emerge fluid, winding across the paintings, the edges of each twisting into the next. Martini glasses, and their associated poise, float above a ruckus of teeth, bones, high heels and sharp nails. Cigarettes are stopped rigid between teeth, their lit ends like orange full stops on the canvas.

Snapshots of focus appear by way of *Luz Del Fuego*, a portrait of the 1940s Brazilian performer and activist known for dancing with live snakes. She is languished, diagonal. The painting is an ode, a tribute in memory of Fuego's assertion that the human form, naked, is not a place for alarm but a place for celebration. A snake rises up through the centre of the painting, between Fuego's breasts, which are decorated with nipple tassels. The tip of its tongue grazes the top of the canvas, in a reach for ascension. Fuego cradles it, and herself - the claw of her blue nails pointing it on to the heavens.

In another portrait, *Jayne on The Stairs*, actress Jayne Mansfield is depicted in the blaze of a spotlight. Mansfield was known as 'the working man's Marilyn Monroe', her breasts once described by J.G. Ballard as 'loom[ing] across the horizon of popular consciousness'; another man in fear of any elemental form. Tzanou depicts Mansfield covered, her muscular leg all curves and strength, angling out from a ruffled hem. Mansfield looks you dead in the eye, her back to the stairs, her face slipped. She offers us little, she gives us a lot.

The great Disastress is filmic in its drama, cinematic in its glamour and allegorical in its intention. Tzanou knows there is both joy and ridicule projected on the beauty of bodily forms, and paints into this societal murk with abundance.

Elsewhere in the gallery Lestat lays dead, hands pawing at his fur. The scale of mourning recalls Princess Diana's funeral. Days of tears for the only man in this place with any kind of dutiful disposition to his name.

Today, the storm is coming. It blows in the weekend. Its drama, her drama, brings a knowing, controlled humour. For the storm, much like the weekend and indeed much like disaster, is blatant, exaggerated and inescapable.

Lisette May Monroe, 2023

Kendall Koppe is delighted to present Sevina Tzanou's, *The great Disastress*. This is Tzanou's first solo exhibition with the gallery and in the UK. This new body of exuberant paintings emerge from the shadows of abstraction into a cacophony of collapsed bodies, limbs and faces that simultaneously exude decadence, desire and disaster. Dripping in texture, Tzanou's paintings explore the subjectivity of the femme and a hyper-feminine performance while allowing for the inclusion of auto-biographical, psychologically charged moments of pathos. Each vibrant scene recalls the debauchery of life in all its performance, humour and tragedy.

Sevina Tzanou (b.1994, Greece) studied in Düsseldorf under Katharina Grosse, Eberhard Havekost, and Yesim Akdeniz. Her most recent solo and group exhibitions include: *The great Disastress*, Kendall Koppe, Glasgow (2023); *Final Fantasy*, Temnikova & Kasela Gallery, Tallinn (2023); *Spikes that bite*, Margot Samel, New York (2023); *Parties I am not Invited to*, Robert Grunenber, Berlin (2022). She has performed at Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn and Kai Art Center, Tallinn (Both 2013). Her work will feature at the upcoming edition of Paris Internationale 2023. She lives and works between Bonn and Athens.

Lisette May Monroe is an Artist and Writer based in Glasgow. Lisette is also the co-director of Rosies Disobedient Press with Adrien Howard. Rosie's is an artist led publishing project focusing on writing from marginalised perspectives with a focus on queer, working class and feminist writers with accessibility to writing at its core.

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