

Soft Opening

Ariana Papademetropoulos

“Sunken Gardens”

10 May - 3 June 2018

Unit 7, Piccadilly Circus Underground Station

Bathed in a balmy yellow glow, Ariana Papademetropoulos’ first solo exhibition in London, “Sunken Gardens” imagines a portal into perfection. Luring the viewer into a stained, warped interior, the artist presents a seductive domestic fantasy while revealing its illusory pageantry.

The first of two paintings, “Glass Slipper” depicts an immaculate Californian interior, as if lifted from a postwar catalogue of ideal and aspirational American homes and gardens. In Los Angeles, a single street can boast thirty different types of architecture: an aztec-themed building sits next to a country-style home, which then neighbours Spanish-inspired architecture and abuts a craftsman house. Exaggerating their proximity to Hollywood, these anachronistic homes allow the creation of false narratives, which demonstrate how easily we erect our surroundings based how we desire to be perceived by others as well as our ideal selves. If Los Angeles represents a city built on myth, these paintings literally represent portals into a mythology that only once erected, manifest a chance of becoming a reality.

Disrupting this beguiling interior and revealing its porosity, Papademetropoulos stains her fantasy with the swirling ripples of a spilling water-stain. Not unlike the associations held by many religions, water takes on holy properties. Seen as cleansing and transformative, water maintains the ritualistic potential to shift perspective, to function as a portal into alternative realities. Inviting the viewer to experience a visual phenomenon known as pareidolia wherein one naturally begins to hunt for recognisable forms within any abstract image.

Papademetropoulos’ installations often include found furniture or decorative interventions that by mimicking the content of her paintings, themselves construct dreamlike interior spaces. The artist extends “Glass Slipper” into the gallery space by including a yellow mirror, a smaller painting of a plaid blanket and a plant-filled miniature aquarium balanced inside hung macrame. An aquarium constitutes a controlled, curated space that alongside the macrame augments and emblematises what can be understood as an exclusively decorative impulse. This distinct lack of functionality again echoes and emphasises the ease with which environments can be constructed purely for visual pleasure and as an expression of subjective taste. Though the inclusion of these decorative elements beside her stained fantasy interior, Papademetropoulos invites an evaluation of the ease with which class is constructed and portrayed.

Ariana Papademetropoulos (b. 1990, Pasadena, CA, USA) lives and works in Los Angeles, California. Papademetropoulos completed her BFA at California Institute of the Arts in 2012 and has since seen three solo exhibitions in Los Angeles: “Wallflower at the Orgy” at SADE in 2015, “Wonderland Avenue” at MAMA in 2016 and most recently, “The Man Who Saved a Dog from an Imaginary Fire” at Wilding Cran in 2017. She has also exhibited widely in group exhibitions including: “Staring at the Sun” at Big Pictures, Los Angeles (2017), “Shaky Towns” at Alter Space, San Francisco (2016), “Please Leave Enough Acid in the Dish” at M + B, Los Angeles (2016), “ALL-IN” at Club Pro, Los Angeles (2016). In 2017 she curated “Revenge of the Crystal” at SADE, Los Angeles and in 2014 she organised “Veils”, an exhibition at The Underground Museum in Los Angeles. Among various press, her work has been reviewed in Art Forum and the Los Angeles Times. “Sunken Gardens” is the artist’s first solo presentation in Europe.