

KRISTY GORDON - Statement

In a spirit both feminist and punk, my work challenges divisions between high art, decoration, and illustration. I interweave motifs from disparate genres and time periods—from Old Master history painting to contemporary portraiture—to create temporally ambiguous settings for strange and surprising interactions among people, animals, and hybrid creatures.

My visual narratives counter historical representations of the figure in painting, namely white bodies performing conventional gender roles. Instead, I populate my work with people from diverse backgrounds. To dismantle gendered hierarchies long embedded in our visual culture, I insert feminine or camp motifs—flowers, unicorns, and fairies, for example—into traditionally masculine genres. The presence of monsters and mythic beings further suggests that these are spaces where identity is fluid.

While fantastical, the environs I depict are not purely imaginary—they stage a return of the repressed. I explore themes and techniques purged from art history on grounds of good taste, and I conjure the magic that has been expunged from the rationalist, technocratic logic of our lived reality. However, the resulting spaces are far from utopian. I foreground power relations as well as the protean vulnerability of the individual body and psyche. By reflecting the pervasive role of violence in our socio-political sphere, I represent fraught encounters in which the identities of perpetrator and victim are rarely clear.

- Kristy Gordon