

Amanda del Valle  
*Magical Girl on a Bunker*  
12.02–26.03.2022

Oskar Weiss and Oliver Falk are very excited to announce Amanda del Valle *Magical Girl on a Bunker*, the artist's first solo show, at Weiss Falk Basel.

Amanda del Valle interfaces in the exceedingly common and the supposedly taboo. The vocabulary of a worldwide cultural phenomenon, like anime, turns to a poetry of violence, eroticism and disgust as her hand lays line on paper. The works are sensual and shocking and act as mirrors for an audience reflecting on their own worries, prejudices and fantasies. For they are pictured moments, always static, and any next, or previous, step in the narratives they suggest is imagined by the viewer. If they play with taboos, they also play with the private: the theater where fetish and escape see their initial scripts written or their only performances acted. These graphite drawings recall the intense minded doodles of public school days, yet in scale reflect on the reality of women as powerful and sexual proactors. Their themes are as old as art history itself: the ill matched lovers, the double, the contra-punto nude and the origin of the world. The gentleness of their execution is in contrast to their content, the forward and the discreet rock back and forth over medium and del Valle's recorded compositions as fantasy. In advance of her first solo exhibition at Weiss Falk, I caught up with her to see how she felt about all of this:

Mitchell: What do your parents think of your art?

Amanda: (laughs) My dad has always been supportive of my art, always. My mom wasn't really into it at the beginning, but she's coming around.

M: How did you begin?

A: Since I was four years old I've always been drawing. It's been my main thing and anime is the only cultural medium that I have consumed my whole life, the only thing I have been constantly following the aesthetics of since I was six years old. Chile, where I grew up, has a very weird relationship with anime, it is always on TV. There are a lot of huge anime fans there because the culture is already there.

M: I think it has a lot to do with the fact that leasing American cartoons, the other kind of big animated aesthetic in the post-war period, was a lot more expensive, so international television channels could buy anime for much cheaper and it became much, much more global. Have you ever been accused of cultural appropriation?

A: Not really, because I always explain that my art is so personal and that culture has always been my safe space. If I was a fashion fan and was reading Seventeen magazine I would do the same work but with that received aesthetic.

M: I think it's interesting because we're so used to American imperial dominance, both politically and culturally, we can forget that anime is one area where it's not true. There is this truly global reach, a global culture. So what about that interested you when you first began these drawings?

A: I started seeing my drawings as an artform when I arrived in Switzerland because I couldn't speak the language. I was really struggling culturally, so I tried to explain myself with drawing. You know, I was missing my family, but I really couldn't speak about it. I always saw my drawing as a type of journal, super personal. It's moved away from this almost autobiographical area.

M: Drawing is probably the most personal of artforms because it is really direct, there is



something about it that has this private feeling, which your work balances. There are other artists who have made careers of spinning the adolescent into high art – like Elizabeth Peyton, Karen Kilimnik, Bunny Rogers. Your work has this feeling that at a different scale it could be done secretly in a school book. This adolescent idea that one identifies with characters real and fictional in order to define and invent oneself.

A: I think my whole history encapsulates this somehow. Drawing isn't only personal, it's also very practical because you can draw anywhere. I used to go to parties and I couldn't speak to anyone because I didn't know the language, or our English didn't allow us to have deeper conversations. I would start drawing in the party itself and try to explain to myself what I was really feeling. The way of trying to explain oneself through drawing is an adolescent, social anxiety thing, for sure.

M: You said you can do your drawings everywhere, but now they've moved to a larger scale, how does that change the work?

A: It changes the context, now they're huge amazonian women. Much more statuesque, imposing. There's a glory given to these figures.

M: I find your work really rococo, this abundance of pleasure, form and a reclamation of female sexuality. At the same time it presses against some strong taboos. Society is still very guarded about a woman's ability to be proactive about sex and violence like any other human. People are still impressed with Artemisia Gentileschi's ability or daring to show this and that was centuries and centuries ago. Are you thinking about how these are viewed, and you as a woman, making these explicit images while working? Or how weird it is that it's still a shock to the audience in 2022?

A: If I showed the same works back in Chile I would get a completely different reaction, it would be more tame. In Europe people are way more shocked because there's a repression. Especially femicide, or this perception of knowing as a woman you're being constantly watched. People don't talk about that so much. It's always hidden. There's a shying away from confronting strong topics.

Text and conversation led by Mitchell Anderson