

# SWEETEST WATER GIFT



**Emma Sheridan**

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One of the paintings is a hazy altered version of an older network rail safety poster from London. The original poster was made to accompany CCTV footage of real-life passenger incidents on escalators. Displayed alongside the mundane health/wellness, finance, bookkeeping, and job finding posters that line the walls of train stations and the London Underground it creates a strange and unsettling narrative. A watery and translucent balloon man is about to run up the first step on the dark escalator. In the oil painting the artist has stirred up the stairs in their uneasy incline.

*Monday's row of ashes* is the title of another painting that also has its origin in an infectious advertisement from public transport spaces. Here we see a row of small dogs whose bodies are contorted to spell the word "Monday". The original image, the artist tells us, is an advert from a job search company with the strapline "Love Mondays again... Find a job you adore". In the painting we find ourselves in the tube, the furry creatures looming over us. There is something overbearing about the painting, adding to this the color palette is dark and the saccharine dogs are crossing the line to unsettling in their expression.

We are taken far and wide when Emma Sheridan transforms and negotiates with existing imagery and objects, it being advertisements, historical artefacts, personal items, and the space in which they are contained. Two of the paintings depict pitched perspective closeup scenes of rugs in the raking light. In *Belgrade Bunny* you feel drawn into the floor level world at the scale of a small ornamental rabbit constructed of shells. In yet another more light and dusty painting we meet a netsuke, a small Japanese sculpture used as button for garments, from the collection at The British Museum. In other works we find a human hand holding a cat's paw as well as an interpretation of an Ernest Procter drawing of a girl.

Each work in the exhibition contains its own narrative, but there is a general sense of a way of seeing the world within the often anthropomorphic still life paintings and portraits. The title *SWEETEST WATER GIFT* is an abridged combination of a text from an Etsy advert selling pet toys and a sentence from the book *After London*, a post-apocalyptic novel written in 1885 by English nature writer Richard Jefferies. In the novel the author describes a London after a disaster, where water floods the streets, and nature has taken over the city. Maybe there is an overall mood or theme to be found behind this amalgamation, maybe a sense of doom and new beginnings in a continuous loop. The artist talks about eternal ongoing end times and that a bit of death floats around together with a bit of beauty and a bit of ugly within each picture.

Emma Sheridan (b. 1988) lives and works in London.