PRESS RELEASE

Caitlin MacBride
Painting symbols. Symbolic girls.

The figures she paints are mannequins: The poser powerhouse kitsch of Jodamo International--its playfully improvised outfits; the dusty headless figure in shoulder pads; the sun-bleached Designer Promise.

Soft cheeks, well-formed lips, and shiny hair. Apostrophes, Rectangles, Semi Colons.

These figures inhabit a sub-world of magical thinking where an outfit has real-world effects and a haircut can make a girl's life fall into place like a sweet combination of accessories in a movie makeover montage.

Mannequins in generous, big-shouldered suits call up a nostalgia or yearning for the fetishistic uniform with a job description, gently rising from the merchandise draped over stiff, graphic bodies.

MacBride's oil paintings exhibit the complicated intersection between contemporary painting, upwardly-mobile fashion, pop culture, and nth-wave feminism.

Self-discovery, looking to place oneself in society, using one's "femininity" as a key. The experience as a woman will connect you to others. This topic can give a form to your expression in a way that simply compares oneself to others.

"good at your job", "end of Sex and the City", "gave up crazy days", "having it all", "played your cards right."

Mistaken identity - she accidentally gets hired to run the company because of her outfit.

A business suit as an element of drag; a means to empowerment in the ever-rising stakes of "sexual politics." In near analogue to the painterly tension between abstraction and figuration emerges the near criminal conflict of "femininity". Are the symbols and registers of the "feminine" meant to comfort one's space within the greater context of society or to throw such relations into question? Or in the words of "Working Girl" Tess McGill, "A head for business and a bod for sin."

The Hills during the writers' strike - maybe they just had scripts that were pages with exclamation points and question marks for them to act out. Using the quotation marks to reference this free-floating expression that happens without words: like on the show when they roll their eyes and make gestures instead of speaking.

A "feminine" way of making your point: does it submerge into vagueness? Can it be held accountable for things not explicitly said? Is it true that women are unspoken, passive-aggressive? Are female artists doomed to "Self-expression"? How does this connect to an idea of feminine public life?

Is there gendered art or just ways of looking at art as if it's gendered?
Text and professional ensembles caught between conversation and the merely decorative.

MacBride presents arrangements of punctuation that simultaneously apes decorative painting and the semiotic history of painting-as-text. Her abstract works represent the voices and gestures of her characters in motion, upward or downward.

They express an ambivalence toward "expression" but also a stubbornness or frustration in their lukewarm tone. A mannered kind of modern painting less emphasized in art history due to it gendered otherness--from Stettheimer to Krasner; Rockburne to von Heyl.

Symbols form a "Hills"-like banality; a regularly-spaced stream that often flows off the borders of paintings like the constant murmur of unverbalized yet scripted thoughts of the female subject, held in balance between powerlessness and empowerment.

—Kayla Guthrie, Sam Pulitzer, Caitlin MacBride