

Read more about painting curtains *Despised and ashamed...*



Despised and ashamed I tell you truly by them all I am condemned, 190x160cm, mixed media on canvas, 2021

This is the first of a series of new large paintings on canvas that feature tapestry-like curtains as the main stage on which narratives play out. For mental health reasons, I have for many years often visualised cloth or curtains to cover 'subjects' of anxiety. They help me to prevent hamster wheels in my head. Like shutting a book on an unpleasant chapter, you know it may open up again but for now it is closed. The process has had limited success as things always leak through, yet it has helped to cloak some things until I could deal with them.

The title is a quote from Aeschylus' play 'Clytemestra', and aims to mock societal condemnation of women that aggravates their frequent feelings of guilt. Something that mothers so often experience. The painting's mediaeval figure-stories explore women caught between societal judgement and an inherent guilt that tells them they must be a fault. Visually exploring past and present reveals devious cultural psychologies that trap women in cycles of guilt and anxiety and suggest that we share and laugh at our common condition in the hope that we can change society and ourselves.



Consider the lilies... 150x180cm, acrylic and bitumen paint on unstretched canvas, 2021

Changing all the time, layers of colour and form create figures that are strange and affective, resonating with our bodily experiences of care.

I love the idea of a process that creates multiple paintings within a painting. The title is taken from a biblical quote that infers that we need not work or toil as all will be provided. It laughs at the implication that in patriarchal societies often it is women who do all the work – so in that way it is god-given! It also plays on a famous lily pattern design textile as well as makes reference to classical Italian painting and dress with the ghostly figure who pulls back the curtain.

Here the lily pattern is eaten away and partly destroyed in replication by a cast of characters that are care-givers or home-workers. They hide in its domestic undergrowth and loosely dripped bitumen paint provides dark treachery textures that obscure the pattern further.

The cloth, the linen and the material (the subject and object) of painting create an interplay between our material senses and our experiences. Patterning becomes a language to be subtly invaded and changed. We are all adaptive.