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KELLY REEMTSEN: THE SHAPE OF THINGS
OCTOBER 8 – NOVEMBER 7, 2020
ALBERTZ BENDA, NEW YORK



Left: *The Escape Plan*, 2020, Oil on Panel. 84 x 63 inches / 213.5 x 160 cm. Right: *Buzz Kill 1*, 2020. Oil on Panel. 72 x 54 inches / 183 x 137 cm

NEW YORK, NY - Opening October 8, 2020 albertz benda presents Kelly Reemtsen: *The Shape of Things*. In three series of new works – *Oval Paintings*, *Pieces of Her*, and *Chainsaw Sculptures* – Reemtsen taps into the loaded cultural associations surrounding femininity.

“She a maiden of rarest beauty...all light and smiles,” writes Edgar Allen Poe in *The Oval Portrait* (1850), “hating only the Art which was her rival...she was humble and obedient.” This Victorian maiden eventually succumbs to a wasting disease while sitting for her portrait – a vessel for a harsh lesson on the dangers of the male artistic temperament, and beauty at the expense of content.

Upon first entering the gallery, the women in Reemtsen’s *Oval Paintings* recall this tradition of Victorian portraiture – the subjects are bedecked in formal dresses and presented in a vignette manner. But the artist turns this custom on its head, reclaiming the feminine form and giving agency to characters that have historically been treated as decorative or superficial. In *The Escape Plan* (2020), a woman climbs a ladder with a sledgehammer in hand, ready to break the glass ceiling.

Pieces of Her - a wall of thirty 20 x 20 inch canvases - represents an anthology of archetypes that Reemtsen has painted over the past ten years. The works can be arranged in different modular groups, changing to fit the world around them. Her subjects stand at ease, casually holding power

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tools and carpentry equipment that are at odds with their formal outfits. Cropped at the shoulders or facing away from the viewer, they are anonymous and inscrutable.

"I'm always amused," explains Reemtsen, "when people think the women are threatening. Why do you see it that way? It's not personal. That's a projection." Embracing this confrontational aspect, the artist has created a new sculptural installation of eight cast resin and steel chainsaws, displayed in the gallery.

Throughout, Reemtsen skillfully blends humor, ornament, and advocacy to reflect on gender performativity and address the challenges faced by women today as they navigate expectations around careers and family.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Kelly Reemtsen lives and works in Los Angeles. She was born in Flint, MI in 1967, and studied fashion design and painting at Central Michigan University and California State University Long Beach.

Reemtsen's work has been exhibited widely in the United States and is part of the Twentieth Century Fox and AT&T corporate collections. Recent exhibitions of her paintings include "Pattern" David Klein Gallery Detroit, MI (2019); "Value" albertz benda. New York NY (2018); and "Object" Galleri Oxholm, Copenhagen DK (2018).

She has studied printmaking since the 1990s, most recently as an artist in residence at the Venice Printmaking studio in Venice, Italy. In the past, she also studied etchings with Peter Petengill at Wingate Studio in New Hampshire, and screen printing with Tony Clough at Serio Press in Los Angeles. In September 2016, Reemtsen was awarded a residency at the "Visiting Artist Printmaking Program" at the University of Central Florida's Flying Horse Editions studio. In 2019, her print was selected by the Royal Academy of London as lead image for the 2019 London Original Print Fair. She was also the featured Artist in Conversation at the LOPF 2019's Talks Programme.

ABOUT ALBERTZ BENDA

Founded in 2015 by Thorsten Albertz and Marc Benda, albertz benda is devoted to an international contemporary visual arts program featuring rediscoveries as well as introductions — from seminal figures in their field whose work warrants further exploration, to debut presentations of artists that are new to New York.

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