

Dale Lewis

Fat, Sugar, Salt

19 January - 10 March 2018
Tuesday to Saturday 11am - 6pm
Opening reception: 6-8pm Thursday 18 January 2018



Edel Assanti is pleased to present *Fat, Sugar, Salt*, Dale Lewis' second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Dale Lewis' paintings depict the artist's personal experiences, painted from memory. *Fat, Sugar, Salt* reflects on the realities of contemporary urban life, focusing on subjects drawn from the artist's immediate surroundings in and around his home in east London.

Lewis' paintings inherit the scale, compositional and narrative structures of canonical art historical painting – renaissance and religious scenes in particular – with devices of metamorphosis, transcendence, spirituality and sexuality serving as mainstays. These traditions are as much inverted as they are co-opted to suit Lewis' ends: whilst monumental scale was conventionally reserved for fittingly worthy themes, Lewis focuses on what he observes around him: social immobility, consumerist excess, binge drinking culture, gang violence, bad diet, class divides, family life, faith and 9-5 jobs.

The spontaneous creation of imagery in the work is revealed by the impasto, energetic application of paint. Lewis' lyrical style of painting often leaves his works in a state of suspension – underdone rather than overworked – with areas of exposed raw canvas integrated into the composition, and visible impressions of the stabs of brushes rubbed against their surface.

Mundane and extraordinary scenes are given equal prominence, gaining expression through allegorical distortion. In *Family Fortunes*, the Lewis family Christmas dinner is transformed into a deranged banquet, in which the artist himself is served for dinner – conveying the artistic anxiety of being on show for public consumption – with the traditional goose and pork courses standing in as guests. Taking its title from the popular 90s TV programme, on closer inspection, the carnivorous horror show gives way to a tender portrayal of the complexity of the family environment, and the unique freedom it provides to exaggerate and express oneself without judgment or embarrassment.

Club Tropicana, deriving its title (and exotic colour scheme) from the 80s hit by Wham!, depicts a cross-section of multicultural society via the checkout line of a Morrison's supermarket, reflecting on the monotonous drudgery of day to day life as a contrast to the fantastic possibility of hedonistic escape. A pub brawl is transformed into a kaleidoscopic, orgiastic whirlwind in *Devil's Juice*; compositionally referencing Luca Signorelli's fresco *The Damned Cast to Hell* (1499-1504), the painting captures the disorientation of a fight in its use of overlapping bodies and spiralling red and black lines. Highlighting the struggle for a sense of individual space that underlies urban existence, the raw machismo and sexuality of the scene is accentuated by the revellers being stripped of their clothing.

Fat, Sugar, Salt is full of humorous and grotesque depictions of 'otherness' that give way to sensitive, transcendent portrayals of the people Lewis encounters. In these renderings of London life, Lewis taps into a familiar, quintessentially British artistic tradition of addressing the tough realities of contemporary society and its fringes through a prism of dark humour and allegory.

Lewis completed a BA in Fine Art at London Guildhall in 2002, an MFA at Brighton in 2006 and graduated the Turps Studio Programme in 2015. He was the recipient of the 2016 Jerwood Painting Fellowship, and completed the Zabłudowicz Residency in New York City in 2017. In spring 2018, Lewis will undertake a residency at the Arsenal in Montreal. Lewis' work features in international collections including the Saatchi Collection, David Roberts Art Foundation and the Zabłudowicz Collection. Lewis lives and works in London.

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