

Athena Papadopoulos

THE SMURFETTE

→ Unit 4 Huntingdon

Estate

Bethnal Green Rd

London E1 6JU

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Utilizing a list of cosmetic, medicinal, and edible ingredients, Athena Papadopoulos typically stains layers of cotton bedsheets with red wine, lipstick, hair dyes, Pepto Bismol, and self-tanner. Connoting the practice of self-augmentation – of ‘dolling oneself up’ – these intense hues draw attention to how such commodified materials are marketed towards certain consumer archetypes. These archetypes then appear in drawings and photographs of women layered into dense collages: Papadopoulos chemically transfers, cuts, and stitches her own photographs into and alongside imagery gleaned from literature, art history, and popular culture.

By flattening these biographical images against a variety of cultural ones, they become materially homogenized. The compositional gesture assumes posture. Papadopoulos’ action of sampling and recombining images therefore becomes a way of thinking about the construction of femininity. Within this, autobiography functions as a point of departure for thinking through the patriarchal power structures underpinning both the visual experiences and social relations performed by Papadopoulos’ characters. As such, the artist’s sculptures and paintings function as saturated explorations of the constructed nature of subjectivity that reimagines the limits of autobiography through complex materiality.

Like loose pages torn from a journal, the ‘paintings’ on view are encrusted with lascivious catcalls, terms of endearment, drunken pejorative slurs, and teenage slang. Resin letters draped across the sculptures spell out double entendres and innuendos: TAPPED, BATTERED, BRUISED, SPIT OUT. Onomatopoeia assumes materiality throughout. This body of work refocuses our attention: if previous assemblages reveal how quotidian materials are implicated in a particular type of socialization, here the focus shifts to language’s culpability in these constructions.

Athena Papadopoulos was born in Toronto, CA in 1988 and lives and works in London. She completed her MFA at Goldsmiths, London in 2013. Recent exhibitions include *Belladonna’s Muse*, curated by Samuel Leuenberger, CURA Basement Roma (Rome, IT, 2017); *Wolf Whistles*, Shoot the Lobster NY (NYC, USA, 2017); *Streams of Warm Impermanence*, David Roberts Art Foundation (London, UK, 2016); *Wild Style*, Peres Projects (Berlin, DE, 2016); *Bloody Life*, Herald St., London, UK, 2016).