

Meliksetian MB Briggs

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WEST COAST ART + DESIGN

**Christiane Lyons: "What Goes Around Comes Around" at Anna Meliksetian and MJ Briggs**



by a. moret

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*Breathless Young Woman* 2013 Oil on canvas 60" x 48"

Photo: courtesy Anna Meliksetian and MJ Briggs

The title of Christiane Lyon's solo exhibition at Anna Meliksetian and MJ Briggs, "What Goes Around Comes Around," reveals insight into the narrative structure employed in the paintings, which celebrate the schism that occurs between the abstract and the figurative. Inspired by the Rorschach inkblot, a psychological test that presented subjects with ambiguous subjects rendered in heavy inkblots to determine how characteristics of personality and emotional function, Lyons manipulates the plane of the

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canvas to celebrate the moment when the bleeding ink unifies two disparate images. Employing imagery rooted in art history, such as the flamboyant style of Rubens, and then juxtaposing references to Pop culture, advertising, film and photography, Lyons creates a charged narrative from images that have "gone around" but now assume new meaning. At first glance *Breathless Young Woman* (2013), inspired by Jean-Luc Godard's 1960 cinematic breakthrough *Breathless*, is jarring because the subject appears upside down, and her cocked visage is seen in profile on the lower right corner of the canvas. Dressed in a formal gown with cascading drapery and a billowing bust line, there is a suggestion of detail in the gestural applications of black oil paint, but like Rorschach inkblot we are left to our imagination to fill in the missing pieces. The young woman stares at us as she emerges from the cocoon of fabric. Her gaze is unwavering and then is quickly forgotten as our eye travels further along the canvas where a schism occurs. Like snow on a television screen, the middle of the canvas is marked by three, vertical black stripes and signals the end of figurative painting and the beginning of abstraction. The top portion of the canvas, rendered in bright white, depicts an ambiguous figure whose head is barely visible beneath a pile of sheets. A single hand appears with its index finger halfway extended, while the top of the canvas cuts off the knuckles. Is Lyons presenting the same figure in two disparate states to mimic the surreal qualities of Godard's films? Or she is employing her own Rorschach method to encourage self-reflection in her viewers?