

PRESS RELEASE

Chantal Joffe

Opens Thursday May 25 from 6–8 pm
Exhibition continues through June 30, 2017



Bella on Red, 2016, oil on canvas,
48 3/8 x 27 1/8 in, 122.9 x 68.9 cm

Cheim & Read is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by the American-born British painter Chantal Joffe. The show will open on May 25 and run through June 30.

With influences ranging from Piero della Francesca to Edgar Degas and Francis Bacon, Joffe has based her work on a direct and intimate observational relationship between the painter and her sitter. She is also engaged in a continuing series of candid, often searing self-portraits, and tender double portraits featuring herself and her daughter, Esme.

Joffe regards her previous show at Cheim & Read, *Night Self-Portraits* (May 14–June 20, 2015), as a personal breakthrough. As she told the Canadian cultural journal *Border Crossings*, “I felt those self-portraits were getting closer to the kind of honesty I want.”

In the current exhibition, the artist paints women and girls alone, with the exception of “Self-Portrait with Esme in a Striped Nightie,” which contrasts the soft ovals of the artist’s nearly naked body with the horizontal blue-and-white stripes of her daughter’s nightgown. Within this relatively narrow subject area, Joffe experiments wildly with form, color, texture, and approach.

There are a number of portraits of Bella, the 9-year-old daughter of a close friend, whose eyes turn toward the viewer with a startling self-confidence bordering on defiance. These canvases are executed in flat, planar color, while others are divided into stark contrasts of shadow and light, the paint laid down in slashing strokes from a loaded brush. “Red Head in Garden Chair” evokes the lurid color and sculptural chiaroscuro of German Expressionism, while “Brunette in Pink Suit” is assembled from Cubist facets and “Yellow Slacks” recalls the flattened shapes of Edouard Manet’s “Olympia.”

In two very different portraits of Esme wearing a tartan coat, Joffe differentiates the abstracted surface of the tartan fabric through her control of the paint, with one image clean and geometric, and the other thickly brushed and tactile. The paintings in this show swing between the poles of forethought and improvisation, as flurries of brushstrokes repeatedly clash and fuse across the canvas’s arena of action. Although drawing is important to her, she never delineates her forms, but rather allows color and shape to merge as a cumulation of her imaginative processes. As she told *The Independent* in 2014, “I paint to think.”

Born in 1969 in St. Albans, Vermont, Chantal Joffe moved to the UK as a teenager and currently lives and works in London. She holds an MA from the Royal College of Art, where she studied with Peter Doig, among others. Joffe’s work is in the permanent collections of the Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, Stanford, California; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.

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