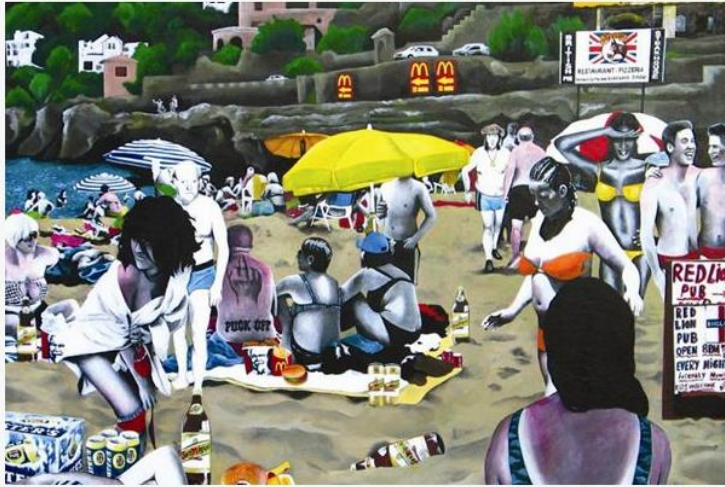


NEVER SHALL BE SLAVES

Twinkle Troughton's solo exhibition examines what it means to be British.

Text by Katie Antoniou | Published 10 November 2008



"Red, White & Blue on the Costa Del Blah Blah Blah"

Dazed Digital: Can you describe how you came up with the concept behind 'Never shall be slaves'?

Twinkle Troughton: 'Never Shall Be Slaves' is a lyric from Rule Britannia and I found it relevant because the proclamation is so defiant and yet, in my opinion, so untrue. What are we all slaves to nowadays? We are a media driven country which can create a frenzy out of anything, the recent Ross/Brand situation being a perfect example. We are slaves to television, fast food, money, fast living and consumerism. I know these things aren't inherently British, but as a British girl, I'm looking at how they affect our culture.

DD: Do you ever worry that your depictions of characters like Amy Winehouse are feeding the celebrity-obsessed culture as much as their photos in HEAT?

TT: No not really, because the whole purpose of using these people is to reflect that culture. It's there and it's real and the whole 'Heat' culture would still exist, whatever my work was about. What's important is to make people recognise this, to get them discussing it and not just accepting it. I have worried that my work could be conceived as trying to appeal to the masses by using celebrities. But I'm not using the true person in my paintings, I'm using their public persona, the persona created by the media for the public.

DD: Your work paints a pretty grim picture of Britishness- is there anything about being British that you're proud of?

TT: I actually don't think it's a grim view of Britishness. It has a darkness to it, which I believe is real. But I also use a lot of British humour which is something we are known for. I also acknowledge that it's the luxury of freedom of speech that means I can say what I like. We are far too apologetic for who we are and where we came from. It feels like we are so afraid to celebrate our own history for fear of accusations of exclusion, or the PC brigade getting involved. I want to put our traditions and heritage in these pieces at the same time as pointing out that we might be heading in slightly the wrong direction. I hope that doesn't sound arrogant? I know it's only my opinion at the end of the day. But I think my work is largely a result of my caring about and loving the place I'm from.

DD: Without an Obama of our own, is there any hope for the UK?

TT: Of course there is, because whatever America does Britain follows. JOKE! Except maybe it's not a joke...

There's always hope for us because we do embrace change and are very liberal. I live on Brick Lane and was kept awake all night long by whooping and cries of 'Obama' by British people. Crikey, I was never kept awake all night by cries of 'Gordon!' So the fact that the nation got so swept up in the USA election shows that we want that kind of amazing, historical event too. Hopefully we'll get it.

DD: Recession is a pretty scary word for the art industry- how is everyone coping?

TT: Again I think although it's been so awful for those directly affected, the media has played a massive role in sensationalising it to the point where we create a depression. There is no positive coverage, no messages of 'sit tight and we'll be OK in the end'. Recessions come and go and money is something we are all governed by. I believe we need experiences like this to realise that it shouldn't be what makes us happy or feel secure, as recession proves there is no real security in money anyway. And if only the media would use their role in a positive way rather than this constant scaremongering, we would definitely be a lot happier.

DD: What can we expect from you in the future?

TT: Exhibition wise I have lots of new work going into the Stella Dore opening as they are moving galleries; the new one is opening on the 27th November. Work wise, I'm just going to stick to this path for a while, observing how we treat each other and how we treat ourselves. I'm not pointing fingers, which is why I include myself in some of my pieces. It's down to all of us to change the country and the world we live in.

'Never Shall Be Slaves' by Twinkle Troughton is showing at the Pure Evil gallery:













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