

LUBOV

ARTFORUM

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Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Dinnertime (Self-Portrait)*, 2018, oil on canvas, 20 x 31".

Shannon Cartier Lucy LUBOV

A pet Dalmatian cut open on a dissection table, six blackberries strung together with a needle and thread, four pairs of large white panties neatly aligned on an Anatolian rug: The paintings of Shannon Cartier Lucy present a magic realism of precise displacements, suffused with soft kink and macabre sentimentality. The exhibition here, “The Loo Table,” was a follow-up to her 2020 breakthrough debut at Lubov. It was titled after a type of eighteenth-century card table with a foldable top, but the press release encouraged a slippery associative logic: “Loo is the loser, the runaway, a lullaby.” It is also, to state the obvious, a toilet, the word homophonous with the first syllable of the artist’s last name (and the gallery’s, for that matter), insinuating, to the prurient mind at least, something scato-biographical gathering at the edges of her tidy, feminine-coded interiors and anxious delicate still lifes.

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In the late '90s, Cartier Lucy studied under Lisa Yuskavage at New York University but soon set aside figurative painting to make text-based works, installations, and fabricated objects. She returned to the genre years later after divorcing, getting sober, and exiting the professional art world to become a psychotherapist in her hometown of Nashville. The artist's personal life has loomed large in much of the recent writing on her work, and she herself has openly acknowledged her childhood with a schizophrenic father as an inspiration for her surrealistic household tableaux ("It was customary in my home to find a toaster in the freezer or the Holy Bible in the dishwasher") and has spoken of the healing role painting played in her adult experiences of trauma, recovery, and self-actualization. In anchoring these images in the artist's psyche, however, we needn't foreclose other riffs and resonances. One detects echoes of Balthus, Edward Hopper, or Norman Rockwell (by way of Lana Del Rey's profane tmesis) in her scenes of torqued domesticity. But the artist's more immediate influences are cinematic: Robert Bresson, Jean-Luc Godard, and Michael Haneke.

A still Cartier Lucy found on the internet from Carlos Saura's 1975 film *Cría cuervos* (Breeding Ravens) inspired the overall composition for her *Girl at the Loo Table*, 2021. The humongous fork and knife, which the painting's young protagonist attentively manipulates to eat her supper (an unappetizing brown bolus of unidentified starches and meats) are the painter's invention. She makes quick work of the scalloped white china, the light refracting through the glassware, and the cumulus-like dinner roll on the stiff white tablecloth. Crisp and epigrammatic, the painting feels like a distillation of the turbid melodrama unfolding in *Dinnertime (Self-Portrait)*, 2018. Here, the artist's juvenile likeness braces herself with one elbow on a red Persian carpet. She's fallen next to a skirted table and is being pinned down by a procrustean wooden chair that has, for reasons unexplained, tipped forward. An acephalous, buttoned-up female torso and the cuff of a beige gentleman's sport coat indicate the aloof presence of mother and father, formally seated around a glinting silver teapot.

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In an effort to “generalize” her emotional and psychological themes, Cartier Lucy deliberately excludes period-specific details from her work. And yet, despite the tradition-bound naturalism of her chosen painterly idiom, one feels that her paintings couldn’t have been made at any time but the present. These are genre pictures for an age of prestige TV and creeping proletarianization, of self-care and social breakdown. None of these concerns surface in any identifiable way in the content of her art, but we look at its controlled chaos and instinctually recognize it as our own, just as the titular figure of *Woman in Reflecting Light*, 2021, stares down at a table awash in sunlight, mesmerized by her distorted shadow.

— *Chloe Wyma*

<https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/202201/shannon-cartier-lucy-87551>

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