

*We caught up with Reb T to find out more about her most recent cross-media project Petty Party, featuring at Babka Edinburgh for the month of February:*

- **How did your most recent project Petty Party come about and what messages does it try to convey?**

At the time of painting, I was going through a break-up. Painting was my catharsis for that period of time. Women are often criticized for their handling of breakups and the current norm is to 'go quietly' to save face or protect their pride. The title of this body of work comes from both being unashamedly sad (it's my party and I'll cry if I want to) and the potential repercussions of this display of emotions being perceived as petty.

The performance aspect came from the post-break up texts I was receiving. There is something extremely absurd about going from the intimacy of sharing your life with someone to then only receiving formal messages about the gas bill. Performing these texts as dramatic poetry only heightens this absurdity.

My performance also serves as an opportunity to take back some control after being in quite a powerless situation. I took those texts and postured them as poetry, my performance itself a parody of the gravitas and self-importance many cis white males feel themselves and their words automatically entitled to.

- **If you were to describe your artistic style through musical genres, which would be most suitable?**

Pop Princess with a side of R&B.

- **You use a lot of pinks and blues in your work. What is it about this palette that you are drawn to?**

I take inspiration from the idea that these colours are 'gendered' and pushing the boundary of this. Pink in the early 1900s was first associated with boys so it is interesting to see this flipped currently.

- **It's quite defiant of you as a woman to eat/chew publicly (as seen through your videography) in an era of harsh body critique. Is this something you thought about?**

Absolutely. When I was creating these works I found a quote by a gender studies researcher Alice Maguire that explains pushing private space into the public realm is "one way to contest patriarchal norms governing women's behaviours and identities". I found this quote inspiring as I realised defiance of these norms could be as subtle a blowing bubble gum or eating a cucumber. I was very specific about what I chose to eat in these performances: cucumber and banana could be perceived as both sexual and or aggressive, bubblegum is sexual and milkshake could be sexual and/ or have connotations of motherhood. Incidentally YouTube has censored the 'Reb-T drinks a milkshake' and requires an 18+ login to view. The isolation of these activities creates an a level of absurdity that attempts to disrupt the fetishization. As one 'Reb-T blows bubblegum' male YouTube commenter wrote, "This makes no sense to me".

- **How do you see your art changing and developing post Petty Party?**

I'm interested in playing with the boundaries of realism in my paintings. My aim is always to make my work as realistic as possible but I continually find myself swept up in the materiality of paint and how much I love using it. The original, realistic depiction becomes less and less visible but I find freedom in the abstraction that remains. I'm currently working on a new project which explores this, morphing the faces of pop cultural icons (such as Spider Man, Giselle, Tyler Durden and Hannah Montana) into my own in repeated images.