

BY CHLOE STEAD IN EXHIBITION REVIEWS | 07 FEB 24



Grace Weaver Girl Bosses Across the Atlantic

The unfazed female figures in the artist's 'Hotel Paintings' may be viewed as a playful act of self-satire



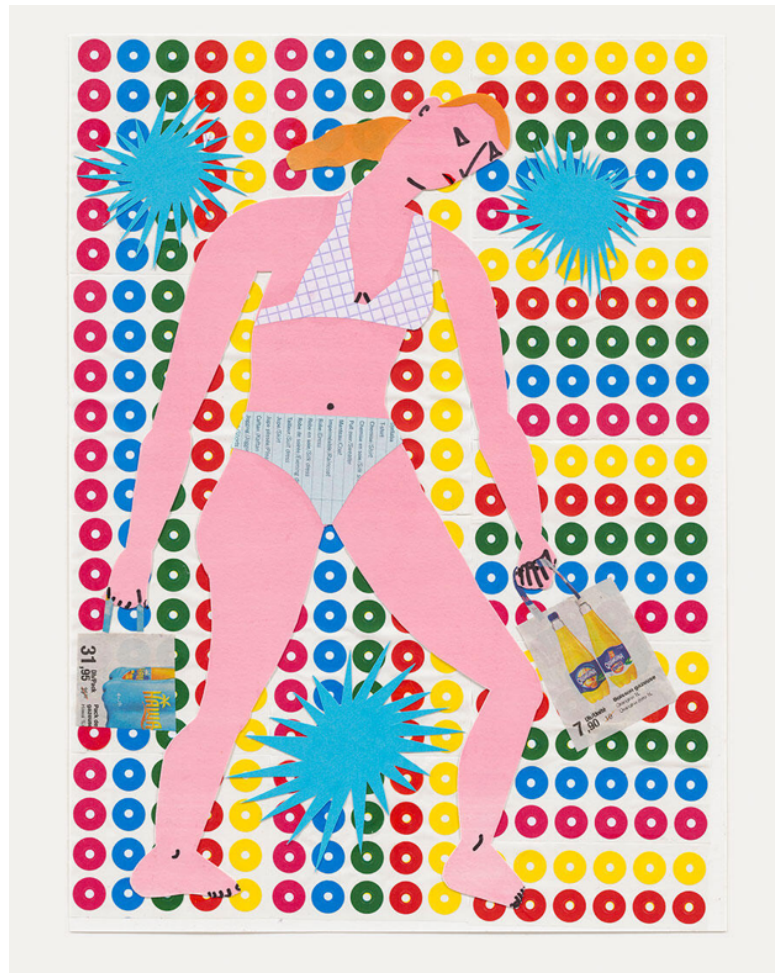
Is there any greater joy than entering a hotel room and immediately taking off your clothes? Grace Weaver doesn't seem to think so. All but one of the women in 'Hotel Paintings' – the Brooklyn-based artist's first solo exhibition in Paris – is depicted entirely, or almost-entirely, nude. Even the partially clothed brunette in *Hotel-painting (The Pink Book)* (all works 2023) is only wearing a pair of black briefs, socks and Mary Janes as she reads lying on her back in bed, one of the many books in her room held high above her bare chest.



Grace Weaver, *Hotel-painting (The Writer)*, 2023, oil on canvas, 2.8 × 2.1 m. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Max Hetzler

There is an undeniable charm to be found in the way that Weaver paints female bodies. Brought to life with masonry brushes commonly used for concrete, each torso on view is an hourglass-shaped swirl of dusty pink and white oil paint accented with black dashes demarcating the back of a knee or the nape of a neck. Perversely, it's the weirdness of these characters' mitten-shaped hands, long necks and sloping shoulders that really bring them to life, a pleasant reminder that beauty is more than being possessed of a symmetrical face or a thigh gap.

The most engaging thing about Weaver's characters, however, is not what they look like but how utterly unbothered they are by the gaze of others. Save for the odd man lounging in the background – a boyfriend tagging along on a work trip, perhaps? – they are mostly depicted alone, clearly relishing the anonymity of travel and the freedom of hotel living. In your own house, it's easy to be distracted by washing up and an overflowing rubbish bin; here, hours can be whiled away drinking coffee (*Hotel-painting [Reverie]*) or jotting down thoughts in a journal (*Hotel-painting [The Writer]*).



Grace Weaver, *Touriste au Maroc* (Tourist in Morocco), 2022, mixed media on paper, 41 × 30 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Max Hetzler

While the 'Hotel Paintings' could be located anywhere, 'Touriste au Maroc' – a 2022 series of collages shown across the road in Max Hetzler's second Paris space – is firmly connected to Weaver's travels in Morocco. Featuring a procession of women captured midstride, each collage is created using ephemera – from sweet packets to book covers – that the artist gathered on her tour of the country. The press materials call this repeating image a 'prototypical tourist', but I'd wager it's more specific than that. Is it not more likely that these well-heeled, well-travelled white women are the result of Weaver poking fun at herself?

In his 2014 essay 'How to Survive International Art: Notes from the Poverty Jetset', the curator and art critic Andrew Berardini writes, tongue-firmly-in-cheek, of staying at the home of an 'art nomad' with 'a stack of wadded airline tickets, varicoloured receipts and empty cigarette packets with warnings in Korean, French and Spanish crumpled on the cardboard box they use for a coffee table.' Weaver's collages – with their magpie-like combinations of multi-lingual objects – speak to the same lifestyle, one which, as Berardini jokes, involves 'a firsthand knowledge of the sunrise over the Po, the sunset over Shenzhen, the crackle of the midday sun as the *acqua alta* wets your calves'.



Grace Weaver, *Hotel-painting (Nora Barnacle)*, 2023, oil on canvas, 2.8 × 2.1 m. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Max Hetzler

As fun as these collages are, there is also, of course, a darker side to the artworld's propensity for travel. A return flight from New York to Marrakesh produces around one and a half tonnes of carbon emissions. And, while it would be a stretch to call this an exhibition about global warming, the works on display do at least hint at the tension inherent in travelling the world in style. After all, to make (or to write about) art in these globalized times is to constantly balance the desire, on the one hand, to see the world and, on the other, for there to be a world left to discover.

*Grace Weaver's 'Hotel Paintings' is on view at **Max Hetzler**, Paris, until 17 February.*

Main image: Grace Weaver, Hotel-painting (Smeraldina Rima), 2023, oil on canvas, 2.8 × 2.1 m. Courtesy: the artist and Galerie Max Hetzler



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