



CIRCA
LONDON

CARYN SCRIMGEOUR
Postcards from Chinatown

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14 October – 11 November 2016



COVER (DETAIL)
Flinch, 2016
 oil on canvas
 150 x 150 cm

TITLE PAGE (DETAIL)
Blood Orange, 2016
 oil on canvas
 140 x 200 cm

LEFT (DETAIL)
Baited Breath, 2016
 oil on canvas
 40 x 70 cm

CARYN SCRIMGEOUR

Postcards from Chinatown

Caryn Scrimgeour's paintings are obsessively immaculate – a manifestation of fanatical attention to detail and an extraordinary command of her palette.

Scrimgeour's table settings intrigue and fascinate, juxtaposing fragile and precious curios with commonplace objects, exquisitely rendered. Rich in symbolism, her work is reminiscent of still life paintings from the Dutch Golden Age, while the use of bird's-eye perspective creates a contemporary context for a very traditional genre.

The absence of humans – aside from the occasional reflection of the artist – makes these works all the more poignant, as do the unlikely protagonists: the harlequin collection of delicately-patterned china; the bone-handled cutlery alongside disposable chopsticks in their patterned paper wrapper; the lavishly-painted cigarette butt; the burnt match; the half-full wine glass; the glistening fig.

These are vanitas paintings for our age: they hint gently at the fragility and transitory nature of the human construct. Similarly, the fragments recorded are mini-monuments to the human desire to endure in the face of futility – and the foolhardiness of trying.



ABOVE & PAGES 6–7 (DETAIL)
The Curiosity Box, 2016
 oil on canvas
 50 x 200 cm





ABOVE & PAGES 10–11 (DETAIL)
The Silent Scream, 2016
 oil on canvas
 75 x 150 cm





ABOVE & LEFT (DETAIL)
Masquerade, 2016
 oil on canvas
 150 x 150 cm



ABOVE & RIGHT (DETAIL)
Flinch, 2016
oil on canvas
150 x 150 cm



Blood Orange, 2016
oil on canvas
140 x 200 cm



ABOVE & PAGES 20–21 (DETAIL)

Keepsakes, 2016

oil on canvas

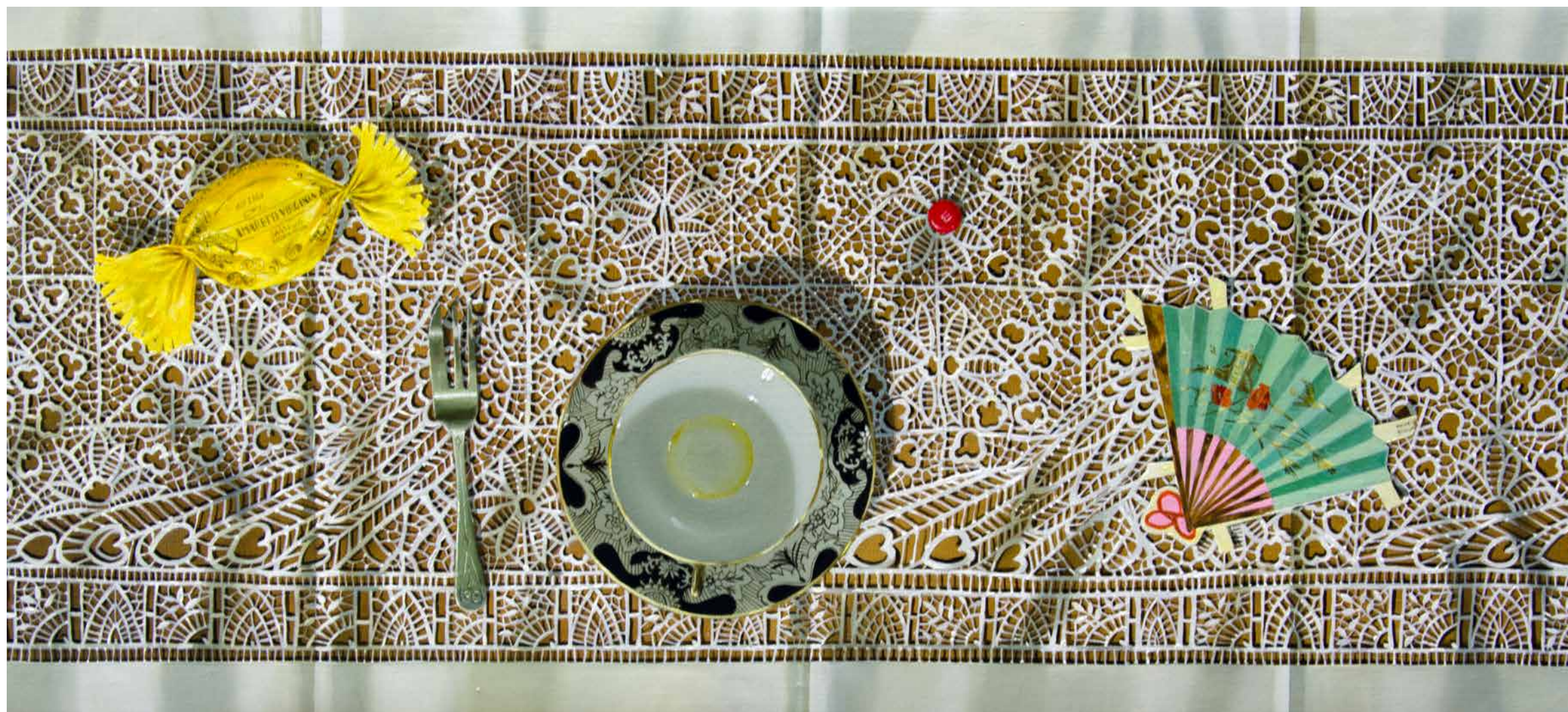
40 x 150 cm





ABOVE & PAGES 24–25 (DETAIL)
Pass the Salt II, 2016
 oil on canvas
 50 x 240 cm





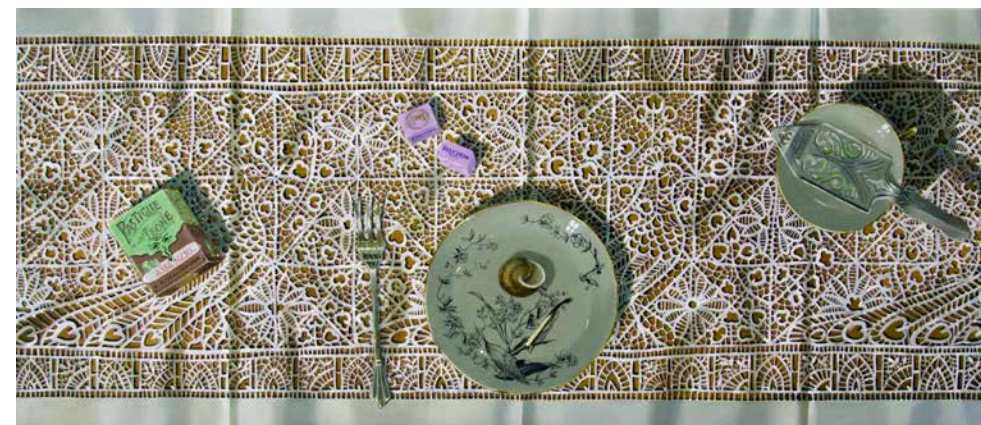
ABOVE & PAGES 28–29 (DETAIL)

Forgotten, 2016

oil on canvas

30 x 70 cm



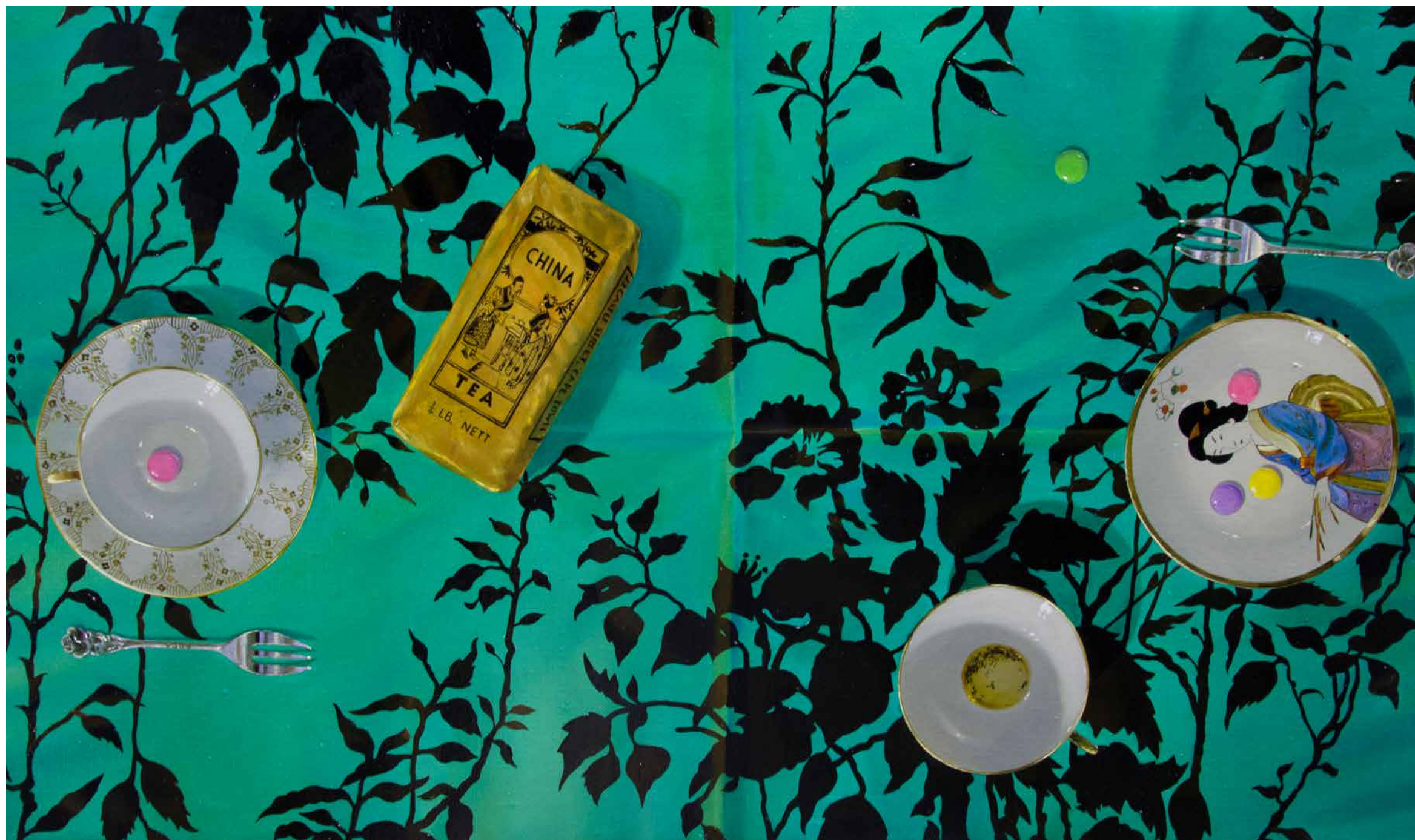


ABOVE & LEFT (DETAIL)

Dilly Dally, 2016

oil on canvas

30 x 70 cm



Scattered, 2016
oil on canvas
40 x 70 cm



Baited Breath, 2016
oil on canvas
40 x 70 cm



LEFT (DETAIL)
Masquerade, 2016
 oil on canvas
 150 x 150 cm

BIOGRAPHY

CARYN SCRIMGEOUR

(b. 1970, Johannesburg, South Africa)

Caryn Scrimgeour was born in Johannesburg in 1970 and has lived in Cape Town most of her life. She graduated from the University of Stellenbosch with a BA in Fine Art in 1991.

Scrimgeour's subject matter is chosen from commonplace objects that surround her as well as prized treasures sourced on her travels. Delicate chinaware and glassware are combined with common trinkets and knick-knacks and portrayed against a backdrop of richly patterned fabric. Precious objects are juxtaposed with mundane items, which in turn are elevated to the same level of importance.

Her works are filled with symbolism, and the place settings consequently 'become representative of major events which have impacted my life ... but which are also events that most women will experience in the course of their lives, in one form or another.' The objects in these paintings are easily recognisable, familiar and often nostalgic, making the images highly accessible to the viewer. Even the use of symbols and images drawn from other cultures and societies serve to entice rather than alienate the viewer.

Scrimgeour explains; 'The constantly changing positions of the knives and forks are indicative of the inconsistency and fluctuation of what we see as sacred or fundamental to our core beliefs ... For instance, an empty place setting, symbolises a loss of self, emptiness and missed opportunities.'

The images are elevated from that of traditional still-life by the use of aerial perspective which forces a shift in our viewpoint and the way in which we interpret the objects. At the same time it creates an almost abstract interplay between the objects and the patterns, creating a contemporary context for a very traditional genre.

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