

WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.



Artistic License

Taking a break from historical figures as inspiration, Erdem Moralioglu collaborated with British painter Kaye Donachie for his fall collection, which riffed on feminine shapes and rich textures. *For more on the London Fashion Week, see pages 6 to 11.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY KASIA BOBULA



Artist Tanya Ling with a gray gelding called Banner at the opening of "Incitatus" at Lyndsey Ingram in London.



A fashion illustration by Tanya Ling.



Tanya Ling Turns to the Abstract With Latest Exhibition

The artist's latest show "Incitatus" will be at Lyndsey Ingram in London until March 14. BY SAMANTHA CONTI

Tanya Ling's lines are running wild.

The long, slim, twisting lines that once depicted Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Stefano Pilati-clad ladies – and even shaped themselves into a Fendi Peekaboo bag – now flow into abstract oil paintings, linear drawings and sculptures made from salt dough and grouting.

Ling, who for decades worked as a fashion illustrator for the big fashion and beauty houses, has turned from figurative, commercial work to abstract painting and sculpture, with her latest work on show in a converted Victorian stable block at Lyndsey Ingram in Mayfair.

"Incitatus," which runs until March 14, springs from Ling's lifelong love of horses, and is hot, blurry and breathless. It could not be farther from the wide-eyed, statuesque beauties that Ling once conjured for the big brands.

In an interview at the show space, Ling says she was eager to move from illustration to painting and from figurative to abstract work. She has been making the shift over the past decade, and says it feels right.

"In the past, I was always working with fashion, art and creative directors and in teams with people, and I wanted to have a go at not being a team player. I wanted just do something poetic, with no agenda, no functionality and no real reason," says Ling from the gallery, which has preserved its rough-edged charm, with brick floors, and green and cream-colored tiles.

The Beginning

She began with line paintings, made in vibrantly colored inks, and twisty sculptures made from unglamorous household staples. The horse paintings,

inspired by her years growing up in England, would come later.

"There was no logic to the work. It was great because I wasn't trying to please anybody," says Ling, a Central Saint Martins graduate who was born in Kolkata and raised between England, Africa and America.

Her first jobs were in design, working for Dorothee Bis and later Christian Lacroix. In 2002, she created her first ready-to-wear collection, which was presented at London's Mayor Gallery on Cork Street, and later showcased in the windows of Henri Bendel in New York.

In 2009, she became creative director of Vertya, a luxury fashion brand founded by Filippo Binaghi, head of the Italian silk mill Lorma, and Pilati to support the Vertya Foundation, a former charity helping children out of poverty.

All the while, she continued to create illustrations for ad campaigns, trend reports and makeup test cards. In 2011, the Victoria & Albert museum acquired more than 50 of her fashion drawings, of cool, leggy women in bright dresses, and still lives of colorful hats, shoes and bags.

Although her fashion illustrations and the new "Incitatus" works both feature lean, bold and energetic strokes, it's clear Ling is now fully immersed in a world of abstraction.

She says that while figurative art and illustration skills will always be in her toolbox, she's made a break with the past.

"I always think of Kandinsky, and his shift from figurative works to sheer abstraction," says Ling, referring to the father of abstract art who began his career painting colorful landscapes.

Star Collectors

She's also attracted a new set of collectors. Among them is Damien Hirst, who in 2014 purchased all of the paintings and sculptures in Ling's show at Alex Eagle in London.

A few years ago, collector Alex Van Halen, cofounder of the eponymous band, and his wife Stine invited Ling to live, paint and create horse-inspired work on their California estate, which has an Olympic-sized dressage arena.

Ingram says she has admired Ling's work for years, and is particularly impressed by the artist's ability "to create across all mediums, with a distinctive visual language that is intuitive, authentic and entirely her own."

Asked about the challenges of moving from figurative to abstract work, Ingram says it is "both very difficult, and also very easy. For Tanya, this was an entirely organic and natural transition, which happened in a very genuine way. I think you can see this



Tanya Ling's paintings and sculptures at Lyndsey Ingram in London in a show called "Incitatus."

too in the pictures – they have a fluidity that somehow bridges this gap."

Indeed, there isn't a tail, hoof or saddle in sight in this latest show, although the paintings are all named after horses. "Marching Thunder"; "A Jet of Our Own," and "Far Away West" are just some of the works that line the walls of the gallery space.

Ling even brought a horse – a gray gelding called Banner – to the opening.

"It was almost like a performance, but with a small 'p.' Lyndsey has restored the stable and made it into a beautiful gallery, and I think it was very romantic that the horse came back. There's a glowing harmony about it, something very positive," Ling says.

She adds that in the 19th century, the whole mews "would have been full of horses – the smell, the noise, the shouting, the changing of the harnesses, the noise of the wheels. Now, it's like 'Here we are – we're super-groomed, but saluting our history.'"

Ling is also saluting her own history. When she was a child growing up in England, she drew horses all the time, and loved them so much she thought she was one.

"Like a lot of girls, I was drawing horses and doing pretend gymkhanas and obstacle courses for them. I had a horse, too, but I wasn't a skillful, or a brilliant rider," she admits.

The title of the show also looks to the past.

Incitatus was the name of the Emperor Caligula's beloved and pampered horse – the one he tried to make a consul, according to legend. The word, of ancient Greek origin, refers to a horse in full gallop. Saint Peter the Apostle used the word to mean "loving one another deeply."

Ling worked with a variety of media to create the pieces in the show. The paintings that feature bright streaks and swirls in red, orange, purple and blue hues are mainly oil on canvas.

"Oil is majestic – it's a whole different creative process. It's slower compared to ink, which is fleeting, and acrylic, which dries quickly," she says. "Because oil takes a long time to dry, you can paint over it, go back and scratch things out. It's a long process."

Despite those the unruly lines, the paintings evoke the discipline and majesty of the horse, the intensity of dressage, and equine parades and pageantry.

Ling's blue ink drawings on paper conjure horses, too, but the lines are more spare, moving like seaweed, or long, thick hair, under water. She says drawing with ink is like "skating off-piste. It's all action, but still a controlled sport."

Ling is pushing herself – and also enjoying herself. At a time of protests, polarized politics and fierce debate, Ling says there is no social message to her work. Each piece is a self-contained story made richer by reading between the lines.