



Gretchen Ryan, Jaylynn, 2012, oil on linen, 14 x 11 inches

**First ever solo exhibition in Singapore of works by Gretchen Ryan**

Opening reception – 2 March 2012, 7 – 9 pm

The artist will be present.

*‘the girls are more perfect than they will ever be, they thankfully have no idea what that means and won’t until it’s gone’ – Gretchen Ryan*

Galerie Steph, together with Fred Torres Collaborations (New York), is proud to present the first Singapore exhibition of provocative Los Angeles-based artist Gretchen Ryan. On view will be new paintings, charcoal drawings and photographs, many created exclusively for the Singapore exhibition.

Born in Boulder, Colorado, Gretchen Ryan creates portraits of young girls—often beauty pageant contestants—that explore disturbing notions of objectification, precocious sexuality and innocence. Ryan forces us to question how Western parents raise their daughters in a disturbingly sexualized youth culture, and how we treat female sexuality and youth. She often paints the same girls throughout their childhoods, tracking them as they gain knowledge of their beauty and power. Although Ryan’s work focuses on the fetishized world of child beauty pageants, she approaches her canvas with a deep respect for her models and the use of traditional portraiture techniques.

Gretchen’s portraits capture expressions of fear and dismay that traditional pageant imagery glosses over. Depictions of her subject’s vulnerability allude to the darker side of youthful beauty. Her much beloved princesses are held up on pedestals but are also in danger - societal obsessions are never innocent or innocuous. She focuses on ‘the way we are when we’re new’, conveying a complex mixture of the oblivious purity of youth and the impending difficulties connected to the ‘peril fraught transition’ to adulthood.

Ryan initially honed her skills by training as an illustrator and her artistic beginnings are hugely apparent. The whimsy and fantasy that one might find in children's fairy tale illustrations here take on a more mature, critical tone. She cites *Orphan Girl at the Cemetery* by Delacroix as a strong influence on her treatment of her sitters' moods and personalities. Once infused with Ryan's unique, contemporary sensibility, the work has a dynamic tension that has led some viewers to compare her work to that of John Currin.

Regardless of what the future has in store for these girls, immortalized by Ryan's brush, they remain a tribute to the obstinacy and incorruptibility of youth. Her works have been exhibited throughout the United States and Europe. She lives and works in Los Angeles.



Gretchen Ryan, *Sorrow*, 2011, Chromogenic Print, 24 x 16.5 inches

### **About Galerie Steph**

**Galerie Steph** was founded by **Stephanie Tham**, a Singapore native who was educated at Christie's, New York. She then developed further professional expertise at leading New York galleries. Stephanie helped organize Fernando Botero's first-ever Singapore exhibition in 2004 and is an expert in his paintings and sculpture. In addition to representing major artists such as Botero, Galerie Steph draws upon a keen eye, a business-like approach and an international art network to identify and represent emerging artists whose value and reputation are growing.

### **About Fred Torres Collaborations**

Fred Torres Collaborations is an artist management company and project space founded in 2005. They collaborate with artists, galleries, and museums in producing and promoting exhibitions in New York and around the world. Fred Torres Collaboration's exhibition space has an active exhibition program that includes publishing catalogs, artist talks, and performances throughout the year.

**Galerie Steph** is located at  
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Gallery hours: Tues – Sat - 12 – 7 pm