



FS Colour Series: Prestige inspired by Paula Rego's Midnight Blue

Description



The Betrothal: Lessons: The Shipwreck, after 'Marriage a la Mode' by Hogarth / Paula Rego / 1999

Blue darkness descends across Paula Rego's disquieting artworks, lending them a theatrical air as strange, unsettling narratives unfold. [PRESTIGE](#) linen's deep blue mimics Rego's midnight tone, a colour steeped in density, weight and the cloaked mystery of the night. Darkness also fills the content of Rego's art as exquisitely drawn, macabre characters expose the menacing, threatening side of fairy tales and folklore; women snarl like dogs, young girls age too fast and boys dance with carnivorous animals, subjects she paints with an insatiable relish, writing, "I thought the only way you can

get into things is ... through the basement ... exactly where my studio was ... I could creep upstairs and snatch at things, and bring them down with me ... where I could munch away at them.”



FS PRESTIGE Softened 100% Linen

Rego was born in Lisbon in 1935, the only child of a wealthy Portuguese family. Unusually, Rego's parents travelled to England when she was just one, where her father was studying engineering, and left her in the care of her grandparents for two years. On their return to Portugal Rego's parents bought a large house with a garden, but Rego was too frightened to go outside, choosing instead to remain indoors, where she could create an endless stream of drawings. Her childhood was filled with stories of Portuguese folklore which both repelled and fascinated her, instilling fear and wonder which kept drawing her in, as she remembered back, "The Portuguese have a culture that lends itself to the most grotesque stories you can imagine." Although the rest of her upbringing remained stable, Rego grew increasingly aware of Portugal's political uncertainty under the oppressive dictatorship of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, a restrictive environment which prompted Rego's parents to send her to a finishing school in Kent when she was 16.



The Dance / Paula Rego / 1988

On graduating, Rego moved on to study at London's Slade School of Art, but later returned to Portugal to be nearer her family after falling pregnant with her fellow artist and later husband Victor Willing. The couple eventually returned to London in the 1960s, where Rego became the only active female member of the London Group alongside Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon and David Hockney, although she stood out from the mostly British artists with her narrative paintings that illustrated macabre stories from Portuguese politics, culture, and folklore.

By the 1980s Rego's artistic career was established as paintings took on

Freudian, Jungian and sexualised content, seen in *The Dance*, 1988 where a trio of partnered figures dance amidst a dreamy, moonlit scene. Each group represents a different stage of womanhood, while the rich, velvet blue sky lifts the scene out of the ordinary and into a silent reverie.



Dancing Ostriches / Paula Rego / 1995 / Pastel on paper mounted on aluminum

Dance became the central theme again in Rego's series of *Dancing Ostriches*, 1995, where hazy dark blue forms a disappearing mist in the background, imbedding the same enigmatic, otherworldly quality into the scene. Inspired as much by Degas' dancers as Disney's *Fantasia*, Rego deliberately dresses her womanly ballerinas in black, a reminder of their loss of innocence and earned wisdom.



Untitled (Boys Dancing with Animals) / Paula Rego / 2005 / Private Collection
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In the more recent lithograph *Come to Me: From Jane Eyre* 2001-2002, stiff, starched indigo blue fabric clothes her 19th century character, who is a ball of pent up, steaming blue anger against a scratched red backdrop. In contrast, the large pastel drawing *War*, 2003 invokes the realms of fairy tales, combining imaginary beasts with gruesome content as hybrid human-animals dressed in vivid pinks and dark blues dance a carnivalesque ritual against a foreboding, inky night sky. In the lively, animated sketchbook study *Untitled (Boys Dancing with Animals)*, 2005, we also see the artist's fantastical inner mind at work as naïve young boys embrace menacing animals, unaware of their imminent threat. The macabre mood is enhanced tenfold by the indigo carpet that rolls under them, suggesting the gradual

descent into darkness and night.

FS PRESTIGE comes in MID WEIGHT 100% Linen

CATEGORY

1. TEXTILES

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Date Created

October 11, 2019

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