

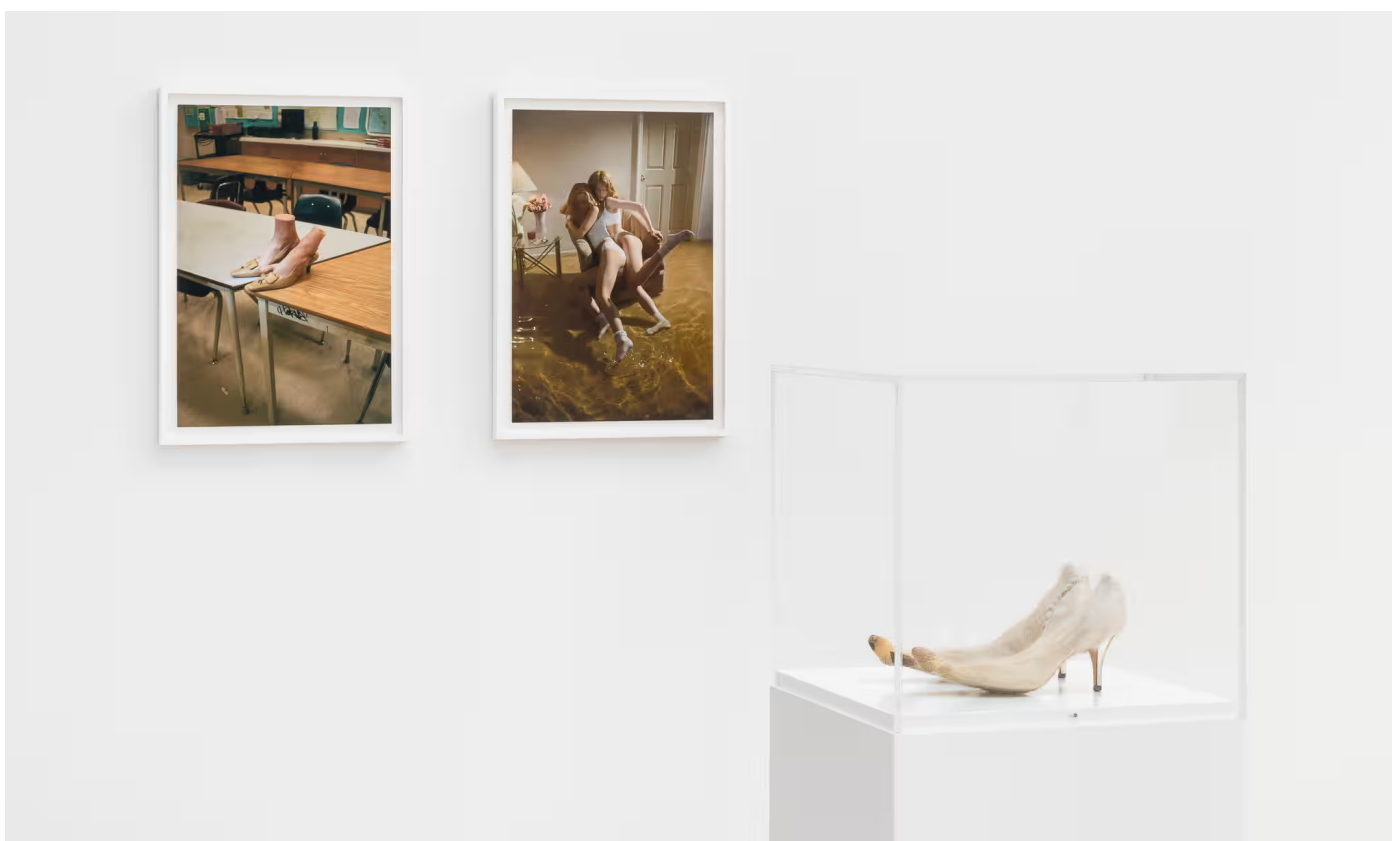


Claire Armitstead

Thu 7 Apr 2022 16.06 CEST

## Lismore Castle Arts

The Irish fashion designer has brought together an impressively varied international collection of heavy hitters and emerging artists in a fairytale setting



Class act ... works by Petra Collins and Dorothy Cross at the exhibition girl girls girls at Lismore Castle Arts in Ireland. Photograph: Jed Niezgoda

**H**uge, ancient magnolias are in full bloom in Ireland's oldest garden, which surrounds Lismore Castle, in the Waterford countryside. Mauve aubretia crawls up stone walls, while stiff white daffodils and maroon fritillaries bow and curtsy to each other on the lawns. Edmund Spenser is said to have composed his epic poem *The Faerie Queene* in the gnarly yew walk in the late 16th century, though the magnolias were a Victorian addition, creating a glorious spring garden for successive dukes of Devonshire.

It's almost as if the 1922 creation of the Irish Free State never happened, except of course we, the general public, are only here because it did. The compulsory purchase of land from English landowners that followed it left Lismore with seven acres with which to support the upkeep of a whole heap of crumbling masonry. The response of the latest heirs, the Earl and

Countess of Burlington, has been to rent out the castle over the summer, let the formal gardens run wild, and convert one of its derelict outbuildings into an art gallery, which has been operating as a not-for-profit enterprise since 2005. Its new summer show - girls girls girls - is a class act, both cheekily of the moment and locked in a whispered conversation with its historic surroundings.



📷 Charismatic outsider ... designer and curator Simone Rocha. Photograph: Gabby Laurent



📷 Whimsical ... a painting on stone by Elene Chantladze. Photograph: courtesy the artist and LC Queisser.

The tortures of fashion are never far away. A pink patterned blouse is embalmed in wax by the German Canadian artist Iris Haeussler. It looks as if it's gasping for air. Ouch, I felt, as I reeled from Dorothy Cross's 1994 cow-udder installation *Stiletto's* - each pointed toe a shrivelled teat - to a surrealist photograph by Petra Collins of shoes so deforming that one big toe juts out like an old tree trunk. But if you lean too hard on overt connections, you might miss the delicate, Chagall-like whimsicality of Georgian artist Elene Chantladze, a one-off, whose paintings on stone and old cardboard sit in two vitrines.

“I was born by the sea. The Supsa River flowed in front of my house. I would look out of the window of a two-story house, the water was swaying, countless birds were flying over it toward the spring: unnamed geese and swans, birds with tufts. Fish were in the water. They know how to dance, they jumped, they moved towards the shore. If I say that fish are dancing, people will laugh at me and say that I have gone insane.” 2

Elene Chantladze (b. 1946, Supsa village in Lekhumi, Georgia) lives and works in Tskaltubo, Georgia. She has had recent solo exhibitions at Modern Art, London (2021); LC Queisser, Tbilisi (2020); and Gallery Nectar, Tbilisi (2018). Her work has been exhibited in group exhibitions at Conceptual Fine Arts, Milan (2021); Gallery Nectar, Tbilisi (2015); and Ausstel- lungsraum Klingental, Basel (2015).

Ser Serpas (b. 1995, Los Angeles) lives and works in between Tbilisi and Los Angeles. She is a poet and a sculptor.



Elene Chantladze, *August mar*, 2008. © Elene Chantladze. Courtesy: the artist; Modern Art, London; LC Queisser, Tbilisi