

# Pilar Corrias

Press Release

*Best Femmes Forever*  
Mary Reid Kelley & Patrick Kelley  
23 January–7 March 2026

Pilar Corrias  
51 Conduit Street  
London W1S 2YT



Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley, *Best Femmes Forever*, 2024. Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London.

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## Press Release

Pilar Corrias is pleased to present *Best Femmes Forever*, an exhibition of video installation and painting by the American artist duo Mary Reid Kelley and Patrick Kelley.

*Best Femmes Forever* is a four-channel video work, filmed by Patrick in the pair's signature black and white and narrated by Mary in her distinctive wordplay-rich verse, as she performs the story of three women who violently lost their lives in the French Revolution: Queen Marie Antoinette, Madame du Barry (Marie Antoinette's rival at Versailles and the last mistress of King Louis XV) and the Princesse de Lamballe, Marie Antoinette's best friend, who, after refusing to renounce the queen, was brutally murdered in the September Massacres. The rivalries and emotions between the women unfold in a ribald cleriheh battle—short, comic verses that rhyme on a person's name—between Marie Antoinette and Madame du Barry that playfully riffs on the real sexual jealousy between the pair.

Behind the queen, stagehands swap out paintings, listening as she veers between fervent prayer and childish vengefulness, hallucinating Jesus Christ descending to arbitrate her woes. Their work reveals another dimension, beyond what Marie Antoinette believes to be a solely personal concern, foreshadowing the eventual undoing of her world.

The film is the first of two major video works by the Kelleys to deal with real historical figures as a primary subject, rather than fictional creations. The second of these, a recent commission by London's National Portrait Gallery, is a double video portrait of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson and his glamorous, notorious lover, Lady Emma Hamilton. These portraits, titled *Let's Hear It for Spirits* and *When I Was the Muse*, are on view at the National Portrait Gallery until 2 August 2026.

To coincide with the presentation of *Best Femmes Forever*, Mary Reid Kelley is exhibiting four new oil paintings. These works consciously revive the still-life tradition of 'flat letter' or 'letter rack' paintings and emerge from a long-standing fascination with the genre, translating Reid Kelley's central concerns, including puns, wordplay, sleight of hand, trickery and emotional association, from video into oil painting. The trompe l'oeil compositions combine printed busts of Marie Antoinette, tacked to cardboard alongside papers and

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letters, including a cartoon of Lassie, the shocked face of Walter Cronkite announcing the assassination of President Kennedy and pages torn from art books. At once parody and convincing homage, the images signal a renewed engagement with a historical style of painting.

**Mary Reid Kelley** (b. USA, 1979) received her BA from St. Olaf College, Minnesota, and an MFA in Painting from Yale University in 2009. She is the recipient of the MacArthur Foundation Grant, the Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel, the Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, a Rema Hort Mann Foundation grant and the Guggenheim Fellowship.

**Patrick Kelley** (b. USA, 1969) earned a BA from St. Olaf College, Minnesota, and an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, Michigan. His works have been exhibited at the Bibliothèque Publique d'Information–Centre Pompidou, Paris, France, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany and the Minnesota Museum of American Art.

The Kelleys have had solo exhibitions at National Portrait Gallery, London; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens; The Fabric Workshop, Philadelphia; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston; Studio Voltaire, London; Baltimore Museum of Art; Tate Liverpool; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Museum Leuven, Belgium; Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Institute of Contemporary Art Boston and Tate Live: Performance Room.

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