

Arts & Culture

Baring all in the name of art

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Art is certainly not dead: South Devon artist Kate Marshall is doing more than her fair share of exposure to bring art to the nation.

Fresh from exhibiting with Beverley Knowles at the London Art Fair in January, and an exhibition at the Florence Biennale at the end of 2007, this year could be one in which you hear a lot more about Kate Marshall.

Her portfolio consists of a variety of mediums, from her favoured acrylic on board to monoprinting, with the subject choices centred around the female form, and the sexualisation of that image.

The naked body is something Kate Marshall is not afraid to explore in her work, but are people too prude when it comes to art that depicts the naked human body?

"I think it comes down to personal taste," she tells us. "I would not expect everyone to want to see art that is explicit - part of the excitement comes from it being taboo."

Born in 1982, Kate Marshall undertook a foundation course in Art and Design at Falmouth College, before graduating from Goldsmiths College in London in 2004 with a BA in Fine Art and Art History.

It was at Goldsmiths that she discovered modern art, and found that there was much more to what she had learnt in her earlier art education.

"It was a slap in the face: I reeled and withdrew into books and life drawing. Gradually I saw the beauty and wit of conceptual art and started to discover artists like Elizabeth Peyton, Marlene Dumas and Cecily Brown, who proved to me that painting was not dead."

"I began to combine the strong, fast line from my life drawing with the vibrancy and sexiness of paint to create a response to the images I felt bombarded by."

Kate's methods for inspiration often involve sourcing and using second-hand material, such as google search images. She has been known to use anything from porn to china figures to the Boucher paintings.

"The idea of recycling images and objects that are past their sell-by-date, trashy, quaint or nostalgic appeals to me: by painting them I hope to offer them up to a new audience."

This new audience is certainly growing. In 2006 Kate was selected for the Noise Festival, a national showcase for emerging creative talent judged by Stella Vine. Live art performances have become a feature of her shows: Kate's solo exhibition in London's East End included a specially designed peepshow booth and was singled out by the Sunday Times as a must-see.

Kate now lives and works in South Devon near Dartmouth, but as she explains it is not the area that necessarily influences her work:

"I have the most beautiful studio with sea views and people often assume that I paint the sea and countryside because of where I live. I love this area but I am drawn to paint people. I spend a lot of time outside on walks thinking about what I am going to paint."

Much of her recent work stems from an interest in the fetishisation of the artist and the artist / model relationship. The rise of contemporary celebrity culture has highlighted the consumer's fascination with artists themselves, not simply with the work they produce.

Many of Kate's pieces are based on self portraits, which some may initially see as an exposure of the artist as a person. Kate's work at times might express how she sees her own physical body, but this is something which does not appear to affect her.

She says: "I do not think I would feel comfortable if they were photographs. I felt that if I was prepared to expose other women I should be prepared to expose myself. Always the madam never the whore...no more!"

While primarily focusing on the female form, pieces such as 'Chest' and 'Unzip' charcoal on paper hint that Kate may want to go further in exploring the male image, 'beneath the trousers' so to speak. She seems excited by the idea, but she is quick to explain the problems behind it.

"I should do a show called 'beneath the trousers!' I have ideas for exploring male images. The history of the depiction of the sexualised male is slightly harder to hijack, I am still trying to make it mine."

"Straight women seem to be happy buying and looking at sexualised images of other women but I am not sure straight men revel in images of other men in the same way. Yet."

Kate plans to show her work in the USA and Mexico in 2008. A portfolio of some of her works can be seen on her official website – see the external link for more details.



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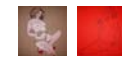
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Kate Marshall's 'Painter Painting' Version 2
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