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ΕΨΙΛΟΝ 23.05.10



Χέσ' τα κι άσ' τα!

Προκλητικές και χωρίς
ταμπού, όπως τα κυβερνητικά
μέτρα «σωτηρίας». Η Τζέσικα
Λιχτενστάιν με τις κούκλες
της διερευνά τα όρια της
σεξουαλικότητας. Και η
εξουσία το ίδιο. Πάνω μας!
Παλιοκατάσταση...

«Κάποιοι θεατές ίσως να απελευθερώνονται από τα ταμπού βλέποντας τις φιγούρες μου. Κάποιοι άλλοι μπορεί να πιστεύουν ότι ταπεινώνουν τις γυναίκες. Πολλοί δεν ενοχλούνται ξέροντας ότι είναι φτιαγμένες από γυναίκα καλλιτέχνη. Άλλοι το βρίσκουν σκανδαλώδες. Κανείς, όμως, δεν μένει αδιάφορος από την παρουσία τους».



Undressed

στρια αντρικών φαντασιώσεων; «Σίγουρα είναι η καθημερινή γυναίκα, η κάθε γυναίκα. Βασικά είναι η κάθε γυναίκα που βλέπει τις φιγούρες – αν καταφέρνει να το αισθανθεί».

Καταφέρατε να βρείτε έναν διαφορετικό τρόπο να μιλήσετε για τη θηλυκότητα, τη σεξουαλικότητα, το γυναικείο γυμνό. Ποια είναι η άποψή σας για το πώς αυτά τα θέματα προσεγγίζονται από τη φωτογραφία ή άλλες μορφές τέχνης; «Είναι αλήθεια πως σήμερα το γυναικείο σώμα προβάλλεται ιδιαίτερα από το σεντόμι και τα περιοδικά και κυρίως με έναν συγκεκριμένο τρόπο. Δεν είναι απαραίτητως κακός. Η γυμνή γυναικεία φιγούρα πάντα ήταν κάτι που η τέχνη ήθελε να "γιορτάσει". Ανέκαθεν θαύμαζα έναν πίνακα, το "Déjeuner sur l'herbe" του Manet: γυμνές γυναίκες και ντυμένοι στην εντέλεια άντρες απολαμβάνουν ένα πικνίκ σε πάρκο. Αυτή η αντίθεση που υπάρχει στον πίνακα είναι κάτι που πλέον έχει χρησιμοποιηθεί πολύ. Είναι, όμως, ταυτόχρονα κάτι τόσο όμορφο, φυσικό. Μ' αρέσει το ότι στη σύγχρονη τέχνη γίνεται προσπάθεια μιας επαναπροσέγγισης του θέματος. Ειδικά από γυναίκες καλλιτέχνες. Είναι πολύ καλό ότι τελικά ο θεατής μπορεί να αποφασίσει αν ζούμε σ' έναν κόσμο που απαθεώνει τη γυμνή γυναικεία φιγούρα, την εξιδανικεύει μέσα από το σεντόμι, την υποβαθμίζει ή αναδεικνύει τη σεξουαλικότητά της ακολουθώντας μια παράδοση σκανδιναβική».

Εχετε σκεφτεί να φτιάξετε αντρικές φιγούρες ή η αντρική σεξουαλικότητα δεν σας απασχολεί ως καλλιτέχνης; «Πάντα με έλκυε η γυναικεία μορφή, είτε έχει να κάνει με φυσική ομορφιά είτε με τεχνητά επεξεργασμένο αποτέλεσμα... Προτιμώ να βλέπω στον τοίχο μου μια γυμνή γυναίκα (από έναν γυμνό άντρα) διότι απλώς μ' αρέσει να ταξιδεύω. Επίσης, η γυμνή γυναικεία φιγούρα είναι κάτι πιο σφιλεγομένο, περίπλοκο, και μ' αρέσει το ότι ακόμα μπορεί να το εξερευνηώ».

1. The figurines look like comic-book and Manga heroines and at the same time they resemble traditional porcelain figures. How would you describe the "genre" of this work?

Currently, the majority of the figurines I work with are actually real Manga characters from anime comic books. Some of the figurines are sold in specialty stores in Japan. They are either sold pre-painted, like buying a Spiderman action figure, or they are sold as model kits that you assemble and paint (like you would a model boat or airplane). Other figurines I have custom made, it just depends on the piece. So yes, the "genre" is very manga/anime in character, however, there is a bit of a twist.

The reason why I chose Manga figures is indeed because they are heroines. When you purchase the figures, they all come with weapons and are posed in very heroic stances. I really love the act of removing their weapon and replacing it with an everyday object (e.g., a magazine, a tray of food, an iPod) and placing them in everyday scenes. It's amazing the change that occurs. Suddenly this figure which was just holding a switchblade, a machete or nun chucks, and was poised to strike, kick, or duck, becomes a heroine in a different way. She becomes an "everyday" heroine- a woman who goes about her daily life doing everything with an all-knowing smirk on her face. She'll serve you food (but she can still kick your ass), she'll pose on a car (but if you get too close she may come after you). She's the type of woman that brings a sense of empowerment to even the mundane--and in doing so, the scene no longer appears mundane--either to her, or to the viewer.

Some people may be upset with the accessories I add to these Manga heroines, or upset with the scenes I portray. Perhaps they think that when you add Louboutin shoes, shopping bags, a blackberry, a bottle of wine, etc., it detracts from the simplicity and wide-eyed innocence of the anime world. But to me, that is precisely the point. I'm not creating Manga. I'm placing Manga in a westernized context.

2. What are your figures made of, what kind of techniques you used in the process of making the figurines?

The figures that I purchase from Japanese manufacturers are usually made of PVC, much like the plastic action figures you are used to (imagine Batman or Mickey Mouse). Some require painting, some I manipulate, and some I customize with various clothing and accessories. I work with companies all over the world to create various accessories and scenes, and whatever I can't find I create by hand. I am currently working with a company to create larger resin versions of my own characters--and I have plans to do some interesting things with them. My next show should not be missed.

3. You use the theme of the "nude body". What is the difference between the expression of the "nudity" and the woman sexuality in the way you choose -with the figurines - in comparison with the photography or other forms of art?

I chose to work in 3-D for a very specific reason. Just the act of looking at a three-dimensional work is very different than looking at a two-dimensional photograph or painting. It's more active for the viewer. They choose a spot to look at-maybe the face, next their eyes scan downward towards the body--the breasts, down an arm, down the buttocks, the thigh, the leg, the foot, back up again and around until a full figure emerges. If the figure is facing away, maybe the viewer starts from the back and works their way forward--moving left or right as the figure's body contorts, until a sideways head is in view. The mere fact that a figure or a statue is in 3-D causes you to want to walk in a circle, and see every bit of it, soak it in. Maybe by the time your circle is complete, your view or conclusion has been slightly altered. You may even linger longer and stare harder than you would at a painting or photograph.

To me that act is very symbolic and representative of the way people look at each other in real life, particularly as it pertains to women. Not just how men look at women, but also how other women look at women. When you watch viewers staring at the figures, you notice their eyes going up and down the figures bodies, or their heads moving from left to right as they rapaciously take in every aspect of the scene before them. It becomes more of a violation.

In that way I think 3-D lends itself to voyeurism more than any two-dimensional medium. And voyeurism is a huge component of my work--whether it's you spying on the intimacies of these figures transfixed in the minute details of their lives, or whether it's them staring back at you, taunting you like a Grecian Siren, until you even begin to question who again is on display.

4. Do you think your heroines are more sexy or fun?

Equally so. You can't deny that they have sexy features but, simultaneously, they are toys. Anime figures are sold in stores juxtaposed next to Star Wars figures and Godzilla figures. What could be more fun than that?

5. You have a scene at the toilet, another one very provocative figurine at the billiard table. It seems you don't have any taboos.... Or maybe there are now new taboos for an artist - for example could you make a "realistic" sex scene? And how do people react seeing your works, do you know the impressions of the visitors of your exhibitions?

I try to do different things with the scenes I portray. On one hand, I like to show girls looking glamorous and sexy in mundane (or in the case of the toilet you mention, subjectively dirty) circumstances. To me there is no taboo. We all sit on toilets. The myth that nothing comes out of a woman's rear end besides flowers and jasmine is completely absurd. On the other hand, I like to poke fun at, and play with, various clichés or

stereotypes--you may see a girl posed on a pool table with a cue ball resting on her rear end, but you also may see a woman holding onto a tiny "white knight" figure and casually tossing him aside as though he were not at all like the fairy tale ending she had envisioned; you may see a woman spread eagle on a miniature sports car, but you may also see a woman stomping all over a tea set separating herself from her traditional role as "the lady who serves tea to friends."

Some people see the work as liberating, others see it as subjugating women. Some people are comforted by the fact that the pieces are made by a female artist, others are infuriated even more. Overall, they are pieces that grab your attention. My favorite thing to do during exhibitions is to watch people pass by on the street, do a double-take at the art in the window, stop and examine, point at a few things and giggle with their friends and walk away with a smile on their faces.

6. How would you describe the heroine of the *Undressed* series. Who is she? The girl next door? The girl every man is dreaming about?

She's an "everyday" heroine. Basically she is you, the viewer...if only you realized it.

7. You found a way to express the femininity in a different way. What is your opinion about the way modern art - the different forms of it as the movie, the photography, the sculpture - presents femininity? What is your favorite artwork or artist, modern and from the past.

It's pretty much a well-established fact that women's bodies are depicted more in movies, magazines and art. But I don't necessarily think that is a bad thing. I think the female form has always been treated in art as something to celebrate. I've always been fascinated by historic paintings such as Titian's "Concert Champetre" ("Pastoral Concert") or Manet's "Dejeuner sur l'Herbe" ("Luncheon on the Grass")--the images of these stark white naked women juxtaposed next to these fully-dressed, overly-ornate men. On one hand the juxtaposition seems so odd, yet on the other hand, it seems so natural: almost mythic and angelic.

One of my favorite modern artists right now is Hye Rim Lee, and her hyper-sexualized figure named Toki who lives in crystal dildo city. I think her work really shows how the female form is viewed by both men and women as a fetish object.

I really like this idea of modern female artists exploring the history of the female form in art and unraveling the mythos behind the flesh. It lets the viewer decide for themselves whether we as a society are glorifying the female form, falsely idealizing it, degrading women or in fact celebrating sexuality as it is universally portrayed in the female form.

8. What about male figurines? Do you think about it, or is masculinity and male sexuality not something you are interested in?

I've always been mesmerized by the female form. Whether it's a product of nurture or nature, I am not certain. We are certainly exposed more to the female form in art, culture and the media than we are to the male figure. Personally, I would prefer naked females on my wall rather than male figures. I tend to identify with the female figures and it's sexier to me to have images on my wall that personify my character and my sexuality. It also seems to be more controversial --and I like exploring why that is the case.

9. What is the actual size of the figurines?

Currently the figurines are about 10-12" tall when standing or 3-4" when seated. I am currently developing 4 foot figures for a new project I am working on.