

MONICA DE CARDENAS

GEORGINA GRATRIX MERGES HUMOR WITH CRITIQUE

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An Offering, 2019



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An Enterprising Woman, 2018; Potjie Princess, 2018

GEORGINA GRATRIX layers thick coats of paint to create imagery she considers kitsch, gaudy, and banal. Her representations are mysteriously endearing with an innate sense of humor. When viewing Gratrix's work, one gets the sense that there is a playfulness as well as an element of critique. Gratrix is represented by SMAC Gallery and is based in Cape Town, South Africa.

Tell us a little bit about yourself. Where are you from and when did art first become a significant part of your life?

I was born in Mexico to well-travelled parents and grew up in Durban; a tropical city on the east coast of South Africa. In high school I joined weekend and evening drawing and painting classes mostly populated by housewives. I then went on to study Fine Art at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town.



Girls Girls Girls, 2019



The Appraisers, 2018

What ideas or themes does your work touch on?

The everyday kitsch, the gaudy and the banal.

What art movements most inspire your work?

Generally I like to look at German Expressionism, but individual artists that influence me currently are De Kooning, Phillip Guston and Maria Lassnig. Always Matisse and I've been looking at Picasso's later work recently along with Bhupen Khakhar and George Condo.

Are the figures in your work based on real people?

Yes and no. My point of departure is often a photo of someone on my phone or in a magazine, but through the drawing process people change and mutate.

What is the art scene like in your current home of Cape Town?

The art scene in Cape Town has bloomed in recent years with the arrival of The Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art as well as the Norval Foundation offering artists a fuller program and exposure to contemporary art practices.

We are huge fans of Punch, the vibrant group show that just closed at Jeffrey Deitch LA which Nina Chanel Abney curated. Can you tell us about your work in the show and what it means to be a part of such a prolific group of artists?

It's the first time I'm showing in Los Angeles so I made Desert Island Disco specifically for this exhibition. A frivolity and impending doom and the dichotomy between waving and drowning sort of sums up my feelings of LA. Of course being part of such a show with so many exciting contemporary figurative artists is very exciting.

What's next for you?

Up next I am happy to be showing again in Los Angeles at an upcoming group show at Nicodim in October called Skin Stealers.

At the end of every interview, we like to ask the artist to recommend a friend whose work you love for us to interview next. Who would you suggest?

JODY PAULSEN is a great friend of mine and terrific artist who works with wonderfully humorous and extravagantly witty felt collages. He's also quite a dream boat.

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Valley Road Flowers, 2019