



**"I AM RESPONDING TO THE PROLIFERATION OF IMAGERY THAT IS OMNIPRESENT IN THE DIGITAL REALM AS WELL THE PHYSICAL MATERIALS OF MAGAZINES AND ADVERTISEMENTS PRESENT IN OUR EVERYDAY SURROUNDINGS."**

Interview by: Issey Scott

Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your background? Where did you study?

I am a Londoner born and bred. I have a Welsh/German Jewish ancestry so I feel more affiliated to the melting pot than an idea of being "English" or "British" per se. Growing up in the city has definitely influenced how I see the world around me and I am probably addicted to the buzz of constant activity. After school I did an art foundation at Chelsea College of Arts, and then decided I was in need of more life experience before pursuing my artistic career. I spent a lot of time travelling in Asia before and after studying English Lit. at Leeds University. Whilst at Leeds I took modules in C18th Feminism, Post-Colonialism, and Psychoanalysis; these themes are still ruminating in the back of my mind, and are quiet, yet influential subjects in my painting. It took me a good ten years to do a full circle and return to Chelsea College of Art for my MAFA. It was a hugely experimental program where we were encouraged to explore multiple ways to make art, but I discovered a lust for painting that superseded my other artist endeavours, and following this I went straight to Turps Banana where I was able to focus my energies on painting in a very intensive two year studio program.

What are your thoughts on the rise of the all-female exhibition as a trope of the art world buying into feminism and female representation in galleries? As your work looks closely at the patriarchy, it would be interesting to consider whether your work would fit into the all-female model.

Coincidentally I am currently preparing for a show at Cob Gallery that will showcase an all female line up. The show is titled, "Subject", and will consider the Female Gaze. I think that the fact an all-female show currently raises an eyebrow, does highlight the inequalities that exist in the art world. It is about time women were given a platform and I am grateful to be practising painting now as opposed to fifty years ago. Although things appear to be moving in the right direction towards a more equal presentation of male and female artists we are still a long way away from being on a level playing field. My worry is that if you are pigeon holed in a box as a female painter, the concept of feminism has been misinterpreted. The issue lies with an "all female model" being classified in a reductive way. I hope that one day there's no longer a need for an all women exhibition and that women artists will be considered quite simply artists.

**When writing about your work, you refer to your ‘dystopian vision of [the] capitalist dream’; other than the reality we are living in through the lenses of different industries, what explicitly are you looking to convey and reveal, particularly to your Generation X and Y audiences?**

My work has always been driven by my experience of the world around me. I have always been interested in portraying the psychological and emotional imprint of experiences that have affected me. As a result of women being judged primarily on their appearance, and then on their other merits, I want to explore what fuels this behaviour. Advertising is subliminal. We are consistently bombarded with imagery that is feeding into our narrative of how we see ourselves in relation to those around us. I am currently exploring the imagery used in mass media campaigns, in particular I am focusing on adverts from high end fashion labels. These brands are considered as “Aspirational Brands” and are intended to signify what we, as a society desire. I find this imagery is often grotesque in subtle ways that may go unnoticed. It is only when you break down each highly constructed image, you start to decode the signifiers. I feel my work is aimed at Millennials as well as Generations X and Y, if not more so. I am responding to the proliferation of imagery that is omnipresent in the digital realm as well the physical materials of magazines and advertisements present in our everyday surroundings. I hope that the reinterpretation of the advertisements through painting, opens up a dialogue where we can re-look at the structure of ideas and references used and highlight the absurd, retrogressive and damaging messages being conveyed beneath the glossy, alluring surface of the imagery.

**Tell us a bit about how you spend your day / studio routine? What is your studio like?**

I wake up, and apparently act like a scared mole emerging into an unfamiliar world. I find mornings difficult and conversations in the morning unbearable, so I am very quick to get dressed and make my way to the studio. Mornings are also my favourite time to work, it is normally when studios are quietest and it

is when I have the best ability to focus on the paintings. Although I can't communicate with the outside world at this time of day it seems the perfect time for me to have a conversation with the canvas. I think it is a portal into that not too conscious but relatively focused realm, the twilight moments for a painter where you are not over thinking your work, but are just “in the zone” as they say. I'm fuelled by lots of caffeine. As time wears on my painting decisions become worse but I normally push myself to keep going until the evening. I take a lot more breaks in the afternoon, and will go out for a walk or a coffee to refresh myself. I find I often need to distract myself from the paintings for a while so that I can re-see them again and make better decisions. I have just moved into a new studio in Bow Arts. It's the dream. Wooden floors, two large, luminous windows. A room with a view, finally. I feel incredibly lucky it's a perfect little garret for me to wile away my time.

**How do you go about naming your work?**

When you spend a lot of the day by yourself with your ideas small things can really weigh on your mind. I have learnt that the best way for me to title work is to do it light heartedly. At some point during the painting process title's will pop into my head. It is not something I try to generate but something that emerges during the process. I just stick with the best one and then try not to overthink it. If nothing has come to mind whilst painting, I will look to the original source material for inspiration or purely for labelling purposes. At the moment, with the current works, I like the echoing of labelling the works from the fashion campaigns I have lifted them from, for example “Gucci Pre-Fall” as it gives the audience a clear insight into where I am generating the imagery and helps them think about what the intention is behind the painting.

**What artwork have you seen recently that has resonated with you? I was in Edinburgh last month, for my first solo show with Arusha Gallery, “Accessorise with a Tiger”.**

Whilst there I went to see an exhibition of work by Emil Nolde, titled, “Life Is Colour”. Before entering the exhibition there was a

disclaimer to the effect of the gallery did not condone the views of the artist who was part of the Nazi party. I had mixed views about entering the exhibition and about the work being shown, as the content of some of the paintings was extremely anti semitic. However, I was really blown away by the work. Some of the paintings were truly amazing. The colours were seriously intense, they seemed to sing and jump off the canvas, and the adeptness at which the paint was handled, truly was brilliant. I feel a real connection to the German Expressionist movement, in the grotesque and bold portrayal of anxiety and ugliness of social interaction. The whole experience of the show, which was in a small space in the upper galleries of The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, was very intimate and direct. I was left with mixed feelings about morality and painting and torn about my own response to the works, the show left me with lingering questions, which I think is the mark of something affective.

**Is there anything new and exciting in the pipeline you would like to tell us about?**

I won the The Darbyshire Prize For Emerging Art just before graduating from the Turps Painting Program, so I will be having a solo show at Darbyshire Ltd in November. It's such a brilliant opportunity because the space is beautiful and light and there is a very large pink wall that I will be exhibiting on. It will be my first solo show in London and I'm hugely excited to have a whole body of work hung together. Rhiannon Salisbury Darbyshire Ltd. 19-23 White Lion St, London N1 9PD PV November 21st, Show runs November 21st - February 21st

I am also really delighted to be part of the show New Work Part III: SUBJECT, at COB gallery. The lineup of artists in the show is incredible, and I will have work next to women who have inspired me and that I have looked up to whilst I was studying. So I was really delighted when asked to participate. New Work Part III: SUBJECT COB Gallery 205 ROYAL COLLEGE STREET, LONDON, NW1 0SG PV October 5th, Show runs 5th October - 3rd November.