

ARTIST Q & A: Monika Behrens

Who was your earliest/biggest influence artistically?

My earliest influence was Rene Magritte, the surrealist. To me he was the master of taking something out of its usual environment and convincingly placing it somewhere else. I loved the 1980s and the personality artists including Andy Warhol and Jean Michel Basquiat. More recent influences, and artists that are my comparable to my style and themes, include Gordon Bennett, George Gittoes, Richard Patterson, Guan Wei, and Elizabeth Peyton



What media do you use and why?

Painting is my medium of choice because I just take pleasure in the whole process. I tried my hand at digital manipulation and found that it just didn't blow my hair back like painting. I enjoy experimentation with painting and feel as though I am constantly learning with every work.

What study have you undertaken, in art and other disciplines, and how has this contributed to your practice?

For my undergraduate I completed a Bachelor in Fine Art at RMIT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). More recently I completed a Master in Art at COFA (College of Fine Art) and currently I am completing a Master in Fine Art at COFA.

Study has made an enormous contribution to my work. Through study I have established a network of artists that is mutually beneficial in terms of inspiration, guidance and comradeship.

What is the biggest source of inspiration for your work?

The main sources are international relations, terrorism, and civil unrest here in Australia. There is injustice and violence all around us, and this horrifies and repulses me.

Is there a dominant message that you try to convey through painting to your audience?

Through my work I aim to convey the message that violence is a barbaric way to deal with conflict and a senseless form of self-expression. Generally the organic objects in my paintings represent victims, and the toys the perpetrators of violence.