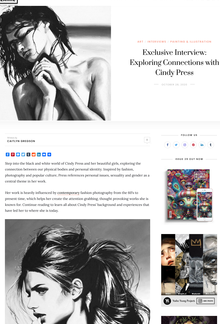


ART · INTERVIEWS · PAINTING & ILLUSTRATION

Exclusive Interview: Exploring Connections with Cindy Press

CAITLYN GREGSON

Step into the black and white world of Cindy Press and her beautiful gyle, exploring the connection between our physical bodies and personal identity. Inspired by fashion, photography and popular culture, Press references personal issues, sexuality and gender as a central theme in her work.

Her work is heavily influenced by contemporary fashion photography from the 60's to present time, which helps her create the attention grabbing, though provoking series she is known for. Continue reading to learn all about Cindy Press' background and experiences that have led her to where she is today.

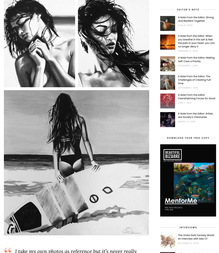
> *I believe that life happens as a result of everything you go through. I was a fashion illustration major in college. Had I been a painting major, I wonder what my work would look like? Regardless, I know I would always be doing something with art.*

How long have you been in the art field?

I have been in the art field for over 20 years but I spent the first 10 in the fashion industry as a designer. I did not start painting professionally until 6 years ago.

Have you always wanted to be a working artist?

Yes! I graduated from art college with a BFA and always knew I would do something related to art. It took experience in different areas to get to where I am now, and my other paths are reflected in my work. I believe that life happens as a result of everything you go through. I was a fashion illustration major in college. Had I been a painting major, I wonder what my work would look like? Regardless, I know I would always be doing something with art.



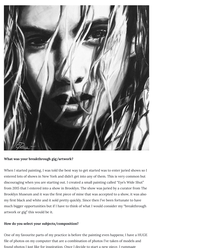
> *I take my own photos as reference but it's never really about the beautiful woman in my paintings or the clothes she is wearing, it's about what she is feeling on the inside.*

Has there been a moment in your career that you realized you were on the right path?

Definitely when I started painting but within my painting practice it was when I focused on black and white. When I started working mostly in black and white was not only did it just feel right to me but there was much more interest from galleries and collectors.

Your website says your "work celebrates women by exploring the connection between our physical bodies and personal identity" – is that the broad aspect of your practice? Are there any specific themes within this that you like to focus on?

What I'm really trying to say with my work is that even though everything looks perfect on the outside no one really knows what lies deep within the inside. I take my own photos as reference but it's never really about the beautiful woman in my paintings or the clothes she is wearing, it's about what she is feeling on the inside. This is more evident in my titling of the piece and I think that is what everyone relates to.

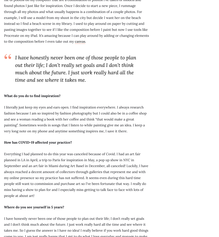


Do you think your education at Moore College of Art and Design was crucial in your career being where it is today? Do you think you could have achieved everything you have without your education?

I think absolute that every effort, I never had any painting classes while in college so when I began to paint I took a few courses at a community college near my home. I needed to learn the technical aspects of working with oil paint. I wish I had taken painting classes at Moore I don't remember if they were even offered if you weren't a painting major. Sometimes I feel like I'm a self taught painter but then I remember all the hours I put into drawing and life drawing in college and I'm sure that has helped with my practice.

Do you recommend higher education to people wanting to be full time artists?

It is very different today than it was when I graduated college. Free of all, it is a lecture and it's no secret that art career is a hard one and there is no guarantee you'll be able to pay the bills. Thinking from a practical standpoint, and also as a mother who just 2 daughters graduate college, I would recommend higher education as something to fall back on. If you want to go to school for painting then make sure you also get a teaching degree, or something else that will help you pay the bills. Also, if you are a painter you need to be extremely go to college anyone to become a professional painter. There are so many wonderful artists now giving workshops that I think it might be better to spend the money learning from them. These are people who are living the life of a full time artist. I think that is the best education you can get.



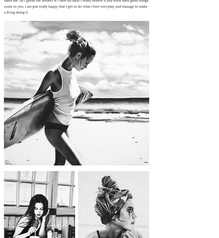
What was your breakthrough gig/artwork?

When I started painting I was told the best way to get started was to enter juried shows so I entered tons of shows in New York and didn't get into any of them. This is very common but discouraging when you are starting out. I created a small painting called "Girls Whole Day" from 2011 that I entered into a show in Brooklyn. The show was juried by a curator from The Brooklyn Museum and it was the first piece of mine that was accepted to a show. It was also my first black and white and it and pretty quickly the Street Dress I'm best known for was much bigger opportunities but if I have to think of what I would consider my "breakthrough artwork or gig" this would be it.

How do you select your subjects/composition?

One of my favourite parts of my practice is before the painting even happens. I have a HUGE folder of inspiration photos that I have collected over the years from fashion, magazine and travel photos. I look for the "inspiration. Once I decide to start a new piece, I rummage through all my photos and what usually happens is a combination of a couple photos. For example, I will see a model from my shoot in the city but decide I want her on the beach. Instead so I find a beach scene in my library. I used to play around on paper by cutting and pasting images together to see if I like the composition before I paint but now I can trade Mr. Procrastin on my iPad. It's amazing because I can plug around by adding or changing elements to the composition before I even take out my canvas.

> *I have honestly never been one of those people to plan out their life; I don't really set goals and I don't think much about the future. I just work really hard all the time and see where it takes me.*



What do you do to find inspiration?

I literally just keep my eyes and ears open. I find inspiration everywhere. I always research fashion because I am so inspired by fashion photography but I can't also be in a coffee shop and see a woman reading a book with her coffee and think 'that would make a great painting'. Inspiration comes from everywhere and I try to write painting ideas in my notes. Keep a very long note on my phone and anytime something inspires me, I save it there.

How has COVID-19 affected your practice?

Everything! I had planned to do this year was canceled because of Covid. I had set an list planned to do in April, a trip to New York inspiration in May, a pop up show in NYC in September and an art fair in Miami during Art Basel in December. all canceled! Luckily, I have always reached a decent amount of collectors through galleries that expressed me and with my online presence so my practice has not suffered. It seems even during this hard time people still want to commission and purchase art so I've been fortunate that way. I really do miss having a show in place for and I especially miss getting to talk face to face with lots of people at show and

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

I have honestly never been one of those people to plan out their life; I don't really set goals and I don't think much about the future. I just work really hard all the time and see where it takes me. It's given the answer to I have no idea! I really believe if you work hard good things come to you. I am just really happy that I get to do what I love everyday and manage to make a living doing it.

Cindy Press' Social Media Accounts

Facebook | Instagram | Website | Twitter

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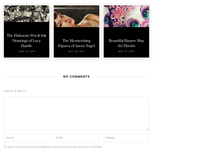
CAITLYN GREGSON

Caitlyn Gregson is the Social Media Manager of Beautiful Bizarre Magazine, and a 3rd year student at Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia. She is passionate about the people who are behind the beautiful work Beautiful Bizarre Magazine is about. Girl on a mission, working closely with the Editor in Chief to learn about independent publishing and the arts. Caitlyn is also a freelance writer, and has been published in Beautiful Bizarre Magazine, editorial and a corporate puppet, and now she also proudly represents the magazine, curation, assists with the administration of the annual Beautiful Bizarre Art Prize, and helps with the day to day operations of the magazine. Caitlyn's work with Beautiful Bizarre Magazine has either resumed a Caitlyn overload her artistic journey on an much justified plateau. Art is now focusing more on photography, which she is falling more and more in love with. Caitlyn is also a Photoshop addicted, Instagram addicted, Pinterest addicted, plant lover, Caitlyn loves all things sweet, wonderfully beautiful and bizarre, and just between us, she's also a little bizarre herself - but aren't we all.

FURTHER READING...



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