

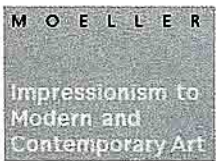
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One of Marilyn Minter's billboards in Chelsea

Artists Up Close: Whitney Biennial "Cover Artist" Marilyn Minter

by Barbara MacAdam

Marilyn Minter's paintings-cum-photographs have titillated the feminist imagination since the 1980s, when her depictions of low-dress glamour at once celebrated and parodied the Greed Is Good Zeitgeist.

Twenty years later, the artist is still a vital force, as evidenced by her participation in this year's Whitney Biennial. Her work, in fact, was chosen for the cover of the exhibition's catalogue, a decision about which the artist said she was "ecstatic."

For the biennial, the artist, born in 1948, expresses her highly noirish vision in four huge billboards in Chelsea (presented with [Creative Time](#)). In one, a glittering, bejeweled, high-heel shoe on a soot-covered foot is stepping over a slick, darkened street; in another, there is an eye surrounded by translucent bubbles that might be jewels, could be ice—but are more likely tears.

In the Whitney's galleries, Minter's three paintings feature close-ups of the same sexy subjects, adding a witty, albeit disturbing, frisson to the often quite earnest mix that constitutes this year's show.

The Shreveport, La.-born daughter of a "Southern belle," Minter, who teaches in the graduate program of the School of Visual Arts, says she gets much of her inspiration today from video games, with Tetris being one of her favorites. "I've been playing hand-held video games since 1995. It's my way of training my brain."

But, she also admits, "I read a lot of trash magazines and play video for day dreaming. I have to pay attention to pop culture because that's what my work is about. I need the visuals."

Explaining the evolution of what she pretends are her "guilty pleasures," she says she went from "comics to paparazzi magazines." But, of course, there was also a very legit side to it all: "Brenda Starr is how I learned to draw. I copied her. I admired her. She had a career."

Minter is working bigger now than she was in the '80s, when she first began drawing attention. "Working big," she says, "has more impact. There's a level where it turns completely abstract. I use the computer and Photoshop for the images I paint, but all my photographs are made with conventional photography. The billboards are like giant paintings. I always use photos and paintings together. It takes me so long to make a painting."

Besides, she says, all of her work has always been about "blurring the lines"—between figuration and abstraction, fine art and commercials (in 1989, she bought ads on three television programs 30 seconds on the Letterman show for \$1,800, for example).

"I'm always messing with and blurring the lines," Minter says of her sultry and excitingly lush productions. But in the end, "I'm trying to give you some pleasure."

Image: Courtesy of Marilyn Minter, presented with Creative Time / Photo: Charlie Samuels

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