

WHAT NOW?

DEBORAH
PAAUWE**Can you talk about your new series, *The Painted Mirror*?**

This new body of work was inspired by my part Chinese background and the Chinese history of concealing feelings through blank facial expressions. I have extended this idea of masking feelings by finding props, such as a fan or mirror, to conceal the face of my subjects. I am fascinated by the unspoken and intrigued by the challenge we face in reading the thoughts and emotions of the people around us.

What underpins the distinctive use of vintage clothing and props in your work?

My mother never kept any of her clothes, so this led to my own obsession to start my own collection and pretend these items could have in fact belonged to my mother. I took great care in sourcing the props in this body of work. The fans and mirrors were bought from locations in the United States that I had visited as a child with my parents. The objects themselves relate to fans distributed in church services in summer and the hand mirrors hold a sense of memory for me relative to the simple personal objects my mother carried with her on these trips.

You have used many identity-obscuring devices in your enigmatic images including partial framing, props such as balloons or lollipops and the numerous veiling possibilities of hair. In *The Painted Mirror* you've found a novel way to introduce landscape. For some time I have been observing the appropriation of artists' imagery by the advertising industry. How do you feel about this?

I am familiar with images that have been used in advertising that have mimicked my work. So far, I have not felt disadvantaged or

disappointed by what I have seen. As the saying goes, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. All art imagery feeds off other art imagery; it is the nature of the medium.

I have been impressed by the care with which you have commissioned a range of writers to create texts (including poetry) to accompany your solo exhibitions. How important is text to you?

Yes, text is important to me. Often I find writers interpret my work in ways quite different to how I do. Sometimes their interpretation is on a similar wavelength and other times their views can be on quite a different path but equally valid. My aim is always to make work that incorporates visual elements that trigger responses in the viewer that can never be controlled, as people will take their own journey with the work.

Having exhibited with Greenaway Art Gallery at Art Stage Singapore earlier this year, what other projects are you working on?

I am currently following up with contacts made through the Singapore fair and hope to formalise a relationship with an Asian gallery soon. I will be showing a selection of new work alongside earlier images at Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne, as well as preparing work for solo exhibitions in Hong Kong and New Zealand.

Wendy Walker

A selection of work from *The Painted Mirror* will be exhibited at Nellie Castan Gallery in Melbourne from 19 April to 5 May 2012 and the full series will be shown in Sydney at Michael Reid at Elizabeth Bay in August.

Deborah Paauwe, *Heavy Roses (seated)*, 2012.
Giclée print, 75 x 75cm and 120 x 120cm. COURTESY:
THE ARTIST AND GREENAWAY ART GALLERY, ADELAIDE;
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