

Art loves fashion & fashion loves art

— But do they really get along? —

Lip-gloss and Lacquer

Art and fashion are intrinsically linked. The many levels of this relationship create a paradox. This attraction and repulsion of the pursuit of commodity, glamour and icons envelops our daily existence.

Concepts of glamour, the cult of celebrity, and fashion are heavily played out in the media, on television and on the big screen. This phenomenon is not new, with Andy Warhol's Marilyns and Campbell Soup Cans making a complete observational statement about the nature of art and commodity; these debates have been around for decades. Even in today's highly saturated culture, high street retailer Topshop has purchased paintings from artist, Stella Vine, for their t-shirt collection. With the likes of Kate Moss and Lily Allen designing their own collections, it's a cultural overload, morphing our perceptions, judgements and ideologies. We are in the thick of it, just as much, if not more than four decades ago.

Art loves fashion and fashion loves art, but do they really get along? Spring Studios, a new gallery space in North London, offers a platform for experimental work across the fields of art, design and fashion. The curator has developed a new series of exhibitions that directly engage with this debate. The gallery's programme regularly set these disciplines alongside fine art, which takes a broad cultural view. Spring Projects aims to present a coherent fusion and convergence of the contemporary by hosting exemplary practitioners across these fields. Contemporary artists and designers whose reference is popular culture in its broadest sense have energised a new discourse between the worlds of art, fashion and design, one defined less by subjects than by attitude. Spring Projects aims to push the dialogue between these fields a little further and provides a consistent commercial platform from which to highlight outstanding work.

The latest exhibition, *Lip-gloss and Lacquer*, opening this June will encourage a critical dialogue and fierce debate. *Lip-gloss and*

Lacquer is an exhibition that investigates our pursuit of commodity, celebrity and fashion. The works in the show both critique and embrace glamour; images of women in the fashion industry; and materials and surfaces, which seduce, tantalise and reflect back on us. The exhibition explores the viewers' response to seven artists and designers that explore aspirations of beauty and luxury.

The show is divided into two categories; artists who approach the topic on a formal level through the use of highly saturated materials; and artists whose work looks at these themes in a more figurative way, using the female image as a point of reference, often investigating the fashion industry.

Curator and Director, Andree Cooke, has selected a range of artists to explore these topics from recent graduates to more established. She comments, "With the programme this year, I wanted to do a show that did cross the various cultural boundaries. *Lip-gloss and Lacquer* includes a designer; two fashion photographers and four artists, some of whom are established while others are emerging. The exhibition includes various disciplines from painting, video installation through to sculpture pieces. The title, *Lip-gloss and Lacquer*, came by thinking about that fashion work that had an 80s feel about it, an era of lip-gloss and lacquer. The sound and rhythm of title stuck, when I asked artists to think about the show it was from the starting point of the title and then the investigation of our pursuit of commodity, celebrity and fashion and what that means in relation to that title."

Lip-gloss and Lacquer is loosely curated around the show title, and is predominantly a response by the artists to their interpretation of the title and its themes. The exhibition comprises artists, designers and fashion photographers showing a collection of work which draws together product design, advertising and fine art photography, pop culture imagery, painting, installation and sculpture. Many of the works simultaneously combine a contemporary and retro 80s feeling.



"Lip-gloss and Lacquer is an exhibition that investigates our pursuit of commodity, celebrity and fashion."



Cooke continues, "Because we are a commercial gallery, in a way I didn't want to curate this as a very tightly curated show like you might have in a public space. The idea is that artists' work will be able to stand alone within that title and it cohesively works together aesthetically. It's trying to fit together with grace, not trying to make everyone fit homogeneously within the title. It's different ways of viewing the scene. There are a lot of cross themes aesthetically and critically, at this stage it's much more about people's work standing alone in its own right."

The world around us only continues to become more complex and self-obsessed. As consumers, we need space for debate and

critical thought. There are many opposing views associated with this world; and frankly it's a matter of perception. Cooke comments: "The zeitgeist has come and is on its way for a much broader approach to fashion and design and its inclusion in the fine art market and being taken more seriously as an art form in its own right. Everything becomes much more interesting when you give it a platform." Let the debate begin.

Lip-gloss and Lacquer opens on 13 June 2008 and continues until 14 August 2008. www.springprojects.co.uk.

The Lip-gloss and Lacquer Artists

Laura Buckley exhibits two video works, which are an exploration of painting and illusion, and unite the decorative with the filmic. She plays with materials and two-dimensional surfaces — mirrors, perspex, concrete — pouring materials and rearranging mirrored supports, as well as juxtaposing notions of the digitally created surface with the physical object. Her video works are shown in small 'sets' created by the artists, their small scale conjuring an intimacy more typical of painted pictures, while their lo-tech quality constantly reminds us of the artist's hand-made approach. Disorientating and kaleidoscopic, Buckley's visual landscapes are multi-layered, while the aesthetic of her work defies neat categorisation or defined pattern; her works create a strange beauty, and new meaning in everyday objects.

Steve Heitt's fashion photography demonstrates his skill, not only as a photographer, but also his background as a graphic designer and typographer. The selection of works for *Lip-gloss and Lacquer* date from the late 70s and early 80s when the fashion world started to employ Heitt to make his distinctive pictures. His notable images often situate models in low-key suburban settings, creating a slightly off-kilter mood. The images are pin-sharp, the colour saturated, yet there is an enigmatic, romantic feeling, often suggesting a longing, or loneliness. Steve Heitt's images of his models preserve an element of elusiveness and female mystery — often constructing enigmas, and complex and intriguing graphic structures.

Lawrence Weiner for almost forty years has investigated the nature of language and offered a radical redefinition of the relationship between the artist and the viewer. His investigations into linguistics structures and visual systems have resulted in a wide body of works that includes books, films, videos, performances and audio works. Weiner considers language to be a sculptural material and believes that a construction in language can function as a sculpture. For *Lip-gloss and Lacquer* Weiner will exhibit a text work made from lipstick ENOUGH TO PUSH OUT THE REST (UN CLOU CHASSE L'AUTRE), a work investigating our pursuit of commodity, celebrity and fashion.

Michael Anastassiades a London designer, has created objects that respond directly to people's behaviour. His mirror collection on show in *Lip-gloss and Lacquer* strays from the gadgetry of his earlier works. With his inspired use of mirrors, Anastassiades brings the environment and the people in it into some of his designs. Though his pieces are finely made and often strikingly beautiful, Anastassiades is not creating objects so much as experiences. His works, which are a combination of product, furniture and environmental design, establish a psychological dimension between objects and users.

"The exhibition comprises artists, designers and fashion photographers showing a collection of work which draws together product design, advertising and fine art photography, pop culture imagery, painting, installation and sculpture. Many of the works simultaneously combine a contemporary and retro 80s feeling."

Elle Muliarchyk, a former model, has pioneered her own form of "girly graffiti." Staged in the dressing rooms of high-end boutiques, Elle smuggles in her camera to photograph herself dressed in very expensive garments with various props which have included a man-sized teddy bear, a WWII gasmask and bags of autumn leaves from Central Park. Self-described as "guerrilla fashion photography," her witty and insightful art plays on fashion's fantasies and everyone's notions of rarefied space and unobtainable status.

Kirsten Glass's dramatic, decadent-looking, large-scale paintings fuse elements of film noir and fairytale into a carefully orchestrated chaos. She incorporates unlikely materials and objects including sand and glitter, mannequins and dripping paint. She culls fragments from a variety of sources and transforms them into images of haunting originality and strangeness. While the paintings have a material sensitivity and femininity, there is also a tough intelligence in their construction, with each component discretely interconnected into new startling configurations. In her paintings she creates a cast of characters inspired by fashion magazines and other printed sources. They are enlarged, interrupted, dismembered and distorted, as well as enveloped by luxurious swirls of colour. Glass's uniformly female figures become alternative alter egos — surrogate selves placed into the world — in what is a form of extended performance, acted out through unexpected means.

Julie Masterton's work takes the form of sculpture, live performance and photographs that draw on fashion, domestic interiors and architectural references. The sculptural forms fold and unfold like a diagram, separating functional and decorative elements. Through a process of reduction and abstraction, her resulting artworks are minimal. Julie Masterton's pieces often exist in pairs or what she refers to as 'two halves.' She creates complex relationships between the viewer and her work by installing a piece in two parts, creating a sense of movement for the viewer, through the simultaneous use of objects and pattern.

Cherie Federico