

Artist profile and interview: Klara Kristalova

Klara Kristalova's works transport, mystify and shock the viewer while taking on a diminutive and thoughtful presence. Kristalova works with Meissen Ceramic, her curious characters glisten with the lustre of the glaze regardless of whether they are a dejected donkey (*Last little stupid donkey*, 2010) or a longhaired woman rising from a marsh (*In the marsh*, 2010). When exhibited together, on plinths, in cabinets or on linen-covered tables, they become a collection (or service) of curios; the remnants of a previous interest which can never fully explain the world from which they are preserved.



Her characters quietly sit, plucked from hallucinatory or dreamscape scenarios, as if visible due to a rupture into another consciousness. Each piece seems like an embodiment of a narrative dream or mythical story. Despite their otherworldliness the characters are definitely closer to us than traditional mythical beasts; seeing them is more like an out of body experience or recollection of a childhood worry.

Animals frequently appear in Kristalova's sculptures, inspired by the multiple meanings they hold from fairytales and old Czech animations. She says they "carry a childish, silly quality and can be even more human than human figures."

Several of her works play out a loss of control or perhaps a conscious transfer of control outside our normal boundaries. In *Trap*, 2011, the crouching figure is enclosed by a dark thicket of knarled branches, in *The Mothgirl*, 2007, the head is subsumed by moths and in *The Long Kiss*, 2007, the exchange is sensual as a single moth appears to be drawing the figure's essence from her lips. Bodily control is also alluded to with works like *Cryboy*, 2007 which shows a pigtailed youth, gagging out a dark slick, flowing down her chest to where her torso and arms are sucked into a glossy, black pool and in *Dissolving*, 2007, a woman's body has been reduced to a pallid blob with the face struggling to remain discrete, sentient on top. In experiencing these works it's impossible to avoid the psychological parallels in lived and felt experience.





How do your works come about?

My ideas are about how it is to live a life; love and fear and what's in between. I think and draw, looking back on past works, then gather the images together, gauging my own reaction to them, and start to build. I do everything in my studio in my yard, in my kilns. I mainly work alone because even painting a tree trunk has to be done my way, to be the right ugly.

You use Meissen ceramic, do you see connections to traditional or naïve ceramic techniques?

I like totemic artefacts and have a close link to ceramic as material. For me it is complex and practical, but I don't reflect on it much. I use the shiny attractiveness to draw the viewer in. The surface is a tool.

In pieces like *Last little stupid donkey*, 2010, the diminutive scale is reflected in a very modest, self-conscious posture.

Scale is very important. I mix scale to make a group of works dynamic and create a floating time feeling. It's about being both close and far away. I tend to work on a smaller scale, to have immediacy and see my work as three-dimensional drawings.

In *Sleeping, with dog* (2010), the motif of a possessive protector or ominous portent of danger is played out with the dog perched on the chest of the prone figure, gazing intently down, alert and in control - uncomfortable as a depiction of reality and ominous as a metaphorical scenario. It reminded me of Gauguin's *Manao Tupapau (She Thinks of the Spirit, The Spirit Watches Over Her)* (1892).



Yes, that was the idea, a mix of threat and affection. I was inspired by that Gauguin and the memory of the dog I had during my teens.

What themes are most prominent for you now?

I have found a lot of inspiration in the transformation and adaption of adolescence, especially connected to gender. I am inspired by details in daily life that recall memories from long ago; simple thoughts about what might be important.

Klara Kristalova's solo exhibition *Sounds of youth and dogs* is at Lehmann Maupin Gallery in New York until January 2012 and she is showing at Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm and at Emmanuel Perottin, Paris in 2012.

Klara Kristalova (b. 1967, Czechoslovakia) studied at the Royal University College of Fine Art in Stockholm and lives and works in Norrtälje, Sweden. Recent exhibitions include SFMOMA's *New Work Series* (2011), *The Magic of Clay*, GI Holtegaard, Copenhagen, Denmark (2011), *White Blues*, Kunstvereniging, Diepenheim, The Netherlands (2010); *The House in My Head*, Kunsthallen Brandts, Odense, Denmark (2010); *Larger than Life, Stranger than Fiction*, 11th Fellbach Small Sculpture Triennial, Germany (2010); *Luc Tuymans: A Vision of Central Europe*, Brugge Central, Belgium (2010). Kristalova's work is included in numerous collections including the Moderna Museet/Modern Museum, Stockholm, Sweden, the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, Sweden, and Norrköpings Konstmuseum, Sweden.



KLARA KRISTALOVA

View of the exhibition "Two Dark Holes and other Stories" in 2007 at Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin Miami, Miami (U.S.A.)

Klara Kristalova's website:

<http://www.kristalova.se/>

Klara Kristalova is represented by
Galerie Perrotin

http://www.perrotin.com/artiste-Klara_Kristalova-29.html#

Galleri Magnus Karlsson

<http://www.gallerimagnuskarlsson.com/>

Alison Jacques Gallery

<http://www.alisonjacquesgallery.com/>

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