

Julia Keenan

Vermilion Hue



1 September – 15 October
2015

Foyer Gallery
University for the Creative Arts
Falkner Road
Farnham
GU9 7DS

Photo: Paul Corcoran

1
'The Double'
2015
234 x 228 cm
Inkjet Print on Fabritex Material.
False Hair Piece, Glass Votive.



Organised by UCA's Cultural
Programme, Surrey

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Subtext

uncanny | ʌnˈkani |

strange or mysterious, especially in an unsettling way

Oxford English Dictionary

“The female is a subject not an object in this work.”

— Julia Keenan

In Julia Keenan’s exhibition of new sculptural and photographic based works, objects and materials carry with them double and triple meanings. Inspired by psychoanalysis, Keenan explores social and cultural mores, which govern representations of the female body. Melding together the conscious and unconscious world, Keenan’s work is uncanny.

In this exhibition, the body is fragmented and stripped of identity; it is a site of perpetual trauma. Trauma is not necessarily the product of physical violence but more so of violations of the body which stem from the ever growing influence of consumer culture in the ‘real’ and virtual world. Body parts, such as teeth, hair, tongues, fingernails and eyelashes are often used by Keenan to transform and anthropomorphize objects of fashion and domesticity, making for beguiling imagery and objects that are both seductive and disconcerting. Keenan’s use of particular bodily parts and man-made materials makes for work loaded with psychosexual innuendo.



Photo: Steve White



2



The vitrine plays an important role in Keenan's work, both literally and symbolically. The works in this exhibition take account of the space they occupy. The glazed interior and exterior walls of the Foyer Gallery resemble a form of large-scale vitrine in which humans, rather than inanimate objects are contained. The sculptural work, *Chandelier* comprises an ornate brass light fitting which suspended from the ceiling rotates while encased in a perspex box. Ordinarily the decorative centrepiece of a domestic environment, here, the chandelier is dressed with fake eyelashes and fingernails and slowly turns as if locked in a never-ending act of display.

There is an inherent paradox in Keenan's outlook, whereby the framing and containment of the body exists in a world in which we are freer, so we are told, to do (or consume) as we please, when we please. It is a world facilitated by the 'freedoms' of cyberspace. For Keenan, this social space is itself a form of vitrine, where the pathologies of instantaneity, spectacle and perpetuity conspire with performance, invention and revenge.

However visually alluring or unsettling the work appears, Keenan's choice of materials (human teeth, pigs tongues, purses, shoes, faux leather, bric-a-brac) used in her altar-like constructions carry hidden significance. The idea of subtext is key to reading Keenan's use of materials. *Vermilion Hue* makes reference to the naturally occurring red pigment, which imbued with associations of beauty, art and spirituality, also harbours a more sinister side, containing the highly toxic metal mercury. Vermilion is also derived from the word vermin. The title of the exhibition and a work in the show, *Vermilion Hue*, suggests something, which is at once visually appealing but also deceptive in terms of what it reveals and conceals. The reoccurring use of carpet underlay, in Keenan's work, is perhaps the most explicit example of how form and content interact, denoting as it does amongst other things how sexual and other social taboos can, quite literally, be swept under the carpet.

Richard Hylton

1
'The Double'
2015
234 × 228 cm
Inkjet Print on Fabritex Material.
False Hair Piece, Glass Votive.

2
'The New Body' #7
2015
210 × 140 cm
Inkjet Print on Fabritex Material.
False Hair Piece, Glass Votive, 'Jones'
Silver Shoes, Style: 'Polly', Rubber
Carpet Underlay, Acrylic Teeth, Acrylic
Vitrines, Pig Tongues.

3
'Purse Piece'
2015
70 × 100 cm
Inkjet Print.
False Hair Piece, Glomesh Purse,
Acrylic Teeth, Acrylic Nails, Acrylic
Paint Vermilion (Hue) 588, Rubber Carpet
Underlay.

4
'Stool Piece'
2015
110 × 83 × 123 cm
Accessorize Purse, Acrylic Teeth,
Brabantia Kitchen Stool, 'Jones' Silver
Shoes, Style: 'Polly', Rubber Carpet
Underlay, Steel Sheet, 'JANSJÖ' IKEA
Lights, Glossy Soft PVC RED Vinyl Fetish
Rubber Upholstery Fabric, Perspex
Vitrine, Wooden Plinth.

5
'Chandelier'
2015
247 × 67 cm
'Svenska Design' Cut Glass
and Brass Chandelier, Mirror,
'SPECIALIZEDANDMADEBYHANDENTIRELY'
False Eyelashes, Royal Waterproof
Eyelash Adhesive, False Acrylic Nails,
Royal Brush on Nail Glue, Daler Rowney
Acrylic Paint Vermilion (Hue) 588, Disco
Ball Rotating Motor, Filigree Metal
Cuff, Acrylic Teeth, Perspex Vitrines on
Wooden Plinth.

6
'Vermilion Hue'
2015
1700 × 300 cm
Extra Deep Base S1085-Y80R.

7
'Bench'
2015
43 × 237 × 70 cm
Rubber Carpet Underlay, RED Vinyl
Fetish Rubber Upholstery Fabric,
ByPublicDemand Women's Flat Retro T Bar
Shoes Mint.

Julia Keenan graduated in Fine Art from University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, 2015. Forthcoming exhibitions include Platform Graduate Award, selected by ASPEX Gallery, Portsmouth, FLOAT ART 15, DIY Present Histories, Live Art Development Agency. Recent exhibitions in 2015 include, SUDA, Hotel Elephant, London; Bath Fringe Festival, POP LIVING, and The Red Files, 2015.