

E-interview with Katie Grinnan

Ken Pratt, one of the curators of Treehugger: Now/Romantic/Nature e-interviews participating artist Katie Grinnan.

KP: Your work was included in the most recent Whitney Biennale. Could you tell something about your reaction to being invited and the experience as a whole?

KG: Well, I was super excited! That had been a dream of mine for a long time and the fact that it actually happened seemed really unreal. I had a really great experience and learned a lot about how much effort actually goes into making that happen.

KP: How does a work by Katie Grinnan take shape? Where does the inspiration or thinking come from and how does that translate into making a work?

KG: My work takes shape in a lot of different ways. Usually I read a lot, watch a lot of movies, go to different places and take a lot of pictures. Right now I'm reading this book "Phantoms in the Brain" which is fantastic! Usually my work has to do with some sort of perceptual incongruity between physical space and visual space but the path to arrive at a work is different each time. In some instances, photographs dictate the structure and process of my work, but other times its a combination of things.

KP: In some of your most recent work there is a lot of imagery to do with wizardry and in our discussions you've mentioned you preferred using the term 'alchemical' to describe some of your work. Do I detect an interest in Alchemy or are you a secret Harry Potter fan?

KG: I like Harry Potter but I'm afraid he's not the model for my wizard work. I like the word 'alchemical' because it implies a transformation of form and space, a process which has a structure. With magic there is not the same visual/physical structure. Magic requires faith in the trick. With alchemy all the tricks are laid out in front of you and it still

seems to question the realm of what's possible. I always hope that my works can evoke this type of space. Also though, I just started brewing beer which is a real homespun version of alchemy. Yummy too!

KP: In Europe I think we have the idea of the USA as being a very difficult place for an emerging artist to survive; the lack of accessible funding for projects or for funds to study, etc. Is this true or is it a European fantasy? How exactly does a young artist survive and make work?

KG: The US is definitely difficult in a lot of ways. Its true that there is a real lack of funding for the arts and art schools are really expensive. Student loans are just a part of life here and most people (like me) use denial to deal with it. Most young artists work a job. I work at a digital photo studio, sometimes teach, sometimes lecture, and sometimes sell work. Its hard to find large chunks of time to make work but its doable. You just have to be resourceful. Its a really market driven place. The positive side of Los Angeles is that there is a real support system within the art community here and its easy to find a studio with a lot of space. I think its a really exciting place to be right now. There are so many artists here who I really respect.

KP: How do you select materials as a sculptor? Is it say a primarily intuitive, tactile process or is it more intellectual. Would you like to give us a better picture of how you personally relate to the materials and choosing them?

KG: Usually I select materials for their innate properties. For example: With Plexiglas- its clear, reflective, strong when bent but also fragile. Foam rubber- its formless and with photos applied makes a really strange amorphous space. Friendly plastic- its non toxic and can be cast, cut, distorted and fused with heat so its similar to the way I work with images. Found objects and photographs- in many cases will be from specific sites almost as a way of making a site a material. All of the qualities inherent in

my materials help to create a formal narrative in my work.

KP: Any clues about what's in the pipeline?

KG: I think I'm going to be in a group show this summer in Los Angeles curated by sculptor, Anna Sew Hoy. But mostly I'm excited to just work in my studio for a while.