

Visiting artist shares art work, experiences with students

Kimberley Hart is a sculptor and installation artist who has received national acclaim for her take on contemporary gender issues.

On Tuesday Hart gave a guest lecture at ISU's University Galleries.

Hart went through her career as an artist going back to her work as an undergrad at the University of California and as a grad student at the Rhode Island School of Design.

After starting as a painter Hart became immersed in postmodernism and urban decay and began to express her work using objects.

Her focus unknowingly shifted toward a feminist perspective as she began integrating domestic practices such as fabric design and knitting into her work.

Teachers and mentors began voicing references to feminist ideology within her work which initially provided discomfort for Hart.

"I started trying to remove any reference people could be making to feminism," Hart said. "I became entirely process-oriented which only brought me closer to the crux surrounding each piece."

After years of avoiding the feminist ideologies that were shining through her work, Hart slowly began to embrace this side of her.

"I couldn't just remain within the process," Hart said. "I needed to look at what was really motivating my work."

As Hart finally began to come to terms with the feminist ideals within her work, she found herself creating art surrounding the narratives of her youth.

A self-proclaimed "tom-boy" growing up, Hart noticed an interesting dichotomy to her childhood. While she had learned to sew and knit through helping her mother with domestic work, she also had a fascination with traditionally male interests such as GI Joes and Hot Wheels.

"I found myself thinking about my relationship to sewing, why I was using it and how domesticity applies to young girls," Hart said. "But I was always a tom-boy, so those two sort of came together."

This would lead to the creation of Hart's alter-ego, a "super-frilly girly-girl" who immerses herself into traditional male roles. The perspective has allowed her to examine contemporary gender issues through a unique lens.

"[The alter ego] is a great way for me to come to terms with the issues surrounding feminism, issues which I struggled with for so long," Hart said. "She allowed me to look at issues of gender and identity and the way culture circumvents these ideologies."

The persona handles the issues with a profoundly innocent and na've perception according to Ariella Budick of Newsday.

"[Hart's persona is] a girly-girl with a predilection for pom-poms and glitter, who enjoys hunting, fishing and killing. Hart and her imaginary other are responsible for clever and sophisticated installations that meld hyper-feminine and macho stereotypes into a darkly funny mélange," Budick wrote.

"She's whimsical and feminine," Clare Durepos, a senior art history and photography major said. "She's also got a very dark comedic edge."

The crowd, comprised mostly of ISU art students, related not only to the impact of Hart's work, but to the years she spent finding her voice.

"She really tailored the lecture to college students," Mary Laube, a senior bachelor of fine arts in painting major, said. "She openly talked about the struggles she had with finding her voice and I was really appreciative of that."

"The most important thing is to know yourself and to use the things that best highlight your strengths," Hart said as her lecture concluded.

Hart is currently in residency at ISU where she is working to help students, as well as researching for the next phase of her work.

Hart is represented by Mixed Greens in New York City and has exhibited throughout the Northeast, Pennsylvania, the Carolina's and California.

Feature articles about her have appeared in New York Arts, Sculpture Magazine, Knitty, Fiberarts and American Spirit. Reviews of her work have appeared in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, the New Yorker, the Village Voice, Time Out (NYC, Chicago), as well as numerous online magazines and blogs. Most recently, Kimberley's installation at Next (Chicago) and project at the Carriage House (N.Y.) both received critical praise.

Her first outdoor piece has just been installed at Socrates Sculpture Park (N.Y.) where she was a fellowship recipient. Kimberley has upcoming shows at Spaces (Cleveland) and Mixed Greens (2009).



Media Credit: CJ Zimmerman / Daily Vidette Photographer
Visiting artist Kimberley Hart, of Brooklyn, N.Y., gives a speech about her work Tuesday afternoon the University Galleries



Media Credit: CJ Zimmerman / Daily Vidette Photographer
A group gathers in University Galleries to listen to guest in speaker Kimberley Hart Tuesday afternoon.