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# VOGUE

## Marilyn Minter on Her First Major Retrospective By Mark Guiducci

Slick, steamy, soiled, smeared: Such is the work of Marilyn Minter, the painter and photographer whose composite images of female body parts and excess (think a mouthful of muddy pearls) have been embraced and reviled for their sensual magnetism for more than three decades. Collected by everyone from the Guggenheim to Jay Z — she makes a dancing cameo in his video for “Picasso Baby”—Minter is about to receive her first museum retrospective, which will open Saturday at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston before it travels to Denver, Orange County, and finally the Brooklyn Museum in the fall of 2016. In advance of that milestone, Minter sat down with Vogue.com for a candid conversation about a few of her favorite things and the state of her art.



**I've heard that your wedding ring is a tattoo. It is a tattoo.**

Both the engagement ring and the band are, because I'm a painter. I keep my hands in horrible stuff [enamel paint] all day long so I never wear jewelry. I got this other tattoo of M&Ms on my right arm after 20 years of marriage [to retired stockbroker Bill Miller] but I made M&M paintings back in the eighties, too. Now M&M means Minter and Miller.

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**That was long before the works on metal right? When you made a TV commercial.**

Yep. It's called 100 Food Porn and it's only 30 seconds long, but ran on David Letterman, Arsenio Hall, and Nightline in 1989. I took the same budget we'd normally get for advertising in art magazines—a page in Artforum was \$5,000 back then – and it only cost \$1,800 to run an ad on late night TV. It premiered Halloween night on Letterman, the first night that LL Cool J was on a talk show. A bunch of artists were talking about making commercials back then.

**You and Jeff Koons both had your porn moments, and they were controversial inside and outside the art world for both of you. Do you relate to him in that way?**

He's a visionary. We both got kicked out of the art world about the same time [in the early nineties]. He got rehabilitated when he did the puppy. I got back in when I showed the 1969 pictures of my mother in 1995 [the same photographs that open the Houston retrospective].

**Your work, both the recent and older stuff, reminds me of James Rosenquist. Do you agree?**

Well, of course. Oh yeah! Easy. He was my idol in college. Threads of Rosenquist and Warhol are all through my work. But I'm messier, and wetter. It's the female perspective. I'm not as tidy, and they were both very tidy. Rosenquist is just so underrated. If he had a big retrospective right now people would go, "Woah!" I mean he did things that David Salle is famous for now. He did those Picabia line drawings on top of his paintings. And he even used a roller brush. He was a polymath, and so playful!

**Talk to me about your Instagram. Like Beyoncé, you follow nobody, and you post pictures of other people's art.**

I don't follow anybody. I just flip through whatever Instagram sends me. I like to keep my algorithm pure so I only ever like pictures of art. It's a rabbit hole for me because I'm a total voyeur. I went nuts when Facebook came out. I found myself spending hours on it. And I tweet! I'm a big tweeter. Social media is killing my reading.

**How do you decide whether one of your pictures should be a photographic C-print or an enamel painting on metal?**

I went to an art school [the University of Florida] that was invested in showing only the "truth," which at the time was Abstract Expressionism. If you didn't paint like de Kooning, they didn't pay attention to you. I got a "C" in painting and an "A" in photography, so I thought, "I guess I'm a photographer." I just didn't know how to make anything without a subject. I became a photography major, but only ever worked in black-and-white. Color was verboten. With photography there was always something I wanted to change, to get rid of, so I started painting the photos. Now I decide to print a photo rather than paint a copy only if there's nothing I can do to make it better.

**But either way, you use a lot of Photoshop.**

When Photoshop came around, I thought I'd died and went to heaven. When I hear artists say "Oh, the good old days" or "I'm old school," I just want to puke. There's no tool I won't use.

**Do you ever consider making self-portraits?**

I never do them. It's too hard. But I do paint redheads and girls with freckles all the time. I love Cintia Dicker. I like freckles because they keep getting erased. You'd have no idea that Pam Anderson has freckles [unless I'd painted them]!

**You paint jewels all the time. Do you own any?**

I really don't own any jewelry. I paint it, but I'm not a consumer. I buy art—that's all I want. I just bought a Kara Walker, which I had to pay off in installments. It's a cutout, and it's nasty. I like to buy the things other people wouldn't want on their walls because I think those are the things that artists should be buying! I have a Larry Clark that's really nasty. We traded. I don't even see it as nasty, actually, but delivery people always comment.

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**How do you feel about the term woman artist?**

It's impossible to push away. I would like to think of myself as an artist first, but that would also be disingenuous. I insist on not being the only woman in a show: I really don't care who else they put in, but I want other women to be in shows with me. I'm really, really proud of women like Cindy [Sherman] and Marina [Abramovic] who are putting cracks in the glass ceiling. I want to join them.

**You shot an advertising campaign for Tom Ford in 2007. How do you feel about the way the art world views fashion?**

In our culture, fashion is considered debased and shallow, but I don't see it that way. It's a billions-of-dollars industry that tells people what tribe they're from. It's critical to the Western world and how you feel about yourself. The fact that it's so dismissed is riveting because it gives so many people pleasure. And I feel like my job as an artist is to shine a light on what is. I get criticized all the time for not criticizing the fashion world, but that would be too easy.

**Your works are so rich, visually. Do you ever catch flak for making art that is too beautiful?**

Oh yes. It's why they're suspicious of me! If I'm controversial, that's why. But I don't care because I know what these pictures will look like in 20, 30 years. I'm not even upset about it. As long as I don't have to go get a day job.



Marilyn Minter, Meltdown, 2011