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ATTITUDE RULES AT MERRY KARNOWSKY'S GALLERY

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Aiko's "Kiss" Photo: Merry Karnowsky Gallery

When *New Works*, the latest show at LA's [Merry Karnowsky Gallery](#), opens this Saturday, there will be plenty of girl power on the walls—the featured artists include Tara McPherson, Deedee Cheriell, Lindsey Way, and Aiko. But gallery owner and show curator Merry Karnowsky promises that it's about great pieces, not powerful women. "The idea of an all-female show being the premise of

an exhibition does not interest me in the least," she explains. "It just so happens that all four of the artists are women and they do some amazing art, but gender was never the criteria."

Instead, what ties the show—which features everything from portraiture to stencil-based paintings to dioramas—together is the overall attitude. "All of these artists are highly independent and have a lot of drive and energy that comes out in their work," Karnowsky says. "I like the fact that there are four very different approaches and dialogues going on, but that nothing feels too foreign or out of place." That may have to do with Karnowsky's approach to organizing a show, which is more about following gut feelings than strict guidelines. "I put shows together very intuitively. There isn't always a concrete premise that I start out with—it really comes to me as I think about an artist's work and place it in the space [to see] how it will all relate to other work while still remaining autonomous," she says.

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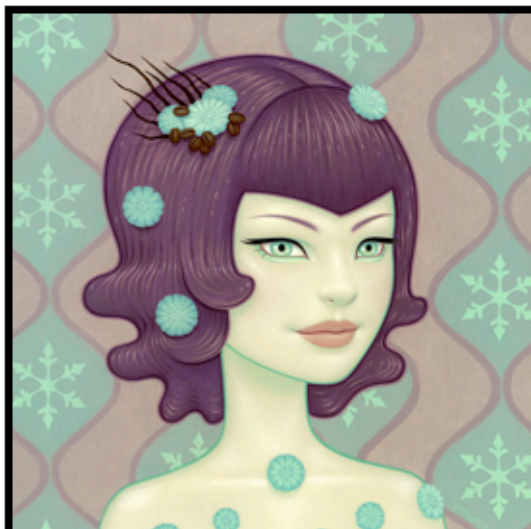
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Indeed, the process of putting together this show, which was a year in the making, is one of evolution: What began as a three-person series morphed into four after Karnowsky visited Way's studio in 2011. "I loved how she worked with paper to create these delicate yet bold dioramas—so I asked her to join the show."

The result is both striking and accessible. "I think Tara's 'seasonal' portraits have this wonderful element of elegance, which is still edgy yet beautiful. Aiko always has

so much energy and color in her work, but also a sensuality that is unique to most street art being made. Deedee uses these hybrid human-animal motifs that articulate human behavior—good and bad—with real delicacy, and Lindsey has created these dioramas that depict a character's degeneration and regeneration alongside ship wrecks and monsters, all with sculpted paper and paint," ticks off Karnowsky. And while they all make sense today, this is the type of show that the gallery owner believes would have been much harder to find when the "underground" art scene was just forming. "When I started 15 years ago, there were only a few galleries exhibiting this type of work. Now there are many more— mostly because of the success of it. But even that is good, because it keeps the work relevant and people on their toes. I think it's a matter of staying the course, and eventually the world will evolve around you."



Tara McPherson's "Winter" Photo: Merry Karnowsky Gallery



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