

# Aesthetica

Aesthetica engages with contemporary art, contextualising it within the larger cultural framework. The Aesthetica Blog keeps you up-to-date with reviews, previews both from the UK and abroad. For further information on Aesthetica Magazine please visit [www.aestheticamagazine.com](http://www.aestheticamagazine.com)

Wednesday, 16 March 2011

## Sharon Kivland's *Je suis malade de mes pensées @ domobaal*



Review by Tiffany Jow

Comprised of items from Sharon Kivland's personal archive of French magazines, postcards, advertising leaflets and objects from a variety of time periods, the artist copied, re-worked and embellished each, tying them together with a narrative that strives for seamlessness but is constantly cut short or interrupted altogether. The resulting works, titled *Je suis malade de mes pensées* (2010), dissect memorabilia from periods of enlightenment through a contemporary lens. Kivland's execution is more amateur than professional, yet is consistently genuine, imbuing the collection with a kind of childlike candour on the realities of modernism.

The exhibition begins with an excerpt from Émile Zola's *Nana* (1880), a favourite of the artist, who has edited the novel down to a mere paragraph that speaks only to light, lighting effects and metaphor used in the original text. Its final sentence reads, "The hair, the most beautiful hair, still blazed like sunlight and flowed in a stream of gold." The following work, *La dormouse* (green) (2011), is a print illustrating the tale's depressing conclusion, where its protagonist Nana Coupeau perishes. Here, the beautiful courtesan is a clearly a corpse, though life seems to thrive in her shining, sun-kissed hair that cascades toward the bottom of the frame.

In a second room, presumably, a second thought bubble, a desk is laid empty except for a quartet of leather elbow-length gloves and a copy of Esther Leslie's book *A Wind of Revolution Blows, The Storm is on the Horizon*, which Kivland illustrated to accompany her 2008 exhibition of the same title. The text, which uses the writing of Walter Benjamin and Karl Marx to underline the objectification of women in 19th century France, sets the stage for the forthcoming illustrations of femininity in different contexts. Three long, white gloves are placed in front of the books, each imprinted in black with the revolutionary slogan "liberté," "égalité" and "fraternité." The last glove is pink, its red lettering spelling out, "ou la mort." Nearby, Kivland demonstrates her limited skill in water-colour in *Mes Bonne Années* (2009), by taking found postcards and studying their scenic images, then attempting later to paint them from memory. The result - a poorly-executed, overly simplistic painting - is displayed below the back of the original postcard, each covered in cursive handwriting wishing the reader a wonderful year.

A third room, the most comprehensive yet, focuses entirely on images of women. *Mes plus belles bretonnes* (2010) is a series of images from French women's magazines that were published during a period of social change. The images are cropped in the manner of a headshot, which the artist has reprinted in black and white then painted over in attempt to restore the image to its original colours. In doing this, however, each subjects' red lips, pink cheeks, lined eyes and curled hair is embellished to the point of deformity. Hairstyles from post-war France trade journals comprise *Mes plus belles coiffures* (2011), where re-printed images take a view of the back of a woman's head, showing off the exquisite detail of braids, curls, knots and wraps. A final pair of

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the back of a woman's head, showing off the exquisite detail of braids, curls, knots and wraps. A final pair of works, *Mes negligées (I) and Mes negligées (II)* (2010) consist of the artist's reproduction of vintage fashion sketches, where she copied drawings of inexpressive women in stereotypical costume and poses. Kivland juxtaposes the drawings with words from the negligees, the lessons of femininity, which she reproduced by hand on the pages of a school exercise book.

Kivland's mixture of works intentionally use plurality as means to an end of multiple interpretations. The exhibition embraces its points of failure and success, frankness and ambiguity, authenticity and reproductions, making for an often ironic, critical commentary on the progression related to periods of social change.

Sharon Kivland's *Je suis malade de mes pensées* continues until 9 April. For more information please visit [www.domobaal.com](http://www.domobaal.com).

Image courtesy Domo Baal

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## About Aesthetica

### Aesthetica

Aesthetica engages with the arts both in the UK and internationally, combining dynamic content with compelling critical debate. Aesthetica is distributed in the UK in WH Smith, major galleries such as Tate Modern, ICA, and the Serpentine, as well as in 18 countries worldwide. Aesthetica is one of the leading publications for arts and culture and the editor of Aesthetica is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. The Aesthetica Blog has a broad scope; covering the latest exhibitions and cultural events from the UK and abroad. [www.aestheticamagazine.com](http://www.aestheticamagazine.com)