

CROSS-MEDIA

Julie Voyce is an artist who bridges the tricky terrain between an individual artistic vision and an appeal to a wider audience by printing multiples that are portable, affordable and entirely hand-made.

Following the two mantras of printmaking 'transfer and multiply', Voyce translates bold drawings into print and transforms them by duplication and sheer volume. Working from brush and ink drawings, she shapes rubber stamps, cuts relief and lino blocks, transfers images to acetate to burn onto screen, and sketches zinc plates. These matrices, used singly and in combination, become printed compositions which she fastens together as books, prints on fabric and sews as dolls, laminates and chains as jewellery, and dye-cuts into boxes.

Like the British artist Chris Ofili, Voyce chooses ordinary, everyday items such as ribbon, buttons, staples and sequins to give shape, pattern and colour to her compositions. Whereas Ofili incorporates these items into paintings, Voyce creates prints and objects that arranged together become installations, and featured separately conjure the consumer to 'own a whole show!'

Since 1992, Voyce has created her unique works under the imprint of R.E.D.H.O.T Productions, printing and assembling pieces at the Open Studio printmaking facility and distributing the multiples at venues such as Art Metropole, both in Toronto, Canada. Her *R.E.D.H.O.T Baby Dolls* (1996), which are made of fabric, screenprinted in bold black and process yellow, stuffed with quilting batten, decorated with a cyan ribbon, and printed with 'I ♥ Toronto', recall the 'I ♥ New York' campaign that defined mass production during the consumer-crazy 1980s. These soft, cuddly smiling dolls entice even the least interested museum visitor to buy art.

Like Keith Haring's Pop Shop, Voyce's boutique concept for a solo show at the Art Gallery of Mississauga in 1996, of which the *R.E.D.H.O.T Baby Dolls* was a part, embraced the public's passion for shopping, providing art items for sale in a boutique area set up in the middle of her exhibition. In contrast to Haring, the items for sale were hand-printed works crafted by the artist herself. Through R.E.D.H.O.T Productions, Voyce succeeds in co-opting the consumer item, shaping it into an original art object and regurgitating it back to society as both art object and object for sale.

Voyce's 1997 installation, *Hanging babies in Grange Park*, again incorporated elements associated with mass production. The large-scale, screen-



Hanging babies in Grange Park, Toronto (detail), 1997, by Julie Voyce. Tree installation of images screenprinted onto fomecore, felt, ribbon, screenprinting on fabric, 1850 x 1250 mm.

Go, transfer and multiply

Julie Voyce combines art and shopping writes Monica Biagioli

printed constructions were hung on trees in a Toronto park, bearing the legend 'Your [sic] beautiful' in comic book-style balloons.

Voyce's engagement with her audience, the wider public she encourages to 'own your own show', is often directed in this forceful way. For her installation *What do you want when your [sic] 50?* (1993 - 1996), the artist invited friends and strangers of all ages to share their desires, which she then incorporated into a tiled installation of laminated screenprints.

Voyce's latest mail art project takes the form of a series of signed and numbered screenprinted 'angel charms' which she has mailed to correspondents around the world. On the front, two wings flank a big dewy eye; on the reverse side she has added an image of dynamite above the message 'your desire goes above'; the reader is left to fill in the blank. The implication is that letting your dreams take flight might be dangerous: dare to desire but at your own risk.

Voyce's work is guided by a childlike, dreamy vision; one populated by tough heroines, such as Captain Babe ('My name isn't babe! It's Captain Babe') and sweet Baby Dolls who 'love Toronto'. Through these characters and the objects created under R.E.D.H.O.T Productions, she both cajoles and entices her audience to dare to dream, to dare to buy art.

Notes

1. From the exhibition catalogue (back of page), *The solo Show with a Boutique*, Art Gallery of Mississauga, 1996.

Julie Voyce is represented by Paul Petro Contemporary Art, 265A Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1Z4, Canada. Upcoming shows include a solo exhibition August-September 1999 at the Woodstock Art Gallery, Ontario, Canada.



Your beautiful, by Julie Voyce. Installation.