

**HUFFPOST**



*Kelly Reemtsen, Holding Your Attention, 2011, Oil on panel, 36" x 36" Courtesy of Skidmore Gallery*

## Kelly Reemtsen at Skidmore Gallery



By Tracey Harnish

Kelly Reemtsen mixes it up with 50's glam and hints of the macabre. Heroines are wielding an axe, shears, a hose or rubber gloves. These women dolled up in party dresses manage to make these common household tools look menacing. With their candy colored outfits, the just as brightly colored wrench is half fashion accessory, half tool of empowerment. Heads and feet are missing in all of the pics except in the rare woman falling painting. It's telling that the made up faces and 'do's in addition to shoes, are missing in action. If there is one

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thing a woman is bound to fret over it's her make up and heels. This makes our woman an enigma but also points to the anonymity that results when women are seen solely for their bodies. Seeing a woman dressed in 50's garb with a Barbie body, there is an automatic association with the helpless woman who was not only barred from the work force, but was helpless without a man. Pairing fancy dresses with tools associated with men says these women are bold, taking things into their own hands.



*Kelly Reemtsen, Pretty with Pink, 2011, Oil on panel, 36" x 36", Courtesy of Skidmore Gallery*

And if you think this is just a fanciful coupling of glam and hand tools, you're wrong. I remember many years ago visiting my girlfriend at her apartment. When I approached her place, it was clear she cleaning as the roar of the vacuum sounded through the door. I fully expected to see her in sweats and t-shirt, but there she was, my vintage junky friend, wearing her heels, gobs of jewelry and a big ol' party dress

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and hat. When I asked her what was up, she replied “This is who I am, this is how I dress. It doesn’t matter what I’m doing!”



*Kelly Reemtsen, Short Leash, 2011, Oil on panel, 36" x 36", Courtesy of Skidmore Gallery*

There are also some larger than life “pills” on display. The size of small purses, this sculpted valium et al, points to other forms of accessories associated with women. Looking more like giant candies than pharmaceuticals, they allude to more of the contradictions and challenges for women who at one time had no control over their lives. Clearly in Reemtsen’s world, that is a part of the past.

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