Look Again

ARTIST STATEMENT

Kaitlyn Peach Heger

I'm fascinated by the language of symbolism and how images can communicate ideas without words. I especially love what happens when combining two or more images, creating new meanings and associations that none would have on their own. Living in cities has been a constant source of inspiration for me. I'm drawn to the visual contrasts of city life, from elaborate storefront displays and beautiful architecture to weathered signs, crowded streets, and the unexpected combinations of imagery found throughout. I have an appreciation for the way society portrays opulence, exquisite taste, and the finer things, but I'm personally interested in the rawness and character that surround them. I'm originally from Philadelphia, a city with plenty of grit, and now I live in Venice, Los Angeles, where glamour and grit seem to exist side by side. LA has its own kind of glittery grit. I like it here.

I make designs in the form of prints, paintings, drawings, and animations. A lot of my ideas begin with something I've seen or remembered, sometimes something as simple as a sign, a pattern, or a graphic on a car dashboard. My background in graphic design has a lot to do with how I approach an image. I love working with shapes, exaggerating proportions, and figuring out how much I can simplify something without losing what makes it interesting. I'm especially interested in combining recognizable forms to create images that can be read in more than one way. I like hiding images within other images, or allowing one shape to suggest several different things depending on how you look at it. In my printmaking practice, I use a jigsaw technique, cutting individual shapes with a laser cutter and printing them by hand. There's something exciting about building an image piece by piece and seeing how those individual parts come together.

Nostalgia through color is a huge part of what I do. I love seeing what happens when certain colors sit next to each other, especially when natural light is involved. A lot of my palettes come from things I remember: candy at a corner store, the colors of a pencil case, Venice sunsets, or shadows stretching across hot concrete. I can remember a particular combination of colors long after seeing it, and sometimes it's a smell that brings the memory of that particular time back. Though it's personal memories I draw from, I hope to access more universal feelings of playfulness, romance, and innocence through color. I want the colors in my work to make as much of an impression as the image itself.

Making art has always been therapeutic for me, especially throughout my experience with addiction and recovery. I think that's part of why I'm so drawn to printmaking. I love being able to return to the same image over and over, experimenting with different color combinations and seeing how each iteration changes the way I experience it. The same image can take on an entirely different emotional quality depending on the colors I choose. I also enjoy the unpredictability of the process.

My personal experiences find their way into the subjects and symbols I choose. I'm interested in the way signage and symbols reduce complicated ideas to simple, recognizable images, and how we often do the same thing to people. Having experienced addiction and the stigma surrounding it, I've become especially aware of how easily someone can be defined by a single aspect of their identity. I've spent a lot of time thinking about this in relation

to femininity, too, and the assumptions we make about people based on their appearance. In my work, I play with this kind of simplification, reducing figures to basic shapes while combining them with other images and symbols that complicate their meaning. I like the idea that something can appear straightforward at first, but become harder to define the longer you look at it.

In 2014, I started collecting inspiration and sharing my artwork under the name Peach MoDel. What began as an online identity gradually became a persona that runs through my work. Peach isn't a character I dress up as, but more of a spirit that lives in the figures I draw. The name itself is a play on symbolism and expectation. A peach can suggest sweetness, beauty, femininity, or desire, while a model can be both something admired and something reduced to an image. I'm interested in how these associations change when they're put together, and how easily we can be looked at, judged, or consumed without our consent.

As I've grown as an artist, I've come to understand Peach MoDel as part of my work rather than a separate identity. I've decided to bring these parts of myself together under the name Kaitlyn Peach Heger. Peach will always have a place in what I make, and now it has a place in the name I use as an artist, too.

I'm fascinated by how much meaning we attach to familiar images and how quickly that meaning can shift. I like creating compositions where one image interrupts another, where something sweet becomes a little unsettling, or where an ordinary object takes on a personality of its own. There's often a subtle story happening beneath the surface, but I don't necessarily want to explain every part of it. I like leaving room for people to bring their own associations and experiences to what they're seeing. My work is meant to be playful, even when there's something more complicated going on. I like the idea that someone might see one thing at first, then discover something entirely different when they look again.