

Something Special

Deep sea worlds, abstract lifeforms and subsequent natural conflict is the sum of Kate Eric's fantastical, intricate and cleverly contradictory work.

Text: Inga-Marie Barnett, Features Writer

Kate Tedman from Oxford, UK, and Eric Siemens from Oregon, US, are referred to as Kate Eric in their permanent art collaboration. A pairing is somewhat unusual for the art world; in literary fields it wouldn't be too surprising and it has come to be expected in the music industry but for a married couple to spend their days and nights painting together, well, who would have thought it could work so beautifully?

Rather than heading off to art school, Kate Tedman took philosophy and theology at London University. Her involvement with art happened quite by chance via a sequence of seemingly unlucky but ultimately invaluable events. "It happened when I met Eric. We were travelling around Barcelona when our car blew up. The repairs were incredibly expensive so we had to raise some money. My husband was used to graphic design and sketching, so he suggested we draw some pictures and sell them in La Rambla, the streets with those kitsch caricature artists and spray painters."

So, that's exactly what they did and those little sketches attracted the right kind of



Kate Eric's 15ft by 8ft *Bug War Over Two Blue Mountain*; Below left: More deftly applied acrylic on stained canvas forms *Flurry and the Inners 2*



attention, just as their overwhelming (in both size and detail) pieces do today. "It was so strange – there was a guy who had a gallery in London who stopped by. We got talking, and he said if ever we were back in London he'd put our work up in his gallery and see if he could sell it. There was also a lady from San Francisco who said the same thing, and everything took off from there."

Since their chance collaboration began ten years ago, Kate Eric has produced fantastical deep sea worlds to increasing acclaim with exhibitions in London, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Hong Kong, and the most recent work being sold to royalty at Art Dubai. These fantastical 'other' worlds are no small feat and, as Kate explains, have resulted in

many sleepless nights. So how does Kate Eric work so well and who brings what to that unshakeable partnership? "I'm very mellow and laid-back, whereas Eric thinks about every single detail and everything has to be perfect. He notices absolutely everything and he's quite impatient when he's working. I'm extremely patient so I do a lot of the detailed work while he does a lot of the broader strokes.

"Our ideas develop from our previous exhibitions; we take bits we like and carry them on. *Bug War Over Two Blue Mountain* is part of a solo exhibition we did in San Francisco. The thinking behind that is if you leave nature to its own devices, it finds a way of introducing conflict – natural conflict." Kate's sense of place not only features in the



Above: *Ambush at Mal Hollows 2* is a prime example of Kate Eric's elegant yet foreboding sub-universes

team's work but is intrinsic to her outlook. "I don't like to make a judgement about anywhere without having lived there for a year or so. It's only when you have to hook up a telephone, open up contracts or get your car insurance that you really get a sense of how a place works. Luckily I've seen more than just the artificial environments here in Dubai (which, by the way, have been done incredibly well); I've been down to the creek where the boats are and went to Bastakiya which was really my scene – more of a 'hole in the wall'. Eric and I made a pact to only live somewhere with really beautiful natural geography and where we can see the sea.

From open places to open people, Kate knows the roots of Kate Eric's moral wellbeing. "We only involve ourselves with people who speak honestly all the time. I'm trying to see if we can get through this whole art thing while sticking to our own values and dealing fairly with people without really networking. If you want to pursue something non-artistically, don't be an artist; it's either-or. If it doesn't work out, I'd rather not change into the person it would take to make it successful as that wouldn't be satisfying."

With that refreshingly logical take on art and life, there's little left to wonder about. Nevertheless, we'd like to know what will follow on from the Frey Norris (San Francisco) exhibition which was sampled for Art Dubai. "I worked so hard on that, that I haven't planned anything other than finding a gallery in Europe," she says, once more with candour. ■



Kate Rates	Kate Hates
Art	
Ernst Haeckel: he makes up creatures but they're drawn to look real. Bosch too - I'm crazy about his work	Things which are instantly accessible. Art needs to be much more than a one-trick pony for people to get into it
Music	
I've been listening to a band called Black Black lately. And Hexa too. I won't describe it because I can't do it justice	Anything distilled and repetitive. I appreciate pop but sometimes it's like being fed really bad fast food
Film	
Fargo (Cohen brothers): it's funny but smart. I'm really drawn to lighthearted things with a dark undertone	Guy Ritchie. I think he's an idiot and a perfect example of someone who thinks he's smarter than he is
Attitude	
Well-adjusted understanding of how things work and little value to unnecessary things	I can't handle falseness in people and I don't think it's necessary
Authors	
I recently got into Cormac McCarthy. His style is really dark but hopeful at the same time, and very violent	Self-conscious writers; sometimes it seems like they're trying too hard to be smart

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