

VegNews

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HER FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION TOOK NEW York City's Fred Torres Gallery by storm last year, and the 34-year-old painter recently wrapped her first European show, which took her to Paris this June. A longtime animal advocate, Gretchen Ryan's incredible, striking paintings tend to focus on human animals and our cultural perceptions of beauty. Blending classic painting techniques with modern themes and subjects, Ryan's talent is only matched by her compassion.

What is your next animal-related project?

I am in the beginning stages of a major piece about animal liberation. It will be a large-scale painting for which I will need a special easel and several months' time to create. I plan to let pro-animal groups use prints of the painting to fundraise and hope it will bring attention to the plight of animals and inspire us to keep moving forward.

Courtney Love is a fan of yours. Which of her projects have you been involved with?

She is using a painting of mine as artwork in

her new album, *Nobody's Daughter*. There are plans to use the image on Hole concert t-shirts as well, and I photographed Courtney to use as reference for a portrait of her in my next New York City show.

In light of the recent Supreme Court ruling on exploiting animals for art, how can artists advocate for the safety of animals?

There is a task force being planned by a large federal arts organization to prevent cruelty

[My portraits of girls with hooves] are all a bit me. The animal legs are a conversation about being one with animals. We are animals, and I love them so much and know that they are me.

to animals in art. "Artists" have used animals in some pretty horrific ways, such as Adel Abdessemed, who displayed six videos of himself bludgeoning various large animals to death with a sledgehammer at the San Francisco Art Institute, or Marco Evaristti, who put live goldfish in blenders, which visitors could turn on at Trapholt Art Museum in Denmark. Art is creation and not at all in line with this kind of brutal destruction of life.

How do you see beauty's role in our society?

Much of our physical beauty, especially as we age, can come from being very healthy and there is an understandable, biological reason that is attractive and desirable. However, there is tremendous pressure felt by women and girls to look a particular way, and the ideal set in the media becomes more unattainable all the time. In this light, I see beauty's role in our society as a real prison of sorts, keeping us consumed with, and neurotically fixated on, our failure to look like airbrushed, teen-aged dolls.



Gretchen Ryan