



SARAH HATTON
VISUAL ARTIST

Turn for the Judges

Turn for the Judges

This series depicts an alarming societal trend in which young children, particularly girls, are increasingly pressured to represent themselves as more mature than their chronological age in the pursuit of beauty. As an extreme example of the pressures on girls to assume adult behaviours and appearances, I have focused on the American phenomenon of child pageantry, a practice which has remained fairly elusive to Canada and Great Britain.

The Girls

The girls of *Turn for the Judges* are composite characters based upon real girls, but transformed into pageant contestants through my painting process. Their faces are made up, and they are adorned with adult clothing and accessories that are beyond their years, but their expressions betray their age. They are shown in candid and personal moments – whether staring nervously out at the audience, sulking backstage, or practicing their victory expressions. These are children that are, for whatever reason, caught up in a performance, and have been captured in moments during which they have let their guard down and relaxed their expectations.

Each painting's title is a common "pet-name" that reflects each girl's personality. I consider the titles of my paintings to function as an extra layer of interpretation, and I was careful to select names that can be as derisive as they are endearing.

About the Pageants

In the selected States that still allow this lucrative form of competition, very young children don provocative clothing and makeup and are judged in a variety of categories. These competitions require a significant amount of parental investment both financially and emotionally, and the commitment of countless hours. These pageants have become so elaborate, and the competition so intense, as to propel the careers of child pageant consultants who are hired to teach children to carry themselves with poise and elegance, and also how to flirt with the judges.

The emphasis on performance at a very early age and the promise of financial gain propels children to learn to use their physical appearance and mannerisms to their advantage.

Composition and The Gaze

The figures are slightly larger than life scale to draw the viewer into the work.

The focus is on the face and the gaze of each child, and the girls' expressions are meant to be both adorable and unsettling. These subjects engage with the viewer, and the resulting interpretations of their faces and body language can range from confrontational to sympathetic, never fully becoming one distinct emotional reaction. The viewer must interpret the expressions of these girls based on their own experiences, relating to the girls rather than passively observing them.

Technical aspects of the work

I paint directly on birch panel, and allow the wood grain from the panel to show through the paint in selected areas. This technique creates a visible record of the history of the painting's development, adds surface texture and gives a sense of the materials that are used in the work. The images emulate glossy headshots and relate to their dazzling subject matter through a painting technique that employs thick varnishes and resins. I create a contrast between glossy and matte areas which leads to heightened awareness of the layers of colour that comprise each work.

I have also used make-up in some of the paintings –whether bronze pigments on the skin, or glitter enamel on their nails - to make a direct connection with the subject matter.

Consumerism and girls

Beauty is conventionally equated with youth, leading to an interminable demand for products designed to slow an inevitable ageing process. Children, who should be the most beautiful, have eluded this marketing strategy until recently, and are now being convinced by consumer forces to fast-track their adolescence. Girls are experiencing pressure to appear more mature and sophisticated in pursuit of beauty ideals; a trend that is constantly being reinforced by targeted marketing to their demographic group. With more disposable income and a variety of new 'juvenilized' products such as cell phones, pagers and cosmetics, girls are actively consuming the branded image of independent, headstrong hottie.

Plastic surgery, now marketed in mainstream media under the self-assuring mantra "you're worth it" continues to fortify the link between physical features to self esteem. Even major retail chains specializing in lingerie have added spin-off outlets for pre-pubescents. With a message that a little girl's beauty and self image could be at risk without appropriate accessories, clothing, and in some cases physical attributes, the mainstream marketing of the beauty industry to girls is booming.

Cultural Considerations

Child beauty pageants remain uncommon in Canada and Britain, and beauty pageants in general do not seem to have the same mainstream connection to national identity or patriotism as they do in parts of the United States. The fact that most Canadian viewers of these pageants enquire almost immediately about whether such child pageants exist in our country indicates our willingness to assume that Canadians and Americans are more similar than different. As a result, Canadians seem to define themselves more by what they are *not* than by what they are. Instances of children on display are rarely as extreme as child beauty pageants, but nevertheless, provide an example of at least one discernable difference in values. However, the underlying consumer forces that drive the pageant phenomenon are pervasive in Canada and certainly exercising influence here. It is worth considering whether child pageantry could ever find an audience in Canada or Europe, or if it is a relic of a belief system in decline.

“Nations hate other nations for the evil which is in themselves”
Irish poet George W. Russell, 1917.





starlet. Oil, resin, wax on birch panel, 2005. (24" x 18")



(above) doll-face. Oil, resin, nail enamel
birch panel, 2005. (24" x 18")

(right) baby. Oil, resin, wax on birch
panel, 2005. (18" x 24")





(above) sunshine. Oil, resin, metallic marker
on birch panel, 2005. (24" x 18")

(right) princess. Oil, resin, wax on birch
panel, 2005. (24" x 35")





(above) sweetheart. Oil, resin, wax on birch panel, 2005. (18" x 24")

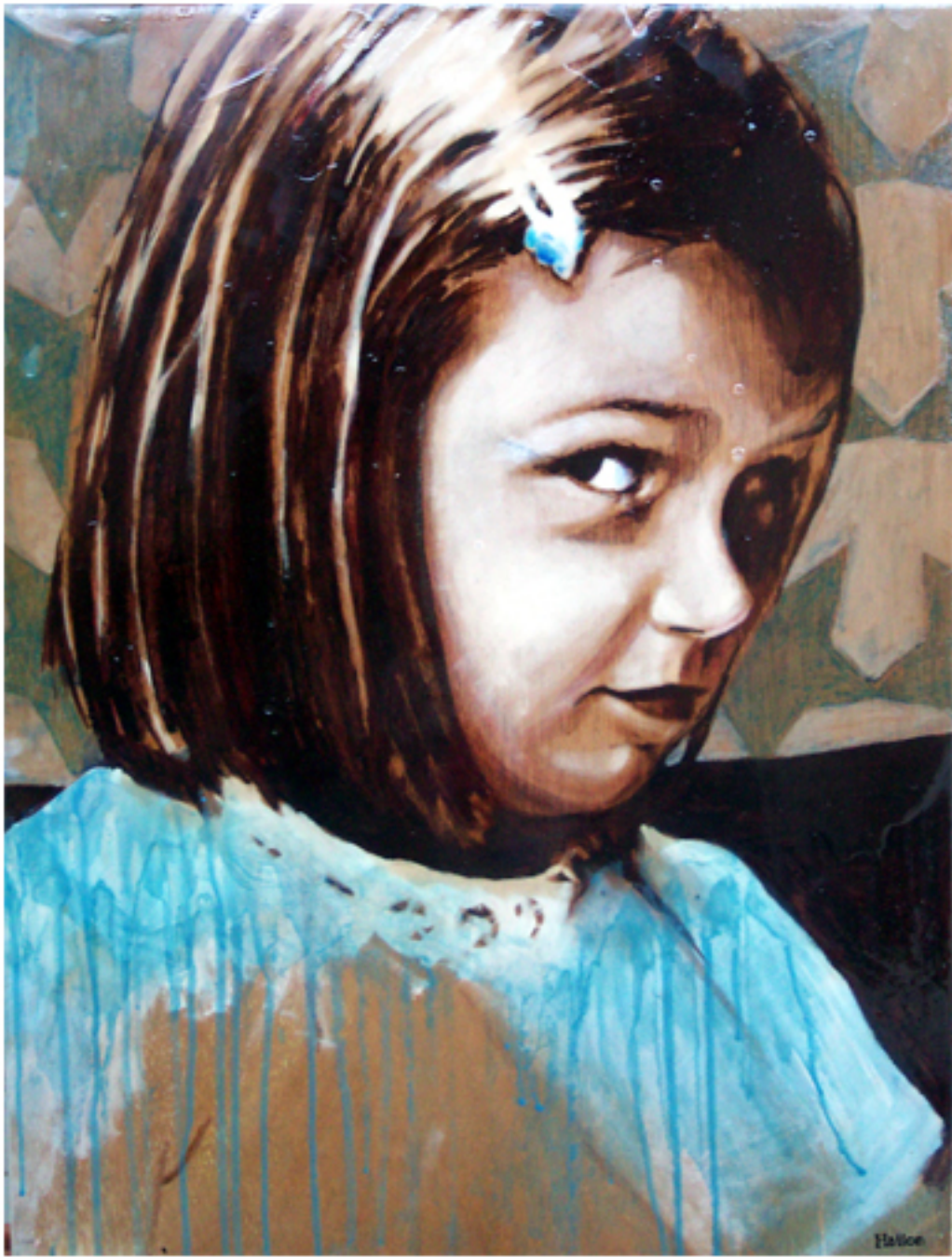
(right) darlin'. Oil, resin, wax on birch panel, 2005. (24" x 30")





(above) cutie-pie. Oil, resin, wax on birch panel, 2005. (30" x 24")

(right) sweet-pea. Oil, resin, wax on birch panel, 2005. (18" x 24")





sweetie. Oil, resin, wax on birch panel,
2005. (24" x 30")

Artist Statement

My paintings explore issues of childhood, in particular the mixed emotional responses that can be provoked through representations of young girls on display. By focusing on situations that enable the display of these children, I intend to provide a starting point to critique the general shifts in society that put pressure on young children to look and behave like adults at an increasingly early age.

My paintings highlight the ambiguous and erratic notions of beauty and conformity that lead to an uncomfortable tension between childlike and provocative behaviour. I single out extreme gender role examples such as child beauty pageants to draw attention to rituals and values that are learned and reinforced from an early age.

The question of what is age-appropriate for girls is constantly being challenged by media and marketing forces that encourage a rapid transition into womanhood. This contentious and largely undefined territory has resulted in a booming industry in which magazines, electronics, and cosmetics are being marketed specifically to girls, and in which cosmetic surgery appears on birthday wish lists.

By raising questions about the increased sexualization of girls, and portraying my subjects as real and expressive people behind the accessories, I intend to show these girls as active, rather than passive subjects.

About the Artist

Sarah Hatton was born in Wolverhampton, England, and raised in Canada and Barbados. From these culturally diverse environments, Sarah's art has adopted many influences that can best be seen in her choice of media and subject matter.

Sarah received her BFA from Queen's University where she was awarded the Chancellor's Scholarship, Queen's most prestigious entrance award, and the first of its kind awarded to a student of Fine Art. She received her Master of Fine Art degree from the University of Calgary where she was nominated for the Governor General's Gold Medal.

Sarah currently resides in Chelsea, Quebec, where she is building a studio and gallery.

CV

Education

Master of Fine Arts University of Calgary
Bachelor of Fine Art Queen's University

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2006	Role Models	City Hall Art Gallery, Ottawa
2005	Turn for the Judges	Dale Smith Gallery, Ottawa
2004	<i>Incendiary</i>	Dale Smith Gallery, Ottawa
2003	All that has Happened Since	Cumberland Gallery, Ottawa
2003	All that has Happened Since	Union Gallery, Kingston
2001	Post Script	Devonian Art Gallery, Calgary

Selected Group Exhibitions

2004	The Angels Want to Wear My Red Shoes	Dale Smith Gallery, Ottawa
2003	Dale Smith Gallery: Premier Exhibition	Dale Smith Gallery, Ottawa
2001	Shed: MFA Graduating Exhibition	The Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary

Selected Awards Received

2002	City of Ottawa Artist's creation and production Grant (emerging artist)
2001	Nominated for the Governor General's Gold Medal (Best Graduate Thesis) Faculty of Fine Arts Research Award
2000	Alberta Foundation for the Arts Graduate Scholarship Faculty of Graduate Studies Award, University of Calgary
1999	University of Calgary Graduate Research Scholarship Faculty of Graduate Studies Award, University of Calgary
1995 to 1999	Chancellor's Scholarship, Queen's University (<i>National Competition, 4yr. Tenure</i>)
1994 & 1995	Gayle McGregor Excellence in Education Award

I would like to offer my gratitude to the following
people who have offered their incredible support
and generous assistance with this exhibition:

Peter Laporte
David and Gillian Hatton
Dale Smith
Patrick Gordon Framing
Susan Globensky
Ed Robinson
Angèle Alain

Thank you!



List of Works

TITLE	MEDIA	MEASUREMENTS	PRICE
<i>starlet.</i>	Oil, resin, wax on birch ply, 2005.	(24" x 18")	\$1200
<i>doll-face.</i>	Oil, resin, nail enamel birch ply, 2005.	(24" x 18")	\$1200
<i>baby.</i>	Oil, resin, wax on birch ply, 2005.	(18" x 24")	\$1200
<i>sunshine.</i>	Oil, resin, metallic marker on birch ply, 2005.	(24" x 18")	\$1200
<i>princess.</i>	Oil, resin, wax on birch ply, 2005.	(24" x 35")	\$2000
<i>sweetheart.</i>	Oil, resin, wax on birch ply, 2005.	(18" x 24")	\$1200
<i>darlin'.</i>	Oil, resin, wax on birch ply, 2005.	(24" x 30")	\$2000
<i>cutie-pie.</i>	Oil, resin, wax on birch ply, 2005.	(30" x 24")	\$2000
<i>sweet-pea.</i>	Oil, resin, wax on birch ply, 2005.	(18" x 24")	\$1200
<i>sweetie.</i>	Oil, resin, wax on birch ply, 2005.	(24" x 30")	\$2000

Commissions can be arranged through Dale Smith Gallery