



Model Turned Painter

Charlotta paints the town red

"I paint with a brush, not a dick." So says Charlotta Janssen, the lanky former model who left the world of dress-up behind for the more satisfying world of painting. She refers to herself as a figurative conceptualist, which is a way of saying that she integrates word and form into what she refers to as "pictords."

While it may seem like a new form, it is actually more a reformation and reaffirmation of some of the West's more respected attempts at interpretation. Janssen works with the novels of literary giants, amongst them Joyce's *Ulysses*, Kafka's *Amerika*, and Melville's *Moby Dick*. Some miniature, some in mural, and others in a witty Rube Goldbergesque way. Triple triptychs allow the viewer to flip tops and bottoms frame-to-frame, which advances the telling of the story and alters the visualization into a flow that is virtually cinematic. Her use of blues on reds or rusts are telling with their flair for exploring new combinations in color.

She takes a book and translates it onto canvas. Each work is in the style, color, and texture of the world of the novel. Janssen takes you deep into the world depicted by the writer. In an exhibition, the books dangle by a string from the ceiling. Not all is flat on the wall: Her ingenious flip-book, derived from *Alice in Wonderland*, consists of three panels which interlock and interchange on as dizzying a level as Carroll's at his best.

Her work can be seen around the world, from New York to Arizona, from a mural at the Mominouki House in Tokyo to CD covers for Deutsche Grammophon. Her live performance art includes an upcoming six-week residency this June in St Louis.

This last project, titled "Info/Overflow," is Charlotta's examination of "aesthetic of the über-access of information." Each week she will move to a different part of the city where, housed inside a cage, she will paint canvases incorporating everyday life—traffic, weather, and passersby. They, too, will be invited in to paint on the canvas, if they wish. Her raison d'être is to "create a direct avenue to a new audience." The woman seems to have more than brush in hand.

By Mark Hall Amitin

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