



# British artist Kate Groobey paints the body as we feel it and doesn't see it

Materiality and abstraction, spontaneity and constant reconstruction: With her work, British artist Kate Groobey invents a new level of reality - and herself. Her work is part of the Berlin group exhibition SURREAL. We have...

By [Zsuzsanna Toth](#) 11 March 2016, 11:45am



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Materiality and abstraction, spontaneity and constant reconstruction: Paris-based artist Kate Groobey, who studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art and at the Royal College of Art in London, loves the play and theme of the body. She paints her large-scale pictures, which she takes with techniques of surrealism, on the floor of the parking lot of a disused printing house on the outskirts of Paris - surrounded by the open sky, a lot of chemistry and a lot

of intensity. She completes one work per day. A work, a piece of the *bigger picture* called self-identification, that may never be finished. And should.

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Kate Groobey's work will be presented tonight as part of the group exhibition *SURREAL* at the König Galerie in Berlin. We met her in advance for an interview.



**What is the story behind the characters and especially behind the (body) attitudes, which often seem complicated and distorted?**

This effect is created because I reconstruct my images with collagations. I draw and cut the drawings and reassemble them. This process creates distortions. I think it's good that you describe my work as complicated. Most people I know have a complicated relationship with their body. This is another reason why I have the feeling that the distortions in my pictures reflect

the *real*/body image much better. I also like the idea of painting a body from the inside out, just as it corresponds to reality.

### **What topics have you dealt with recently within your work?**

My father was diagnosed with cancer, which of course affects me and my family very much and preoccupies me. My last series *Perfect* is based on a song composed by my father and niece. The lyrics are as follows: "There's nothing quite so perfect as potatoes, there's nothing quite so perfect as potatoes, there's nothing quite so perfect as potatoes, potatoes, perfect potatoes potatoes potatoes." In my work, the potato became a symbol of cancer.

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In my current series, I turned my family into superheroes. I once read that we like superheroes because they "provide models on how to deal with problems, they find meaning in loss and trauma and help to find our strengths and use them consciously." My father became "I hate everything man", my niece "Kick Ass" because she just got her black belt in karate and my mother is the "unfoxy lady." When we played Scrabble last year, the discussion arose at some point as to whether "unfoxy" is a word. My mother insisted and said, "I'm a *unfoxy lady*, I've always been!"

### **Can you describe your usual work process?**

I draw, I cut, I draw again, I cut, I rearrange, and so it goes on and on.

### **And when do you know that a picture is ready?**

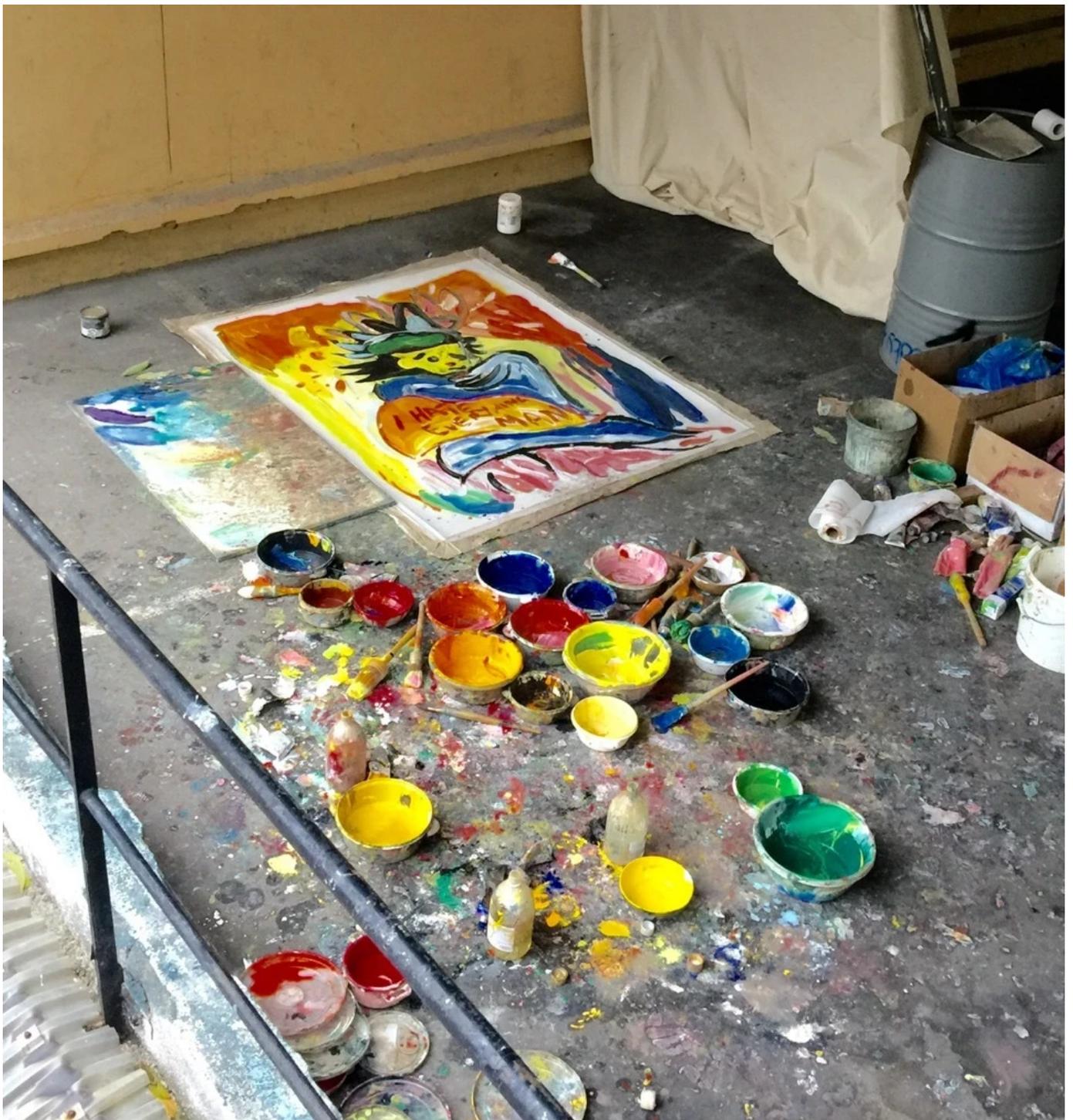
Instinctive. I can feel it when the time comes.

**How does your work fit into the exhibition *SURREAL*, which will be shown by Johann König in Berlin?**

The techniques I use to work correspond to an automatism - one of the cornerstones of surrealist techniques. I like them because they allow me to drill around in my own head.

**When did you start drawing and painting and when did you know you wanted to do it professionally?**

When I was 15 or 16 years old, I got an almost ecstatic feeling when I painted a self-portrait in unrealistic, bright colors. It was like an addiction. A friend moved to London at the same time to study painting. I followed her.



**How much Kate can be found in your pictures? Are people and bodies also partly self-portraits?**

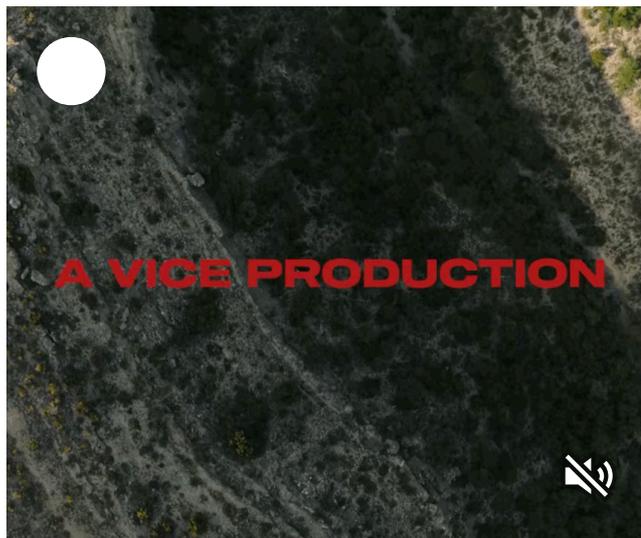
The characters in my pictures are all me and then again not. Even if they are partly concrete portraits of other people, they are also self-portraits. I bring my pictures to life by painting costumes or *dressing* them according to my character. If I do that, the picture or portrait will be 100 percent Kate. This aspect brings an important level of self-identification to my work process.

**The bodies or body parts in your pictures are increasingly female, but often also difficult**

## to identify.

The bodies and body parts that I draw and paint often do not clearly correspond to a gender. The way I paint the body also applies to the gender aspect in the pictures. So rather how we really feel and feel it - and not what it should look like. We can all behave in a stereotypical male or female way at any time. Or cope with more feminine or male tasks. Or wear more feminine or male clothes. But I am also aware of what it means to paint female bodies as a woman. For centuries, primarily men have primarily painted women's bodies and it is time to show what the female body painted by a woman looks like.

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From today, the group exhibition *SURREAL* in the König Galerie shows the works of a total of 21 artists who deal with the language and techniques of surrealism. The viewers should be stimulated across all senses - from a painting that tastes good to a poem that makes noises. **The vernissage** will take place tonight from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Here is an overview of the works shown in the exhibition:



URBAN ZELLWEGER, UNTITLED, 2016, PHOTO: ROMAN MAERZ



MIRA DANCY, JOAN OF ARC SYMBOLIC, 2015, PHOTO: ROMAN MAERZ



JUSTIN JOHN GREENE, GETS ME EVERY TIME, 2014

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Text: Zsuzsanna Toth

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