



MODERN GIRLS

Retro women are reborn through the digital paintings of Berlin artist Mimi S.

Don't get the wrong idea about Mimi S. She may paint ultra-voluptuous, darkly mysterious women, but that shouldn't color your expectations of the artist herself. "Sometimes people are irritated when they meet me because I am down-to-earth and not the strange vixen-painter they expected," says the German-born painter. "It amuses me."

Mimi—who's based in Berlin and represented by the Strychnin Gallery—originally worked as a character designer and illustrator in the animation industry, a job that tested her patience. "You have to transfer their ideas and wishes, no matter if you like the style or not," she says, echoing the frustration of corporate lackeys the world over. So she went solo, creating "digital paintings" that she painstakingly develops layer by layer on her computer. Mimi's husband is also an artist, and the two of them have been embraced by the rockabilly and hot-rod communities, thanks to their posters and CD covers. "I think the fact that my female characters are very curvy fits well into the ideals of today's '50s-retro spirit," says Mimi.

For all of its over-the-top beauty, Mimi's work sometimes borders on horror. In *Metamorphosis*, a sultry, negligee-clad woman's ankles and feet have melted into a large flesh puddle. What's she trying to tell us? Don't bother asking. Mimi is keeping mum, insisting that it's up to the viewer to decide the meaning. "Maybe it's just pure nonsense!" she says self-effacingly.

Mimi herself is a painted woman, having gotten her first tattoo as an 18-year-old working at a pub outside Dublin. It was the early '90s, Celtic tattoos were the rage, and Mimi was experiencing the classic teenage desire to shock the parents. Her motivation was different when she was in her 20s. She got an Asian fire horse on her back "just because it was beautiful."

Three years ago, she commissioned a piece to cover the Celtic one, but it took on greater significance when her mother passed away. "I wanted to have a garden with flowers, Pacific gods, and exotic paradises that I could dream of because it was a very hard time, and I often wished I was far away," says Mimi. The tattoo, a work in progress that covers her arm and shoulder, is by her friend Niki of Berlin Ink Tattoo & Piercing.

Next up for the artist: two new series of paintings and illustrations, the details of which she is keeping to herself. "But," says Mimi tantalizingly, "I can promise they're going to be very sexy, really strange, and beautifully disturbing." —Kristina Feliciano

Clockwise from above: *Give Mama a Break*; *Jinx*; artist Mimi S.

