

VOGUE DAILY

FASHION

“And She’s Not Even Pretty”: Courtney Love’s Autobiographical Art Show Opens Tomorrow

by Lynn Yaeger



Left: Return of the Punisher, Courtney Love, 2011
Photo (clockwise from left): Courtesy of the artist and Fred Torres Collaborations, New York; Steven Meisel, *Vogue*, January 1997

“I don’t have a band now, running around London—this is what I do now,” **Courtney Love** says, referring to the approximately 45 works on paper, rendered in colored pencils, ink, pastels, and watercolors gracing the walls of Fred Torres Collaborations on West Twenty-ninth Street in New York. It’s the day before the exhibit’s private opening party, and Love says the prospect of lots of strangers looking at her work is so terrifying, she was tempted to hide out at **Lola Schnabel**’s house, until Lola reminded her that even **Bob Dylan** endured an opening like this, so Love should just brazen it out too.

Brazen is in fact what many people still think of the frankly notorious Love, and certainly the works in this deeply felt autobiographical show, which is entitled “And She’s Not Even Pretty,” are confrontational if deeply affecting, by turns anguished and deliberately cartoonish. Many of the figures depicted in the drawings—almost always a blonde, Love-like creature—are nude, and there is often bitterly ironic text embedded in the works: “You Just Aren’t Good Enough,” in one case, or “You Sure Know How to Hurt a Girl.”



From left: #2 Dublin and You Just Aren't Good Enough; Courtney Love, 2011
 Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Fred Torres Collaborations, New York

In an intense interview, Love offers, unprompted, a free-wheeling catalog of her influences, which travel from experiments with vintage Polaroid Land cameras to the virtues of a Martin guitar from the 1950s to a description of the essay she has just finished reading, Clement Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," famous since it was published in *Partisan Review* 70-odd years ago.

Love is surprisingly fragile in person. A tattoo reading "Let It Bleed" trails up one arm; today she is wearing sparkly Miu Miu flats with rhinestone bands around their heels and a black pull-over with a little round white collar from *Comptoir des Cotonniers*, both of which offer a faint, distant echo of the hurt little girl "kinderwhore" persona Love pioneered two decades ago.

Though the works in the show were created in the last several months, Love says she has always drawn, especially on the road. She attended the San Francisco Art Institute in the mid-eighties, but admits she didn't get much out of it: "I was a bad student. And then I decided I wanted to be a rock star."

Asked about the difference between writing a song and creating a work of art, Love says that actually it's an identical experience for her: "It's the same birth, when you're alone and the music is really loud—the same feeling. Like **Michael Stipe** says, my ears are my eyes."

One of the most striking works in the show is a wedding gown under glass, on which a profane legend has been scrawled in lipstick and then over-embroidered in scarlet. Love says that **John Galliano** made the dress for her, for nuptials that in the end never took place. At this point it's certainly not fit for a trip down the aisle, though the matching veil, embroidered repeatedly with the words "Fuck Yes," strikes a more genial note.

But if the drawings can be harrowing, Love surprises you by admitting that she's really enjoying herself. "It's fun. I'm not critiquing it as it's going along," she says, smiling. "I had a really good moment in the studio yesterday—the framer came in and I thought, this is evidence! This work is evidence of my life right now! No one can take it away from me. It was nice."

"Courtney Love: And She's Not Even Pretty" opens May 3 and is on view through June 15 at Fred Torres Collaborations, 527 West Twenty-ninth Street, NYC; fredtorres.com

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