

Introducing Hayden Kays

Hayden Kays is a painter, sculptor and printmaker who fuses Pop Art aesthetics with YBA sensibilities. His signature pieces, the Typewriter Series, have earned him critical acclaim and the attention of celebrity collectors such as Chris Martin, Noel Fielding and Harry Styles. A selection of these iconic artworks is currently the subject of an ongoing world tour which has so far called at London, Paris and Dubai, so now is the ideal time to get to know the artistic enigma that is Hayden Kays.

Hayden was born in London during the grim Thatcher years and grew up witnessing first-hand the explosion of young British art, which gave him a profound sense of the radical possibility of being an artist. Consequently, his work explores the relationship between the present moment in mass culture and the ghosts of the past which still haunt our way of doing and thinking about art.

The underlying theme of all Hayden's work is a commentary on capitalist culture from the point of view of someone who is gleefully immersed in it, rather than as an aloof critic of an omnipotent system. His reflections on art and culture are sometimes sardonic, absurd and wry, but they are also revealing, vaguely uncomfortable and almost always true. The secret of his success that he is well-versed in both trashy popular culture and high-end fine art, which enables him to seamlessly merge the two. The Typewriter Series blends traditional visual culture with street art, combining striking imagery with pithy witticisms in a digital image that is both alluringly romantic and cuttngly astute.

Damien Hirst, a respected influence and an object of tongue-in-cheek humour, frequently appears in Hayden's work, but so do the pop artists of the 1950s. It is this entrenchment in art history firmly rooted in the present that enables Hayden to create a series of hard-hitting messages that seamlessly both celebrate and critique the culture industry. It is not high-minded, but it is intelligent; it is not purely aesthetic, but it is not lost in meaning. It is the kind of art the rampant, social media frenzied 21st Century deserves. His newest sculptures emulate the aesthetic of Andy Warhol's infamous Brillo Boxes as an homage to the historical importance of pop art. But they bear the message 'This is not a bomb', referencing Rene Magritte's famous 'This is not a pipe' painting and tapping into modern political insecurity about terrorism. Hayden is not, however, judgemental or prescriptive, for it is up to the viewer to decide if these things are good or bad or just of fleeting significance in the tapestry of modern life.

The great trick of Hayden's work is that he has made a career out of adopting the position, so unfashionable amongst young artists, that high and low culture can co-exist peacefully and fruitfully. Hayden immaculately merges disparate styles and litters his work with contradictory or jarring references, making it the ultimate expression of postmodernism. This dizzy, electrifying explosion of culture that knows no boundaries and speaks with timeless wisdom has earned Hayden success and notoriety in equal measure. He is represented in London by The Cob Gallery, has exhibited internationally, produced books and merchandise, done an album cover for The Kooks and even done an art swap with Jake Chapman. Hayden once told me he's aiming to be inescapable, and that, at least, he is achieving with sublime effect.