

2017, Sept 5. "Christina Kruse on Suprematism, Structure, and the Inspiration behind her latest exhibit." The Cultural Omnivore. Online.

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CHRISTINA KRUSE ON SUPREMATISM, STRUCTURE, AND THE INSPIRATION BEHIND HER LATEST EXHIBIT



As one of the preeminent models of the nineties, Christina Kruse's visage could be seen in every major fashion magazine, advertising campaign and on the international runway scene. The Teutonic blonde's effortless cool garnered legions of fans in the fashion industry leading to a demand from photographers and designers that has endured two decades. I caught up with the model-cum-artist as she prepared to showcase her latest work in New York.

Tell us about your childhood.

I grew up in a protected nature area just outside of Hamburg, an idyllic place that is completely surrounded by forests and fields, which was great for my 3 younger brothers and I. We spent a lot of time playing in forests and fields...hundreds of tree houses later...

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You seemed to take a pragmatic approach to modeling, understanding that it wouldn't sustain forever. How does that pragmatism translate to your creative life?

Modeling is clearly a time-sensitive job. I myself have thought of it as a summer job that has lasted 23 years. I am not sure if it was because of pragmatism or just a healthy dose of realism, but I was fairly prepared for each of the 23 summers to be the last one.

By nature, in my everyday life I tend to want to keep things as practical as possible. I have found freelancers in general to be very pragmatic as work life is already unpredictable and at times challenging, so I think it helps to try to keep that at a minimum in one's home life.

As a model you're the object of someone else's vision. Do you feel more or less vulnerable and exposed in front of or behind the lens?

I don't feel vulnerable or exposed by all means. If anything I think it is great fun being someone's canvas for their vision.

What makes this job so great is that it is never the same. Mind you I also had the great luck of working with people that did a lot of high-end editorial work and not German mainstream catalog work, which I remember was a little less exciting with the exception of the salary. So either way I was eternally thankful for having been able to do both at times, and always with wonderful people.

Do you have a formal art education?

I left school when I was 16 for modeling and tried to do my baccalaureate via post correspondence while living in Milan (there was no email at that time). That failed after only a few weeks, as I was constantly traveling. When I moved to New York, I took a good amount of SVA sculpture classes either in the evenings or in the summers as that was the only time I could be guaranteed to commit, since I was again traveling so much. I think I probably had an unusual education, but to me it was a pretty profound one because I worked with the best of the best in the photography and fashion worlds, and so what better education is there than being on

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set with Steven Meisel—the master of both worlds. Makeup begins on a blank canvas, hair becomes a sculpture, the set becomes a different world, the lights, the camera position...to combine all of that to create iconic imagery is pretty incredible.

What artists and artistic movements have had the biggest influence on you?

Someone who always has and continues to move me greatly is Kazemir Malevich, who said sometime around 1915:

Under Suprematism I understand the primacy of pure feeling in creative art. To the Suprematist, the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth.

That about sums it up for me, and I relate to the minimalistic visual language.

Tell us about the process by which you work.

Whenever I set out on something new, my initial question is what am I dealing with, what is it I want to see happening, and most importantly why.

Once the why is answered, all of it somewhat falls into place, and I will create the drawing, then choose a model and the materials, shapes, forms, and colors (if any).

And then I start building all of it and assemble it—this can be a very lengthy process as it is a construction and not only do all elements need to make sense and fit, and but they also need to be stable, dependent, and connected to one another.

As an artist, you work primarily in mixed media and photography. What medium do you identify with the most?

In recent years, wood. Very recently, metals have replaced my camera to a great degree. When I used to take pictures, I also enjoyed building the sets for it very much—they were part of the whole process, and over time I became much more interested in elaborating on these objects, eventually taking myself out of the entire

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process and only concentrating on creating that idea or feeling as an object or set alone.

What about structure compels and informs your work?

To me, everything and anything has a structure, whether it be a conversation, a garden, or a piece of art work. I simply see it at such— I don't know why; it is just the way it is .

Naturally understanding structure is the essence of anything I do...it's a bit like a house—without some supporting beams, it will fall apart. I like to see these beams and understand what they are about.

How has your current living arrangement in upstate New York influenced your work?

Upstate has been really good for me on many levels. I have my studio up here, it's quiet, and I am surrounded by trees—a perfect place to de-connect from a rather stressed city. The other day I talked to a friend and said, "it's odd: this whole place here feels like I am back where I used to be when I was a child. I renovated the house mainly myself, built a studio out of the garage, and organized the landscaping, all things I did in the forests when I was little except they were treehouses or apartments on the ground created by branches and tree stumps.

I am finding myself in the same scenario that I loved to be in 40 years ago, which is kind of brilliant, and I suppose my very own structure has remained the same.

Tell us about your latest exhibition at Seaman's House.

The show was organized by the curator Helen Allen and is really a show between my friends, their friends, and Helen's artist friends, which has been great fun. It started out to be much about a minimalist and very structured tight works but then evolved into a grander scheme with perspectives coming from an architect, an environmental activist architect, and two artists that are everything but minimal in any of their works. It all worked wonderfully well together, which was really beautiful to see, as it was a great dialog between very different positions and views.