

WESTERN ★ PROJECT

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By David Pagel Special to The Los Angeles Times

SASS AND SMARTS, INSEPARABLY TWINED



About 20 years ago; Kim Dingle's hyperactive imagination gave birth to "Priss." The bespectacled girl, dressed in her Sunday best, began appearing in the artist's paintings and installations, where she pummeled her pint-sized peers, made a mess of everything she touched and seemed to be the star-crossed stepchild of Shirley Temple and Calamity Jane.

Ellina Kevorkian's new works at Western Project pick up where Dingle left off. Imagine Priss as a twentysomething. Then add a sidekick whose fiery eyes fan the flames of her love of destruction. That gives you an idea of the playful mayhem that takes shape in "Love Poems for Infidels," Kevorkian's second solo show, which includes 10 paintings, two lacy costumes and a three-minute video set to a throbbing pop beat.

Most of Kevorkian's paintings depict her and her twin sister, Soseh. The blond and brunet are often dressed in silk finery as they stroll through lovely gardens, sneak down candlelit corridors and cut the throats of men who get in their way. The twins also cool their heels in an old-fashioned jail cell and lean stiffly against one another, like a pair of pretty corpses in a 19th century death portrait.

In other digitally enhanced canvases, they skinny dip among lily pads and engage in a hot embrace. Equally at home in images staged to resemble Pre-Raphaelite paintings and soft-core porn, they also appear in settings that recall Bible stories, Victorian novels, gothic nightmares, Shakespearean dramas, film noir fantasies, wild westerns and campy rehashes of all of the above.

Fact and fantasy dance around each another in the grainy, sepia-toned video, which pays homage to two of the sisters' ancestors, another pair of female twins who robbed trains in Texas in the 1800s. Kevorkian's outlandish realism redeems pop clichés, transforming well-worn poses into archetypes both silly and inspiring. Think "Thelma & Louise" meets "Deadwood" and you're on your way to getting the gist of Kevorkian's smart, sassy art.

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For immediate release:

ELLINA KEVORKIAN :
Love Poems For Infidels

July 16 - September 3, 2005
Reception for the artist:
Saturday, July 16th 5-8 pm.



Western Project is proud to present Ellina Kevorkian's second solo exhibition. Receiving an MFA from Claremont Graduate School in 2002, she continues to live and work in Los Angeles painting and shooting videos. *Love Poems For Infidels*, addresses issues of identity and genealogy, specifically the duality of twins – a mirroring of beauty, power and femininity - as rogue western outlaws. Kevorkian's paintings are composed after works by J.W. Waterhouse, Sir John Millais, and Artemesia Gentilleschi. They are reinvented visions of a new authority, making new choices - women slinging shot guns in western gowns, garnished in super-bling jewelry – the artist pictured "outside of society..." as Patti Smith wrote. It is the defiant stand of the Infidel – questioning the history of representation and subverting it's supposed truths.

Kevorkian uses numerous contemporary methods to spin her layered tales. Nearly all the images are staged (from Pre-Raphaelite works) and photographed, then transferred to canvas and repainted. Like tinted photographs from the turn of the century, her paintings mimic historic narratives, inverted with flourishes of technology and acrylic medium. The paintings' source of authorship is up for grabs – and, can a camera make paintings? What is "film-like"? Are these a new kind of readymade?

Kevorkian's presentation of these tales is both subjective and social – painting and DVD formats. It is her filmed mini-epic of *Infidels* that is the center piece of the exhibition - part 1920's sepia silent film, part hallucinogenic river of images. Her tale of twin female outlaws cracks open the polite dialogue of "the Goddess" and Photoshops a new set of criteria for the feminine – just as mythic, but with dustier skirts, and a fierce subjective voice that revels in contrary acts of determination and faith.

For images and further information, please contact the gallery at 310-838-0609 or www.western-project.com
