

ART AND CULTURE IN JERSEY

With the CCA Galleries International director, *Sasha Gibb*

Christmas is always party time at the gallery. We love the excuse to stay open late on a Thursday night and enjoy helping Christmas shoppers hunt down the elusive perfect present from an extensive collection of prints, paintings, sculptures and books.

This year's Christmas exhibition Nicole Farhi: Life and Limb is absolutely a highlight. Nicole Farhi gained public recognition in the 1980s as a fashion designer, winning the British Fashion Award for Best Contemporary Designer 3 years running.

It was Eduardo Paolozzi who triggered her move to sculpture. They met at

the Royal College of Art's foundry on Queensgate where Farhi had gone to cast her first sculpture. Paolozzi became her friend and mentor. *'He came for dinner almost once a week. He would invariably arrive loaded with plaster casts...'*

Paolozzi had huge hands, with chubby yet nimble fingers capable of delicate movements. Farhi made a series of sculptures to commemorate them. She began to make further studies, concentrating just on her sitter's hands. *'I was drawn to the idea of sculpting the hand because it represented such a huge challenge. From the beginning of mankind, the first marks left on the walls were made by the human hand.'* The exhibition show cases Nicole's sculptures of Paolozzi, alongside hands of Prima Ballerinas and dancers from the English National Ballet.

While working on this series, Nicole was already developing ideas for her next body of work *'... I wanted to continue looking at parts of the human body; this time exploring the powerful beauty of flesh, curves, and the sexual energy large women have.'* Nicole worked with different models including Sue Tilley or 'Big Sue', Lucian Freud's life model for 'Benefits

Supervisor Sleeping'. The models were first photographed in a comfortable pose, Farhi then worked on the photographs, cutting them up and blowing up sections until she was happy with the composition.

She took a cast and made negative moulds. Already familiar with the subtleties of bronze, Farhi has cast four of these in bronze, with a dramatic matt black graphite patina. She also began working in white Jesmonite, a type of reinforced plaster with a capacity to pick up the delicate textures of skin.

A major proportion of the earliest works of world sculpture are goddess figures. As the series grew, Farhi realised that she was making work that referenced these. She explains *'each fragment is named after a Greek or Roman Goddess. Something in my work reminded me of the beginning of humanity. I looked into Greek mythology and found the similarities between those sensual powerful deities and my earthly goddesses.'*

Reg Gadney, Senior Tutor at the Royal College of Art observed: *'Rilke said of Rodin that he had an unerring knowledge of the human body. From the start of her career as a designer and sculptor, Nicole has shown an essential unerring knowledge of the human body'*. I would add that I am acutely aware of the empathy shown to her sitters and the female form. I feel privileged to be bringing this work to Jersey.

Nicole will be holding a discussion with art advisor Selina Skipwith at the gallery, Wednesday 27th November, 17.30 -19.00. Tickets cost £32.00 and include a drink with the artist. Places are limited and should be booked from the gallery in advance.

Nicole Farhi: Life and Limb, Thursday 28 November - Friday 31st January. The gallery is generally open Monday to Friday 10.00 - 17.00. In the run up to Christmas, we are open until 18.30 every Thursday (from 21st November) and 11.00 - 14.00, Saturday 30th November. We are open outside these times by appointment.

The exhibition has been made possible by the generous sponsorship of UBS.

For more information visit www.ccagalleriesinternational.com, t: 01534 739900 or come to the gallery at 10 Hill Street, St Helier.



Cybele, 2018, Jesmonite, ed of 6 by Nicole Farhi