

ERIN CONE

Modiste

Erin Cone worked briefly in the design industry after receiving her BFA in painting from the University of Texas. The experience impacted her on a practical level, giving her business skills that she lacked. It also increased her respect for the artists in the design department. “I even aspired to be an illustrator at one point,” she says.

Her exhibition of new work at Nüart Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is called *Modiste*. The title is derived from the French word for fashion and means “dressmaker.” She explains, “In life, the dress reinvents the wearer. In art, the dress does the same, functioning as an automatic abstract—a shape put on the figure which immediately changes its impact. I am continually intrigued by this potential for abstraction to inform and transform realism.”

In her early work, Cone focused on the absence of fashion, using the figure as an abstract element. Today, fashion is the abstract element—dresses at first glance appear perfectly normal and, on second glance, appear improbable both in their construction and in the way they clothe the figure.

In her painting *Insouciance 1*, the model strolls nonchalantly out of the frame leaving behind two green boxes one of which may have substance, the other of which does not. Because the red advances toward our eyes and the green recedes we may, at first, see the figure as central in the composition with the boxes to the right. And then we adjust.

The collaged red dress and the reality of the figure are an example of what she calls “a deliberate push-and-pull between near-photorealistic detail and my own vocabulary of visual glitches that challenge that very realism. This duality is central to my work and allows the figures I paint to remain wholly representational while functioning abstractly—evoking emotion without defining it.”

Cone’s figures are clothed in anonymity.





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1 *Insouciance 1*, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 44"

2 *Immersed*, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 56"

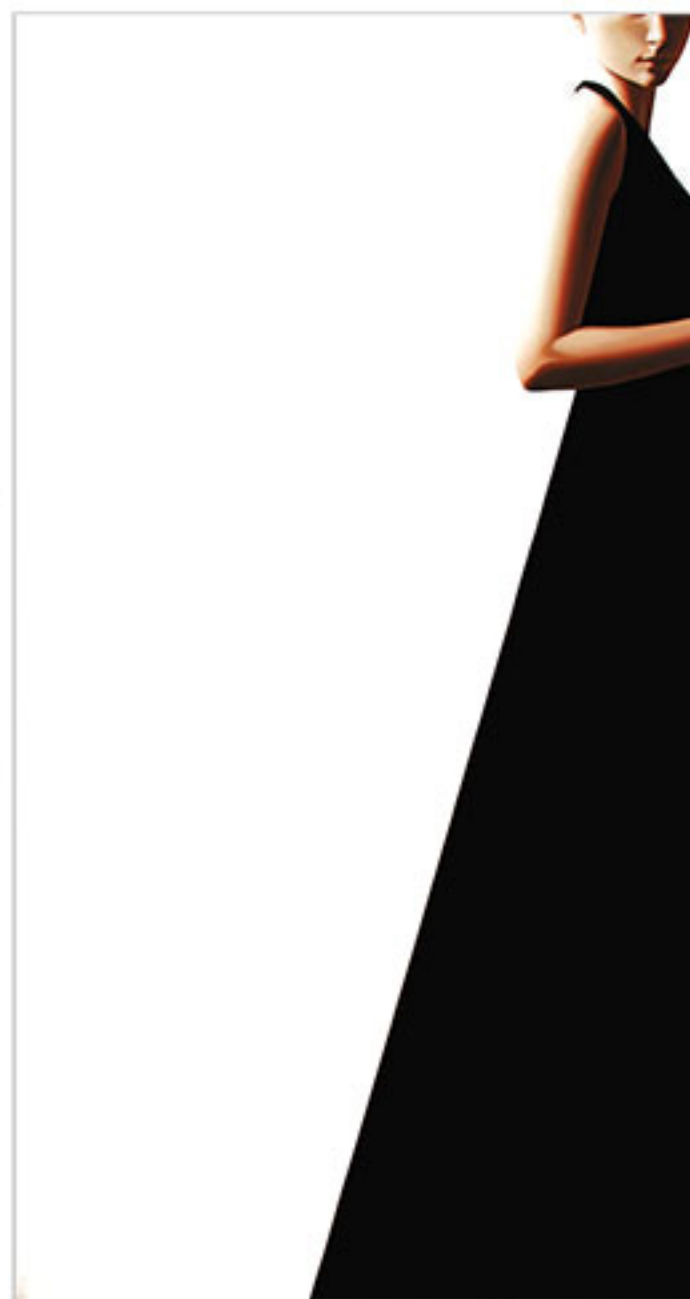
3 *Finale 2*, acrylic on canvas, 68 x 36"

4 *Bloom*, acrylic on canvas, 84 x 48"

They are playing a role.

Her paintings have played a role, as well, on the covers of books by several famous writers including Haruko Murakami. Recently, a painting appeared on the cover of *El Cielo Ha Vuelto* by Spanish author Clara Sánchez. The novel won the 2013 Planeta Prize, the second most valuable literary prize in the world after the Nobel Prize.

Sánchez writes about a model she saw in a magazine and later met. "The girl made me think about people who are visible and



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yet invisible at the same time, and how the image functions in our society, in which we recognize an image and yet we don't know somebody's voice."

Cone's paintings set the stage for our own imagining. ●