

FRANÇOIS BERTHOUD

7TH DECEMBER - 29TH DECEMBER 2007

97 GOLBORNE ROAD LONDON W10 5NL

FIG (FASHION ILLUSTRATION GALLERY) presents the first ever London solo show of the legendary Italian/Swiss Fashion Illustrator Francois Berthoud.

Berthoud has very recently relocated to a new studio in Zurich, from where the exhibited work was chosen, having spent virtually his whole career based in Milan where the exhibited work was made over a 10 year period.

Berthoud's image making process originates with a drawing which is then transcribed onto lino plate. The lino is carved, as one would expect, inked up and pressed against paper before being carved again and inked up with another colour and pressed against the same piece of paper. This process can happen many times and the resulting work is often highly complex and multi layered.

Berthoud also makes mono types where enamel paint is carefully dripped, Pollock style, over the printing plate before an impression is made. The resulting image is then either thrown out, put to one side or left to dry before reworking the plate and going through the process again. None of this is scientific or driven by mechanics. Berthoud is constantly adjusting, cropping and experimenting to produce the perfect work. Occasionally some of the simpler linocuts become multiples but in the vast majority of cases the works complexity or the method deployed renders mass reproduction impossible and the works are unique or produced in very limited numbers.

Berthoud's low tech working methods are now usually found only in the school art class however the imagery produced has kept Berthoud in work at the high end of the Fashion Industry for the last two decades.

Berthoud is well known amongst the world's finest creative directors for producing images of the female form with an exacting precision that are imbued with a latent eroticism. Berthoud's gaze doesn't hit the side of the face. His commissioned work has been principally made for women's magazines in order to create desire and consumption and in this he has enjoyed considerable success.

The exhibition features both commissioned and non-commissioned original work. A portrait of Dolce & Gabbana made for French magazine MIXT(E) and a crown of thorns for Visionaire's Bible can be viewed alongside a nude in stiletto shoes in belly flop position.

Berthoud was born in Le Locle, Switzerland. After finishing his studies at the School for Graphic Design in Lausanne in 1982, Berthoud went to Milan where he drew cartoons for 'Alter-Alter' and 'Linus'. Early fashion illustrations were commissioned by Anna Piaggi for Conde Nast's Vanity and since then his work has appeared in many of the leading fashion magazines such as Vogue, Numero and Interview.

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