

InSights

Devon Dikeou

Marilyn Monroe Wanted to be Buried in Pucci

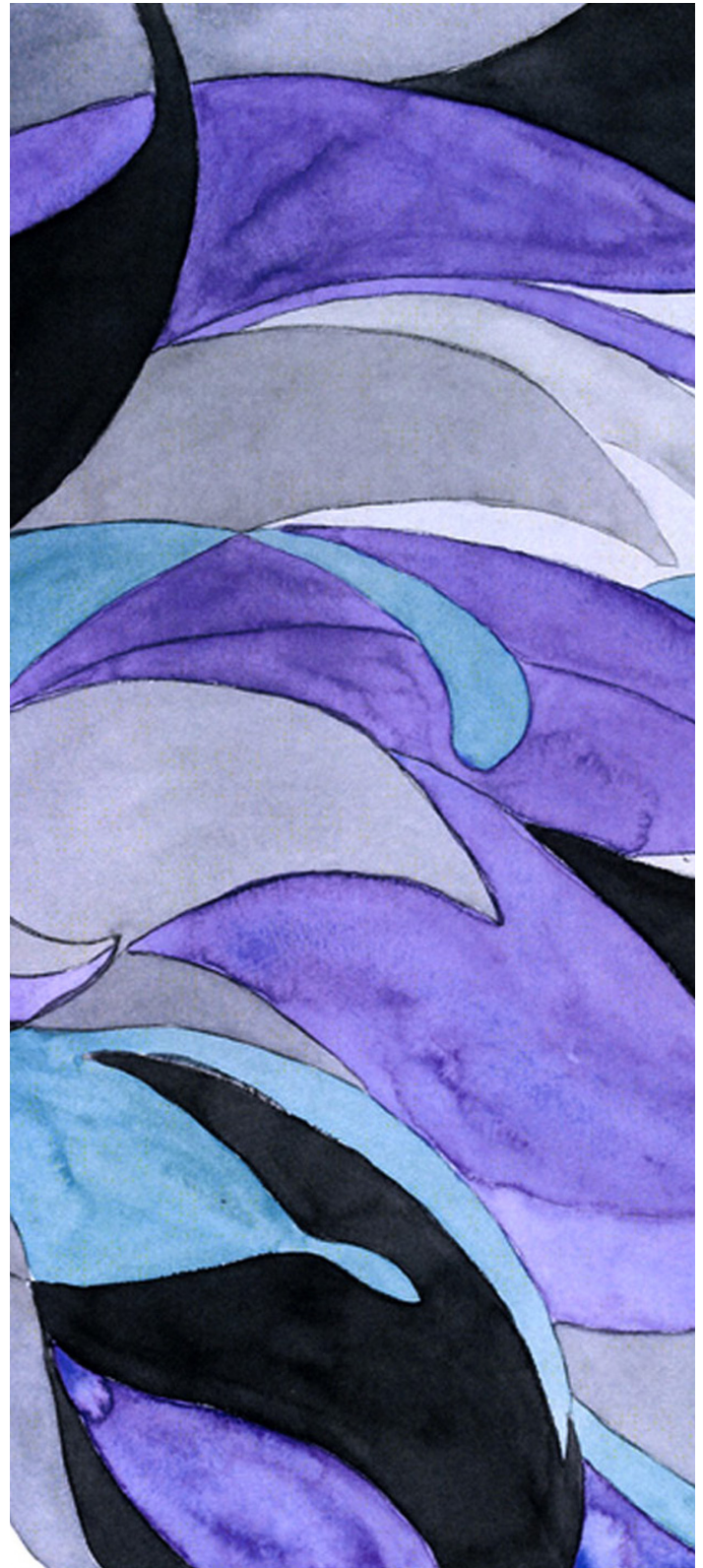
In her exhibition *Marilyn Monroe Wanted to be Buried in Pucci*, Devon Dikeou, a New-York based artist, uses Marilyn Monroe's living request to be buried in a dress designed by renown Italian designer Emilio Pucci as the lens through which to reconsider various developments in art and design since the 1960s, particularly as they relate to the social, urban and popular cultural contexts.

The exhibition is comprised of various objects of art, artifacts and design including a 30-foot-long wall mural and 36 small abstract paintings created by the artist, both based on a Pucci dress design. For Dikeou, the number 36 is significant as it represents how old Monroe was when she died in 1962. The title of the exhibition refers to the convergence of art, fashion and popular culture. When Monroe's wardrobe went for auction in 1999, after having been stored in a warehouse since the star's death, it included a selection of simple, slithery dresses by Emilio Pucci. Monroe owned a number of the Italian designer's ensembles and was, in fact, buried in a favorite green Pucci dress. For Dikeou, Pucci and Monroe are both symbols of a moment of transformative change in American culture. In their body-conscious simplicity, Pucci's modern and colorful graphic prints hinted at the coming sexual freedom of the 1960s, while Monroe's highly publicized sex-kitten star persona and dramatized personal life hinted at the conflict over lost innocence underlying the new era of sexual liberation.

Also included are five black and white photographs documenting the American flag hanging at half-mast in New York's Union Square to commemorate the 1999 death of the great baseball hero Joe DiMaggio. Again, Dikeou uses a significant number; in this case, the number five, which was DiMaggio's Yankee baseball jersey number.

An American Romance

The artist discovered that DiMaggio's adoration of Monroe is evident not only in her lifetime, when he took her as his bride and even after their divorce, but also in her death as he proclaimed his ongoing love for her with six red roses that he arranged to be sent three times a week to her burial site. During the run of this exhibition, Parisian Florist (the Hollywood florist who upheld DiMaggio's request) will deliver six red roses to the installation at Moore on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. According to Louis Alhanati, owner of Parisian Florist, his shop was the focus of



Above: © 2007 Devon Dikeou, *Marilyn Monroe Wanted to be Buried in Pucci* (work-in-progress).

major media attention in 1982 when DiMaggio stopped the flower delivery after twenty years. He says even today the public's fascination with the subject is unrelenting and he still gets Marilyn fan clubbers stopping in.

On the opening night of the exhibition visitors were invited to touch or try on a replica of the platinum eternity band that DiMaggio gave Monroe after their 1954 wedding. Lent to the exhibition by Tiffany & Co., this event allowed everyone to participate in affecting the spirit of an iconic American romance. The original ring, a platinum band set with thirty-five baguette-cut diamonds, sold for \$700,000, well beyond the \$30,000 estimate, at Christie's New York in 1999 during a sale of personal property from the estate of Marilyn Monroe – a testament to the power of the mythology and iconography surrounding the starlet and the sports hero.

Through the various components of the exhibition, Dikeou has effectively woven together references to Pop Art, abstract painting, minimalism, performance and conceptual art to create a loose biographical narrative that converges into a historical tableau of a romantic and turbulent era in American culture.

The exhibition is on view January 30 – March 14, 2009.

About the Artist

Devon Dikeou has exhibited widely throughout the United States and Europe including: Hohenthal und Bergen - Statements: Basel Art Fair 29, Basel, Switzerland; MAMCO, Geneva in collaboration with Outcasts Incorporated; Postmasters Gallery, New York; and more recently at artMovingProjects, Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Dikeou is the publisher/editor of *Zingmagazine*, a curatorial crossing, an award-winning publication that recently celebrated its 12th anniversary.

Organized by The Galleries at Moore and curated by Lorie Mertes, Rochelle F. Levy Director and Chief Curator as part of the *InSights* series of exhibitions presented in the Window on Race – on view 24/7 from Race Street in front of Moore.

Special thanks to Parisian Florist of Hollywood, California for supplying the deliveries of roses and to Tiffany & Co. for their participation in the opening night event.

The wall mural was executed by local Philadelphia artists, Casey Watson, Nicholas Balko and Michael Eddinger.



Above: The Parisian Florist circa 1960s, courtesy Parisian Florist, Hollywood, CA

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MOORE

COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

20th Street and The Parkway

Philadelphia, PA 19103-1179

215.965.4027 / galleries@moore.edu

www.thegalleriesatmoore.org / www.moore.edu