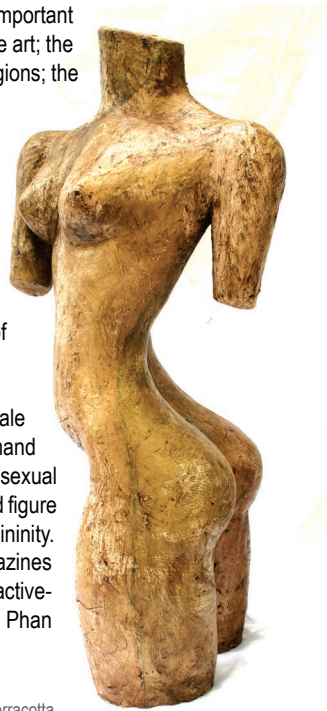




*T*mages of the female body serve to define some of the most important discourses of Western culture: the tradition of the nude in fine art; the worship of the Virgin Mary and the goddesses of ancient religions; the licensing of pornography and the prosecution of obscenity.

In many cultures, the assumption of the perfect and complete female form has also led to its endorsement as a cultural symbol - witness Britannia, Marianne, and the Statue of Liberty. Yet we regard the image of the naked woman as the object alternately of fascination and suspicion. The ubiquity of women's bodies makes the female form one of the most familiar, if also most contested, of cultural symbols. **Oc-Eo Art** explores this subject in *Attractive-Repulsive* - an exhibition of photographic images and sculpture to challenge our perceptions of the intoxicating female form - at **3 Bedfordbury** from 8-20 September.

The history of art is replete with campaigns designed to re-package the female body within the reassuring assumptions of aesthetics. On the one hand, a demand for order and purification has created a celestial-like form, so abstracted from sexual pleasure that it can sanction the male gaze. On the other, an objectified, exploited figure which has been created for men's pleasure is stripped of sensuality and femininity. A fantasy figure that holds court in pornography, hip hop videos and magazines published by women for women. These themes are explored through *Attractive-Repulsive*, which features the work of three female artists - Dominique Dieulot, Phan Tu and Sophie Howard.



Sophie Howard - *Idol* Terracotta

www.oc-eoart.com



Larissa Exalto - *In Your Eyes* Oil on Canvas, 40 x 30 cm

*T*he abstract-expressionist work of Larissa Exalto's debut solo show can be found at 3 Bedfordbury from 26 October to 1 November.

Full of energy and colour, the Ukrainian-born artist attempts to capture her emotions, her pain and how she sees and feels through paint - a colourful reflection of the world and relations between people and nature. *"My art is about life and the importance of simple things around us, things we take for granted and rarely look at,"* she says. *"We don't need eyes, we need vision. It's like a little door to those deep and powerful feelings locked up inside everyone."*

Larissa's inspiration comes from within and from the natural beauty found in everyday life - momentary feelings from the rays of light from the sun, listening to the rain, a subconscious channelling of emotions. She applies paint heavily, allowing thick layers up to 7 months to dry before working into and moulding the shapes and colours over and over. The results appear chiselled, ribbed, sculpted and textured with a 3-dimensional effect.

www.larissaexalto.com

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