

# METRO PICTURES

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# THE SKINNY

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## INTO THE WILD

Judith Hopf at Liverpool Biennial

### MUSIC

The Pixies  
Remember Remember  
Kiran Leonard  
Brian Reitzell

### FILM

David Gordon Green on Joe  
How to Train Your Dragon 2

### CLUBS

Ruf Kutz  
Julius Steinhoff  
Lazare Hoche

### ART

Jade Collin

### THEATRE

24:7  
Hope Street Emerging  
Artists Programme

### FASHION

Jessica Campbell

### COMEDY

Phill Jupitus writes us a poem  
David Stanier  
Chorley Little Theatre

MUSIC | FILM | CLUBS | THEATRE | ART | BOOKS | COMEDY | FASHION | TRAVEL | FOOD | DEVIANCE | LISTINGS



Judith Hopf - Flock of Sheep (2013)

Photo: Kaufmann Repetto

# A Needle Walks into a Haystack

Part of a group show at the Old Blind School, **Judith Hopf** discusses Liverpool and Berlin, exhibiting in public spaces, and reimagining materials

**B**erlin-based Judith Hopf is known for her sculptures and films that use everyday items such as computer packaging or household items. Last year, her first solo exhibition in the UK at Studio Voltaire, London, saw the gallery filled with a flock of concrete sheep accompanied by a film referencing the history of silent cinema and the suffragette movement. Hopf was also featured in the monolith that is dOCUMENTA in 2012 and created columns of drinking glasses to form a 'bamboo' forest that visitors could walk through.

The Skinny met with Judith Hopf for a coffee on what she called "day zero" – the very first day she had arrived in Liverpool to research her new Biennial work and her first time ever in the city – to find out how she approaches her work and what plans she has for her new commission.

"A lot of the time my sculptural practice is in collaboration with cinematic work," says Hopf. "I don't think that will happen with the Biennial exhibition, as the process normally takes a year or so. I don't produce works excessively. I like to let the film and sculptural works grow organically and over time they knit together rather than get thrown together right at the moment of exhibition. I'm making something new for the Biennial, although it may incorporate elements from existing works".

Research time in Liverpool has been important for all the artists and it's clear that facilitating this has been a priority for the curators, Mai Abu ElDahab and Anthony Huberman. "They want to create the time for contemplation," says Hopf, "to not just ask for the new but give us time to reflect on the procedures involved in making the work for the exhibition."

Hopf is excited about her inclusion in the Old Blind School group show which, although in a building, is more in the public realm than, say, exhibiting at the Tate or Bluecoat. As with all the buildings that are opened up especially for the Biennial, the audience is often comprised not just of regular art-going visitors but often locals who just want a look inside the building. "Exhibiting in a more open, or public, space is important to me, away from institutional spaces

also to get a broader range of opinion or overview. I appreciate it as I grew up in the 60s and 70s where there was a whole interest in the arts as an aesthetic for the general public, not just the expert public. It's very rooted in my understanding. I think it's important that artists exist in the public realm and we find new contexts and situations for our work. The changes in how you view the work are also interesting to observe. You see when perhaps the work exists just for amusement or when it can get quite sharp in different contexts."

Festivals, of course, are also very different beasts compared to the gallery environment. "Yes, it's a thin line we walk," says Hopf. "In event culture there is this expectation that you should be astonished and amused by the artwork. In fact the art may be quite boring, slower, or not so entertaining."

**"It's important artists exist in the public realm and we find new contexts and situations for our work"**

**Judith Hopf**

Does site-specificity ever come into it? Does Hopf feel like the city of Liverpool will have influence on her ideas or production process? "Yes I think so," she says. "I always try to adjust to the situation – I mean you have to anyway as a human being. The work has to, in some way, be related to Liverpool. I'm going to take my time to learn about the city and how it works, and of course you're influenced by who you meet and the places they take you to or what they tell you. My

work is often inspired by objects and the things that I find just around me. A good example is the work I made for the last dOCUMENTA which was made with the drinking glasses that were formed into kind of trees. The idea came when I was just cleaning up some glasses one day and stacking them up and I thought, Oh, maybe I can make a column out of them one day. That's quite typical for me."

Encountering the work at dOCUMENTA, you were struck by the simultaneous lo-fi production of the 'trees' but also their delicacy and precariousness. Green leaves punctuated their length, giving the glass towers a lo-fi pop twist. "I was thinking about what you can do with materials when you steal their original function," says Hopf, "and also how they can then appear again in public life and in a different aesthetic discussion." As with a lot of Hopf's work, the viewer can have an instant relationship with the materials because you recognise them immediately. Once you have had this recognition, however, the materials have a completely different life or understanding in their new context. "There are all kinds of funny interpretations," says Hopf. "The choice of materials is important for me – it comes from a political understanding of how you use what you find around you to express ideas." Hopf also has an amusingly modest opinion of her own ability. "I think in terms of my handcraftiness, as an artist, on a scale from 1 to 100 I am maybe about 40."

So what are her first impressions of Liverpool? "When I approached the old Trade Union building I was thinking about empty buildings and spaces in the city and how important it is to reflect on that. Why are they empty and what has happened? It's similar to Berlin where I have been working now for 22 years. After the wall came down, there were and are still so many empty buildings, there has been a lot of change in how we use the city."

The group show at the Old Blind School opens 5 Jul

The Old Blind School (former Trade Union Building) is located on 24 Hardman Street, L1 9AX. Open 10am-6pm daily