

*We Are All Children of the Stars*  
Simone Kennedy

Exhibition commentaries frequently detail the work of artists other than their subject. Sometimes this represents an effort to understand influence, or it may be an attempt to contextualise an artist's work within a field of wider practice. On occasion it is a way by which to aggrandise work, to lend gravity where it may be lacking, or, it may betray an attempt to construct historical lineage—evidence that the same themes and motifs preoccupy artists irrespective of the eras in which they are born.

In the body of literature devoted to Simone Kennedy, Louise Bourgeois and Paula Rego are most commonly cited as influences on or precursors to her work. Certainly, the latent aggression implicit to the art of these formidable women is palpable, also, in that of Kennedy. Surrealism too, impresses its dreams—sometimes gently, at other times more forcibly—on the work of all three artists.

Such comparisons, however, can inhibit our appreciation of an artwork's matchlessness and at this point in her career, Kennedy's efforts are more her own than ever.

Though she dispenses with her usual, vivid palette, the graphic character of the artist's work remains emphatic. It is due, in part, to this latter quality that Kennedy's art is direct and insistent, that it beats a path to one's heart, eliciting reactions in spite of heavily encoded symbolism. Comprising animal, anatomical and decorative elements, this symbolism is immediate in impact—a quality rare in the world of art in which visual codes are often impenetrable or not potent enough to exude some sense of what they really mean. The startling clarity of iris and pupil, the soft curve and pulp of a human brain and finally, the conquered form of a small body: these are images which, when combined, are both repellent and intriguing, images that provoke emotional and visceral responses without our ever really knowing why. This curious mode of communicating feeling, silently, instinctively, is one mirrored in the artist's parallel text in which protagonists rarely correspond in any tangible sense but remain acutely aware of each other's presence, nonetheless.

Rendered solely in monochrome, these drawings seem a subtler, yet more incisive reworking of a theme that has revealed itself as central to Kennedy's art: that of the relationship between mother and daughter—one passionate, fraught and frequently complex. The act of drawing is in itself an intimate one, the most immediate link between idea and material expression. Perhaps it is this sense of intimacy, coupled with Kennedy's mysterious mode of symbolism that engenders a tension, a tautness, qualities that make her new work compelling and so wonderfully unique.

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