

Victoria Clarke

is a British artist and illustrator living in Amsterdam. She works primarily in acrylics and find deep interest in social issues.

"I am a completely self-taught artist and illustrator from England, largely influenced by nature, my surroundings and the different countries I've lived in. My illustrations aim to bring a touch of cuteness, irreverence and whimsy into the world.

I was born in England, and I don't remember a time when I wasn't creating, until a tragedy in my teens caused me to put my brushes aside. But I came back to art slowly, and on my arrival in Amsterdam five years ago, it became my driving force once again.

I have struggled with mental illness in the past, and with the challenges of being a woman in today's world. These have shaped my art in two directions: on the one hand, my current seascapes are a never-ending quest to recapture a single moment of inner peace, a kind of sublime mindfulness.

On the other hand, I am a strident feminist, full of frustration with a society that makes women feel inferior; that belittles whole sections of the population simply because they don't fit its own ridiculously narrow, culturally-defined mould. I want my paintings to shine a spotlight on this cultural straitjacket."



The Pretty Series :

"This series explores the idea of femininity and prettiness as a social construct.

Inspired by a trip to Japan during the Cherry Blossom season, Victoria was struck by the realisation that the enjoyment of the pink floral prettiness was not gendered there. Middle aged men were some of the foremost people celebrating this most feminine of seasons.

Having felt as a child and young adult that femininity and prettiness were not accessible to her, Victoria began to think about who else may not feel they are permitted to explore feminine aesthetics. She googled phrases such as 'pretty man' and found that almost all results were exclusively thin white young able-bodied women. She felt she wanted to demonstrate this incongruity in Western European culture, and thus the Pretty series was born.

The first triptych is comprised of a pre-teen boy, and young black man and an old white man. The flower crown represents the notion of prettiness and is supposed to be visually rather absurd.

The second triptych comprises three females: a large black young woman, a transgender woman and an older woman with Down's syndrome. For them, an oversize, awkwardly placed hair now represents prettiness."