

ARTS & BOOKS

July All Year Round

By Charlotte MARCHALANT

Miranda July's break-through. Portrait of the American artist, darling of the underground scene turned international star.

Browsing through Miranda July's *résumé*, a question inevitably comes to mind: How can so much talent fit into one single person? In the last Cannes Film Festival, Miranda July presented *Me, You and Everyone We Know*, a movie she wrote, directed and starred in. This "Do It Yourself" adept collected four awards, including the much coveted "camera d'or". But the 31 year old is already used to success. Her offbeat take on the world eludes all definitions and has been earning her raving reviews for nearly ten years. Her work has been shown at prestigious venues such as the Guggenheim Museum or London's Institute of Contemporary Arts to name but a few. At ease with a wide range of media such as audio, video or even literature, her inexhaustible inspiration finds an outlet in creations that mirror her environment from an innovative angle. So much so that she was given a special award for "originality of vision" at Sundance,* the Mecca of independent cinema. *Me, You and Everyone We Know* is a modern tale on love, suburban boredom and paedophilia. While pin pointing society's shortcomings, it retains a cute, pleasing yet serious atmosphere.

But for all her uniqueness, Miranda July did not come out of the blue. She belongs to the bubbling scene of Portland, Oregon, whose ethos is summed up in a lyric by the local all-girl band Sleater-Kinney: "You're no (...) fun, like a piece of art that no one can touch".** The message is clear: art must be taken down from the pedestal on which former generations have placed it and returned to the people. "Culture is what you make it" Sleater-Kinney assert in another song. Miranda July's latest internet project is a perfect illustration of that desire to "democratize" art. *Learning To Love You More* (www.learningtoloveyoumore.com) is a forum where people can find assignments given out by the web mistress herself and share their experiences. This highly successful website testifies to a new attitude towards art and its protagonists. The internet, a recurring theme in July's work, helped break down barriers and foster new collaborations. Thus July's work-mates are musicians, jewel and fashion-designers, film-makers and writers, all brought together by the internet and a common taste for experimenting. Like a hyper-active kid, she fiddles with everything without any regard for limits and boundaries. In pretty much the same way as Warhol in the 50's (he too created quite a stir then) she digests the old to spit it out new, with her own stamp. Her idiosyncratic strange and poetic mood pervades all her work, and makes her a most interesting figure in today's artistic landscape. Entering Miranda July's mind is a startling but enriching experience, so different it is from the norm - a word I have got an inkling she doesn't use much.

*The Sundance Film Festival, the first event of its kind, was created by Robert Redford in 1985. Now a major structure, it promotes independent cinema.

***All Hands On The Bad One* – Kill Rock Stars, 2000