

Corno Speaks

to be visual arts

www.tobe.ca



Corno speaks

By Kat Coric

Last month I had the pleasure of talking to my favorite artist of all times; Johanne Corno. Corno is my inspiration. Read on to see why.

Kat: It is a pleasure to talk to one of Montréal's favorite expatriots. Tell us how you've been getting along in New York City all these years.

Corno: The first years were a long painful struggle. It was hard because I was starting at the very bottom. I was a nobody here. Just another artist with a dream. I could barely pay my rent for the longest time. But I was determined and I never let go of my vision. It took several years, my efforts paid off and good things started to happen.

I love life in New York City. It's the city for me, the place to be. It's an amazing place in which to learn and to evolve. I'm living the biggest dream of my life which was to live in New York City and sell my paintings throughout the world. It can't get any better.

Kat: We hear that you are also selling in Hong Kong. How do you find that part of the world?

Corno: Hong Kong is one of my biggest markets at the moment. I'm having my first official one-

woman show there in July. It will be amazing because the energy is very intense and that's my kind of place.

I'm quite impressed with the way collectors in Hong Kong respond to my work. I think they are much attuned to contemporary art, especially if it is simpler and fresh like mine is. I think they enjoy bright colors and gravitate to the American comic book style because, in many ways, it relates to their historic approach to art which is steeped in simplicity and purity of lines. So I think I fit into a modernized version of their ancient esthetic.

Kat: Do you find it's different for a woman in the contemporary art world?

Corno: That's an understatement. I find it's different for a woman for anything and everything. You have to learn to stand up for yourself, take your place in the world, make your statement, speak your mind, assert yourself. I'm not saying it's easy, just necessary. When I came to New York and met obstacles, I persisted. I believed in my work so much that it finally paid off. At the end of the day people had no choice but to open the door because I was always in their

face. I was there and there and there. I wouldn't go away.

Kat: Young artists are always impressed by those who come before them, and, more than that, they are always looking for advice from their predecessors. What are some of the precious things that you have learned along the way that you would like to share with the young generation of artists?

Corno: It's very simple. You have to work for anything you want in your life. It won't come by itself. The only real way to make that happen is to follow your heart. Everyday, you must go into that place deep inside yourself and you must keep it strong and alive. You must always come back to your essence. You must follow your intuition. You are your guide. You have your beacon. But if you don't listen to it, the light will go out. You have to listen to it. You have to follow its light. There are no shortcuts. The work in progress is life itself. But I wish I would have known that about myself sooner, but I didn't. There are things that you just have to learn as you go...

Kat: You made your mark on the art scene with your famous torsos. Over the years your subject matter has expanded and grown. Talk to us about your latest interests. How has your career evolved and what

kinds of subject matter interests you these days?

Corno: I just finished a 50 foot installation where abstracts were integrated in the figurative work. I'm quite taken by this idea of mingling the two styles. I did these huge close-ups of female faces and they represented women dancing and you could sense their movement and their energy. The use of abstraction reinforced the movement. I find I need the freedom that the abstraction provides me with. It's good because I can integrate it in my paintings.

I continue to be obsessed with human figures and faces. I can't paint enough of them. Each new painting comes from a place deep inside of me where I am inhabited by these forms. You remember what I was saying earlier about being true to your essence, well something in me wants to get these forms out. I can't help myself. But I don't worry about it. The human figure has been the subject of art since the very beginning of civilization, and it will always be an object of beauty that will fascinate the human eye. I'm just doing my part in this long tradition of exploring the beauty of the human figure.

Kat: Who are some of your artistic influences?

Corno: Julian Schnabel is still one of my favorite artists. His paintings, his movies, his sculpture are all so strong. But I'm impressed by many artists. It's like music, you can love so many different styles—classical, rock, jazz. I appreciate many different types of art and each one touches me and influences me in its own way.

Kat: Do you foresee a Corno show in Montréal soon?

Corno: As a matter of fact, yes, I'm planning something big for next fall. I want to give back something to all those who have supported my work over the years and who have been faithful to me. I want it to be an event to remember.

Kat: What are some of your upcoming projects?

Corno: I have three important shows coming up in Paris, London and Hong Kong. Opera Gallery is about to open a new location in London and they will be showing many of my paintings at their opening.

I will be going to Paris and to London next month. Both galleries are in fabulous locations: Bond Street and the Faubourg St-Honoré. There will be a spectacular event this fall in Montréal. My work was just part of the Encaen Bénéfice for the Éco-musée in Montréal.