



Flower by Portia Munson, 1998

Portia Munson BY GIRL

Ever since she was a little girl, Portia Munson has collected all the shiny, sexy, mysterious things that come in pink—the things that lure us, represent us, and define us. As a feminist artist, her obsession grew into the stunningly encyclopedic and notorious *Pink Project*, a huge and powerful display of everything from dildos to deflated balloons engulfed in an army of all the tiniest, cutest, girliest objects in the world. To behold it is a queasily hilarious shock; while alluding to oppressions of gender, it somehow achieves a radical raw expression of female sexuality and female desire.

Munson also paints what girls like. Representing metaphors of female experience in sweetly creepy still-life, she reveals something often unpleasant lurking beneath pretty, mundane surfaces. In each small canvas, a familiar object is found as if on a kitchen table late at night, caught isolated and dreamlike in the light, and painted with the flat penetrating clarity of a child's gaze. An elusively perverse humor permeates the surreal world she creates, yet there's a somber, sensuous weight given equally to kids' toys and sex toys; things that are cute become ominous, the banal is sexualized, the appealing repels.

Munson's paintings provide the pure pleasure of morbid curiosity satisfied—as if she would reach for a flower and instinctively turn over the petals to find a slug, and love the slug as much as the flower.

Portia Munson's paintings will be shown this fall at Yoshii Gallery, NY.