

Pop CORNO, by Lucinda Catchlove,
ZINK
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Full of vivacious color, ecstatic motion and sensual, muscular lines, the figures in the large-scale canvases by Canadian painter Corno seem to swirl in an orgy of motion. Her bodacious paintings are celebrations of form, figure and the rush of enjoyment. "You've got to turn yourself on. If you're not turned on by what you're doing, there's no point," she says from her studio in SoHo, the historical heart of New York City's modern art district, where she has lived since 1992. Clearly, painting turns Corno on and her paintings turn on many collectors. In fact, her work is so popular that all of her canvases are pre-sold. Represented internationally by Opera Gallery and in Canada by AKA, she's exhibited everywhere from Miami and Los Angeles to London and Hong Kong, and her paintings graced the London premiere of Cirque du Soleil's *Alegria* show.

Born Joanne Corno in Chicoutimi, Quebec, in 1952, Corno was a small-town girl with big ambitions. She moved to Montreal at the age of 17 and traded her dream of being a ballerina to study art education at the Université du Québec à Montréal. It didn't take long for her to realize that her burning desire was to paint, not teach. Informed by her love of dance and its muscular physicality, her four ongoing series — titled "Faces, Women, Men and Portraits" — found an immediate audience with Montreal's movers and shakers. "It's Pop Art with emotion," she explains. Certainly, the paintings in her Faces series owe much to Andy Warhol's screen-printed pop portraits of his adored icons. However, the people behind the visages in Corno's series remain anonymous even as they are immortalized. Where Warhol's work was about modernist identity and fame, Corno's pieces illustrate an instantaneous and transitory celebrity.

The fleshy weight of the figures in Corno's paintings have also incited comparisons to British painter Lucian Freud — grandson of Sigmund Freud. Yet Corno maintains her own work is more modern. "I have a very classical way of drawing. I just push it further." While Freud's paintings evoke mortality, Corno's erotically charged images are seductive celebrations of life. As such, the deathly serious might condemn Corno's work as simply decorative, and it is — both simple and decorative. But to dismiss simplicity is to forget that Picasso labored intensely over his most seemingly simple line drawings: Creating an impression of ease and fluidity is a hard-won illusion. "Sometimes people look and see only three lines, but sometimes it took me 30 years to get to those three lines. It's so hard to be simple and strong — to have all the information but be very basic."

Judging by how quickly Corno's Hong Kong exhibition sold out, her exuberant brushstrokes may soon reach an even wider audience. After all, sometimes a bit of light can remind us that life isn't so deadly serious after all. CornoStudio.com

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CANADIAN ARTIST CORNO CREATES SENSUAL
POP ART WITH A PULSE YOU CAN DANCE TO.

