

# KIM McCARTY

## FLUID ADOLESCENCE

Written by Clarissa WAIDRON  
Images courtesy of the artist

Born in LA, watercolour artist Kim McCarty was the youngest of three girls. As a small child, her family moved to Switzerland for her father's work. She credits this as the development of a close family bond which remains to this day. There, her sisters encouraged her to draw and paint, their only form of entertainment. Graduating from UCLA's Art School in 1988, her work has progressed through stages of medium and subject matter, from oil images of adulthood to her more recent career-defining watercolour probe into adolescence.

In her early career, McCarty used men as a muse, believing it would help her understand the opposite sex better, and present herself as someone who was strong and tough - the complete opposite, she says, of who she is. Working in watercolour, McCarty has become known for her evocative depictions of nude children and adolescents, and to a lesser extent flowers, with her signature bruise-inspired palette of acid yellows, greens, and browns.

She is fascinated by Alberto Giacometti's elongated sculptures, calling him "a master of the human condition and also believes, unwittingly, her own children, daughter Clancy and son Chas, now adults, influenced the path her career has taken. "Truthfully I didn't realise I was portraying the adolescent figure until other artists and friends brought it to my attention." The LA Times said her "skilful rendering of the collision between childhood beauty and youthful damage echoes with tender vulnerability."

A fire in her Malibu home in 1994, which destroyed her studio, cemented her decision to explore other materials. "Oils are much easier to manipulate", she says, "and much more forgiving, but unfortunately watercolour creates the effect I wish to achieve." McCarty paints wet-on-wet, so her colours bleed and diffuse, a method that is impossible to control. "I'm continually starting over. By trying to keep her work fluid, there is little ability to anticipate the resulting image. An expensive endeavour: work could be lost or gained within minutes.

McCarty's exhibitions have taken her from London to Paris and across America and she is part of a permanent collection at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. More recently McCarty has exhibited solo at David Klein Gallery Michigan and Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York.

"I have always been interested in identifying an expression that suggests both longing and loss." Having admitted that her unclothed figures could be seen as adolescent eroticism, McCarty's work has not received criticism for this, unlike photographer Sally Mann. Mann received widespread condemnation in the 90's following the release of her "Immediate Family" collection which depicted her own children in erotic and nude positions.

Married to restaurateur Michael McCarty, they own restaurants in LA and New York and are considered to have contributed dynamically to the culinary and artistic scenes on both coasts. They split their time between Malibu, where they live surrounded by The Malibu Vineyards; and an apartment in New York.

