



## Artists We Know: Catching up with Clio Newton.

by Jared And Alannah

March 20, 2017

**F**or our fifth edition of the bi-weekly *Artists We Know*, we are super excited to interview Clio Newton, an American artist currently residing in Zürich. She combines her conceptual background with a larger-than-life approach to hyperrealism, creating simultaneously sensitive and powerful images of women.

**J+A:** Hi Clio, thank you so much taking the time from installing your latest show, to meet with us (with the help of Skype) today. What is exciting to you as a working artist right now?

**CN:** What I'm most excited about as an artist right now is globalization. With the power of social media and the speed at which artists can connect with each other and share their work, I believe the art world is in a moment of Renaissance.



LAYING DOWN (IN PROGRESS), COURTESY OF THE ARTIST © CLIO NEWTON, 2017.

**J+A:** Absolutely. And it has definitely helped us keep up with some of the work you're currently making! I (Alannah) know you from school in NYC and currently, you're living in Zürich. If you had the option of living anywhere would you move?

**CN:** I'm really happy living and making art in Zürich. Switzerland has the advantage of being in the middle of Europe and close to a lot of different cultures and histories. I think it's a great home base for now. I've been fortunate enough to also live in New York and Florence at different times in my life. New York will always be a special place to me since it's close to where I grew up and it's where I first felt independent. Also, it's New York.



NINA (DETAIL), CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 5'X8', COURTESY OF THE ARTIST © CLIO NEWTON.

**J+A:** Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences in New York, Florence, and Zürich?

**CN:** In New York, attending the [Cooper Union](#) was a really fabulous experience for me and it opened me up to a lot of new and broadening ideas and ways of looking at my work. And living in New York alone is so stimulating.

In Italy it was really about going back to the roots of classical painting: we created our own paints, worked from a live model for painting and drawing. I was seeking that kind of academic figurative training to combine with the experimental and conceptual education I received at Cooper. Being in Italy was fabulous as well: the food, language, architecture and environment is rooted in history and culture with strong ties to the arts. I've recently started an MFA program in Zürich at [Zürcher Hochschule der Künste](#). My experience here parallels some of my experiences in New York. This school has similarities to Cooper in that it's very theory-driven with a focus on experimentation and art discourse.



MARIA AND FUSUN, OIL, EACH 5'X8', COURTESY OF THE ARTIST © CLIO NEWTON.



FROM BATHERS, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, EACH 5'X8', COURTESY OF THE ARTIST © CLIO NEWTON.

**J+A:** What makes you engage with your community?

**CN:** My work really pushes me to engage with my community. I am always looking for women who can model for me and share their life experiences. My 2015 series "Bathers" was a collection of large scale portrait drawings of women I met walking around the Zürisee – Lake Zürich, which touches the city center. For two months I introduced myself to women of all ages and origins who were swimming and sunbathing. I liked the idea of creating a series where the women were all connected to a specific time, space and activity, despite having very different life experiences that brought them to that moment.



SARAH (IN PROGRESS), CHARCOAL ON PAPER, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST © CLIO NEWTON.

**J+A:** As our virtual and physical life becomes more intertwined do you see your work branching out of its physical realm?

**CN:** I recently have been experimenting with a very low-tech kind of virtual reality. Perhaps because we are living in an increasingly virtual space I thought it would be an appropriate time to create work that deals with simulation. I've been experimenting with mirrors to create composite (3D appearing) drawings. That is when you're standing in front of the mirror installation (with two drawings hanging opposite) at the correct angle you see the two drawings in the mirror overlapped. The result is a composite image that your brain understands as three dimensional. I like this idea that the final piece can only exist in your perception.

To be honest, though – I love the physicality of drawing and painting. A lot of what inspires me in the studio is related to touch and material, I don't imagine this part of my practice will ever change.

**J+A:** Do you see your work shifting or changing in any way with our current political situation? And this is not exclusive to America's political climate, of course.



ANABELLE, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 5'X8', COURTESY OF THE ARTIST © CLIO NEWTON.

CN: Yes, absolutely. Given all that has happened recently, in the states and in the UK with Brexit and populist movements gaining momentum in areas of Europe, I think we have a responsibility to be more thoughtful and compassionate than ever. I'd like to make work that underlines what unites us, in particular as women because there is so much.

One project I'm developing focuses on issues of wealth distribution in America. The intention is to create a series of portraits of women from various economic backgrounds and exhibit the collection of portraits proportional to the present distribution of wealth. My hope is that the portraits will call attention to the dramatic disparity of means but that the humanity of the individual will be most present.

I believe we are all a lot more similar than different, I look for that in my portraits.

**J+A:** I remember for one of your shows in New York you installed a drawing you had created of a giant breast in the ground floor glass gallery at 41 Cooper Square and 3rd avenue — do you have any particularly memorable moments of people's reaction to your work?

**CN:** I was outside the gallery once and someone passing by on the street stopped and was pointing to it exclaiming (to me) "Woah, that's a big titty!" not even knowing I was the artist. It was one of those classically unpredictable and unsolicited comments New Yorkers sometimes give.



CLIO IN HER STUDIO, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST © CLIO NEWTON, 2017

**J+A:** You didn't fess up that it was your work?

**CN:** No, I didn't, haha.

**J+A:** What is the secret to having a productive day in the studio?

**CN:** Eating a lot of cookies. If I eat a lot of cookies, I'll be really focused all day, it could be the constant stream of carbohydrates fueling my brain. Cookies are where it's at for me.

**J+A:** I bet Zürich has some damn good cookies! Thank you, Clio, it has truly been a pleasure learning more about your past and current work. We look forward to seeing all the great pieces and projects you have in the works!