



Francesca Gabbiani
Paper Artist

Francesca Gabbiani is building wonderlands out of scraps of paper. She's appropriated a favorite childhood activity into high-art collages of magical figures and abandoned spaces. Gabbiani brings bright eyes of youthful possibility to forgotten or stigmatized spaces and ideas. Her work is currently shown in a group show in Milan, called *Don't Shoot the Messenger*, as well as in the Hammer Museum as a part of *The Afghan Carpet Project*.

[Malibu Magazine] How do you approach perspective?

[Francesca Gabbiani] The materials that I use are flat and opaque although very luminous. It's difficult to make elements that look totally three-dimensional. In my art, I want to subvert that perspective because of the challenge it offers to the eye. Also, recently I've been working with paper — actually peeling away in a true physical sense.

[MM] Is that in the *Deconstruction of Radical Spaces* series?

[FG] Yeah, the shadows are coming and the paper falling with gravity; it's coming out of the piece, kind of like a decay. Behind the drawing of the shape is visible. So it's more three-dimensional in that sense.



- < **Prey** 2010
Colored paper and gouache on paper
48" x 38 1/2"
- << **Lost at Sea** 2010
Colored paper and gouache on paper
Private collection
- > **Under Surveillance** 2012
Colored paper and gouache on paper
15 1/4" x 15 1/4"

[FG] A lot of these magical things come from my childhood, believing in the impossible. They also carry an idea of the feminine. I think in times when the majority of people had certain beliefs or fear of magic, those fears were more often than not directed toward women. The women were the ones persecuted, and actually they still are. There's a certain darkness to these images, and some of those decadent spaces I was making were almost a sign of how far people would take their opulence to the point of gluttony.

[MM] How do you balance the childlike nature of your work with these heavier ideas?

[FG] Maybe the theme would be the loss of innocence, but I don't make the message that clear; it's open ended. I find the loss of innocence intriguing, because we all go through it. I went through it in my personal history because I was estranged, on and off, from my family as a young teenager. And I was living in empty buildings with other youths like me. I learned a lot. There were a lot of utopias, and there were a lot of things we built that we made in the empty buildings. I didn't realize how influential this was on my art. And now that I am a little bit older, I realize that this has completely shaped my whole artistic endeavor.

[MM] What was the inspiration for this series?

[FG] I take photographs of destroyed buildings and turn them into wonderlands of color. Los Angeles is a big part of my work. I have always been very attracted to the architecture in this city. I like abandoned places, like a ruin with a piece of a staircase remaining. Suddenly, that staircase doesn't lead anywhere, just to a no-man's land. I like the idea of having nature and culture mixing together: How can I combine and pervert the two things together and make them one?

[MM] What informs your color choices?

[FG] The colors are so important to me. I drive and take pictures of the colors I see. I'll find some colors clashing with each other to the point I want to puke, while others are almost a cleanse; they clean you up once you've almost vomited all these extreme colors. Or they just melt into each other. The hues that I use really define the work in the most unnatural idealized beauty. I think that this psychedelia, which artists found in the '70s, is really rich.

[MM] Much of your work includes gothic, mythic and witchcraft imagery. What draws you to this content?

