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November 21st, 2013 by ART WEDNESDAY

COB GALLERY X NINA FOWLER

Nina Fowler's new show, *'That's Right Mister, and How's your Fairy Tale Coming Along?'* at the **Cob Gallery**, draws you into a "semi-circle of glamour" and a life-size installation of Golden Era Hollywood, with star turns from Jean Harlow, Marilyn Monroe, Rita Hayworth and Katherine Hepburn amongst others. Describing her work as having a cinematic appeal: "people seem to enjoy it on that level," the Shoreditch-based artist is already causing a stir with A-List collectors, including Jude Law, Johnny Lee Miller and Sharleen Spiteri, who have all snapped up her stunningly drafted 3-D drawings.

At the centre of the exhibition, seven life-size cut-outs of the Golden Era starlets have been propped on 'leaning boards', reconstructions of the off-screen props on which actresses would rest between takes, to avoid creasing their dresses: "I'm always struck by what morbid objects they are," says Fowler, who is being feted as one-to-watch by the Saatchi Gallery. "They look like instruments of torture. The actresses stuck in a corpse-like position. It comes back to that facade: anything to keep these women from looking crumpled."

Fowler has long been fascinated by the dark underbelly of Hollywood's Golden Era, citing Kenneth Anger's 'Hollywood Babylon' as a formative influence. She focuses on what Anger describes as "the scalding reality behind the glittering facade of America's dream factory." When we ask Fowler which movie star she most loves to draw, there's no hesitation: "Jean Harlot, a blonde bombshell of a starlet, whose studio played up her off-screen 'romance' with Clark Gable, when in reality, she had fallen for a bookish studio exec who tragically committed suicide soon after their wedding, fearing he could never satisfy her."

Fowler's first two installations were bought by public collections and her first large-scale project was hosted by Gallerie Dukan in Paris who spotted her work by chance when they were visiting her boyfriend's studio next door. After seeing a doll's house-sized maquette of silent movie star Valentino's 1926 funeral, the French gallery commissioned the full-scale version. "It was the first time a matinee idol had died and the public had gone wild. There were suicides and riots and the body was put on public show. The front of the funeral home broke down under the weight of the crowds," explains Fowler. The furore was hijacked by other stars of the day, who milked the funeral for their own publicity. I love that era, it still feels relevant to celebrities today, but then the actors had a much grander facade."

Nina Fowler is on at Cob Gallery until 9th November.

Words by Sharon Walker.

