

Beauty is far from skin deep. True beauty comes from a spirit that is at ease with itself and knows itself completely...



PICTURES: CHRISTINE PIKE

The art of combining mythology and feminism

In one medium or another, Christine Pike has been sculpting for most of her life, and her work takes inspiration from both the natural world and from folklore, as **Abigail Brown** discovers...

The dawn of the 21st century brought about a new wave of feminism, and today the movement seems to be more prevalent than it was in the 1960s. Local sculptor Christine Pike is putting women and femininity in the spotlight with her work – and also looking to mythology for the inspiration for many of her other pieces. Abigail Brown recently managed to distract Christine from hares and horned headdresses to talk about her distinctive art.

KL MAGAZINE: Let's start from the

beginning – where did your love of ceramics come from initially?

CHRISTINE PIKE: Even as a child, I've always had a passion for sculpting although it wasn't until I moved to Norfolk in 2007 that I had enough space for a kiln and could really get the ball rolling! I took myself to evening classes, I fell in love with it, and the rest is history!

KL MAGAZINE: Your work is incredibly unique – where do you get your ideas from?

CHRISTINE PIKE: A lot is inspired by myth and folklore, particularly of the

British Isles. I also have my own 'private' mythology where certain ideas have a particular meaning to me – hence the hares and my 'Wild Girls' with their horned headdresses.

KL MAGAZINE: How does the issue of femininity influence your work – and what's the story behind 'Fierce Beauty'?

CHRISTINE PIKE: As a woman, it's difficult not to be drawn into expressing the feminine in my work – especially the subtle power of female energy. So many women struggle to fit the image of how they should look, how they should behave, and what they should



aspire to and all this is imposed on them by society. I'm trying to remind women of their power and their true, inner beauty. I've had people cry in the past because a piece of mine has really moved them.

As for 'Fierce Beauty' the title was first used as the name of an exhibition I did in 2016 to showcase the 'wild' girls. I liked it so much I decided to keep it and use it on my website as well. It refers to my philosophy about the nature of female energy and the natural world.

KL MAGAZINE: *If you'll excuse the pun, hares seem to be a running theme in your work – why's that?*



CHRISTINE PIKE: Hares have a particular significance to me as they're part of my personal mythology. For me, they represent chance, mystery, and innate wisdom. Many cultures have a 'trickster' figure in their mythology, and for me that's the hare. She's the one who can shake things up, challenge your perspective, and turn you in a different direction.

KL MAGAZINE: *What is your favourite single piece of work?*

CHRISTINE PIKE: To be honest I don't really have one. I keep photos of my work and occasionally I'll look at them and think 'wow – that one was ok!' but I'm never wholly satisfied, and I'm always trying to build on what I've learned.

KL MAGAZINE: *Why did you choose ceramics rather than the more conventional art genres?*

CHRISTINE PIKE: Probably because I'm much better at 3D work than painting – I find I can 'draw' much more easily with clay than with pencil. I also love the tactile quality of clay and its ability to 'shapeshift' into anything you want it to be.

KL MAGAZINE: *What do you enjoy the most about what you do?*

CHRISTINE PIKE: I love everything about it, but in different ways and at different times. Sometimes

I want to get my hands in the clay and sculpt something new and at other times I simply enjoy the discipline of moulding and casting.

KL MAGAZINE: *What's the most difficult part of the creative process?*

CHRISTINE PIKE: Well, as I'm now discovering it's most difficult to make a successful mould to cast from! It's a highly underrated skill and it's much more difficult than making an original piece of sculpture. Making the mould can easily take three times as long as making an original sculpture.

KL MAGAZINE: *You're now exhibiting around the world – but how did your work get recognised that far afield?*

CHRISTINE PIKE: I find people in the Netherlands and Belgium really 'get' my work, although they're slightly bemused by the preponderance of the hares! Northern Europe has an ancient tradition of ceramic work, so they really respect it as an artform.

KL MAGAZINE: *What are you working on at the moment?*

CHRISTINE PIKE: Currently I'm working on some large-sized pieces to go outdoors, as gardens and outdoor spaces seem to be the perfect environment for my work – it would be perfect for these pieces to be surrounded by nature.

KL MAGAZINE: *What's in store for Christine Pike in the future?*

CHRISTINE PIKE: That's really hard to say as you never know what's around the corner. At the beginning of this year I was approached by JD Wetherspoon to make some decorative panels for the new Whalebone pub in Downham Market, which I certainly wasn't expecting! I love taking on commissions as they often force me to step outside my comfort zone. I'm also planning a series of miniature pieces cast in bronze.

KL MAGAZINE: *Where can we see more of your work?*

CHRISTINE PIKE: I'm represented by the Red Dot Gallery in Holt as well as others around the country and in the Netherlands. I'm also a member of the Greyfriars Art Space in King's Lynn and exhibit my work with them – and details of upcoming shows can be found on my website.

For more information and details about Christine and her work please visit her website at www.christinepike.com

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