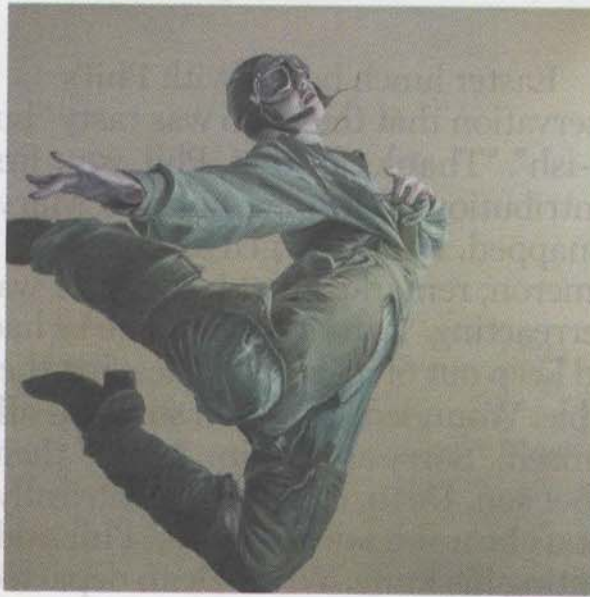


# Kathrin Longhurst

BY John McDonald



AGE: 46

LIVES: BROOKVALE, NSW

REPRESENTED BY FLINDERS LANE GALLERY,  
MELBOURNE; NANDA\HOBBS, SYDNEY

## *Her thing.*

Heroic portraits of women in a style that parodies the propaganda imagery of Socialist Realism.

## *Our take.*

Kathrin Longhurst's work is a vodka commercial waiting to happen. Born behind the Iron Curtain in the former East Germany, Longhurst has never forgotten her origins. In East Germany there were important collections of Old Masters and German Romantics but the only approved contemporary art consisted of propaganda images of workers and soldiers. These figures were often monumental in scale. Longhurst was in her late teens when she and her mother were able to move to Scandinavia. Upon migrating to Australia in 2000, she studied at the Julian Ashton Art School in Sydney.

Although she's still attracted to the bold, monumental forms of so-called propaganda art, Longhurst knows that such work can only be viewed ironically in the West, usually through the medium of advertising. She conflates the communist images of strong, assertive women with the

powerful, glamorous females on TV and in glossy magazines. Her emphasis on "girl power" suggests a positive brand of feminism.

In her Flinders Lane show, *Into Thin Air*, she portrays young women in aviator suits, suspended in space as if they have just leapt from an plane. One might also see this as a symbol of freedom and self-determination. These pilots are oddly reminiscent of Bernini's famous sculpture of St Teresa in ecstasy. In her smaller portrait heads, Longhurst shows beautiful women with the glamour and poise of actresses, dressed in the same gear. The red lipstick creates a sharp contrast with the dull green of their uniforms. Perhaps duty isn't incompatible with pleasure? *Can I afford it?*

The largest canvases in the show measure 180cm by 180cm and sell for \$15,000, the current upper limit of Longhurst's prices. This includes oils such as *Dance Me to the Edge of Reason* (above).

The smaller portrait heads are 92cm by 92cm and sell for \$7000.

*Where can I have a squiz?*

Flinders Lane Gallery, 137 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, until April 7. ■