

# Rebecca Morgan

## Critical Study:

Rebecca Morgan creates layered artworks using a combination of painting and drawing that comment on her ties to her rural roots and the stereotypes associated with them. She is inspired by the human figure, and the beauty of nature, which her technique captures. Morgan is also inspired by the “Old Masters,” particularly Northern Renaissance and Flemish genre of painters, like Frans Hals, Peter Rubens, and Adriaen Brouwer and the way they capture celebration of everyday life. The most prominent themes of her work are those of the wilderness, redneck stereotype, and continuous self portraiture/examination.

### Vocabulary:

**Perception:** the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses.

**Distortion :** the action of giving a misleading account or impression.

**Gesture:** the action of giving a misleading account or impression.

**Contour:** an outline, especially one representing or bounding the shape or form of something.

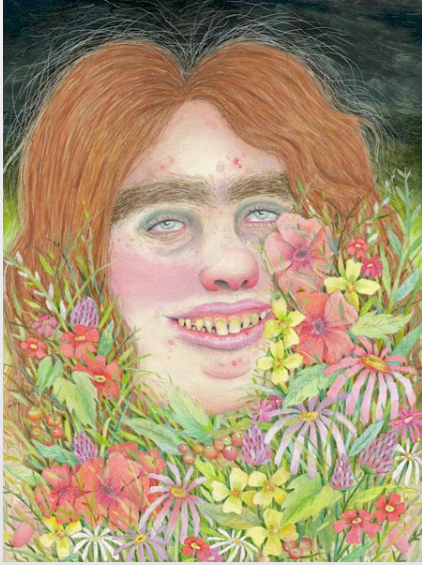
**Portrait:** a painting, drawing, photograph, or engraving of a person, especially one depicting only the face or head and shoulders.



Rebecca Morgan was born in the small rural town of Clearfield, Pennsylvania. She received a BFA from Bloomsburg University and an MFA in painting from Pratt. Morgan is known for her detailed paintings that depict exaggerated stereotypes using humor.



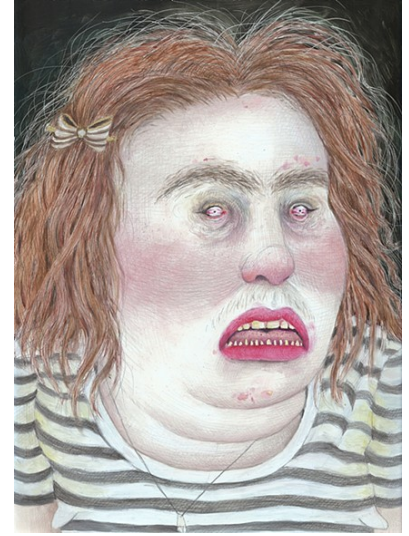
American, b. 1984



Spring Bumpkin, 2014



Untitled, 2012



Self-Portrait as Prisoner, 2012

Analyze the paintings above.

**Structural Frame:** How are they similar? How are they different?

How does the way it they are painted affect the mood or ideas of the paintings? What materials are being used? What symbols are being used to suggest stereotypes? Do the figures contrast the background? In what way? How would you characterize these figures?

**Cultural Frame:** **artist, artwork, audience, world**

What is Morgan bringing attention to through her work? How does she do this? How does Morgan **perceive** herself? Do you think others share the same thoughts? How is this relevant to today's fixation on appearance? What is Morgan saying about **perception**? Why are these self-portraits depicted as being ugly? What does that say about social class and gender? How does Morgan's roots affect her opinions of the figures she creates?



The subjects often address the stereotypes of "country bumpkin" and "redneck" by creating grotesque figures, but address them in an aesthetically pleasing way. There is comfort in these paintings for Morgan based on her roots, but we see conflict based on modern culture. The paintings are made out of drawings first, using graphite, and a smooth gessoed panel. Morgan then paints over the graphite in thin layers, allowing the translucent layers to expose the drawing creating depth.



## Subjective Frame: *Audience*

What do you see? What is the overall mood? What was the Morgan's intent? Do the colors and detail evoke any emotions? Are these emotions the same or different from what the figures look like? Are there reoccurring details or features in each portrait? What does the repetition of a certain feature say about Morgan's mindset when creating the portraits?

While Morgan's subjects are figures, humans can relate to them but her work has a versatility that transfers over class race and gender. The drawing skill and porcelain figures are cherished and incorporated into elaborate paintings that can hold their own for a sophisticated New York art audience, or a rural Appalachian coffee shop.



Hummel Hobo Bumpkin  
2014  
Graphite and Oil on Panel  
14" x 12"



Evening Tourist Bumpkin  
2011  
Graphite and Oil on Panel



Hunter or Hipster  
2012  
Graphite and Oil on Panel

**A Closer look:** Take a look at these drawings Morgan has made of other people. They are still exhibiting the same stereotype of "country bumpkin" or "redneck." What are the similarities? Differences? Do we view them differently now that she is commenting on other people and not herself? Where do these people belong? Would they be accepted where we live? Why or why not? Where do these paintings exist and why?

"Her faces can also be wonderfully grotesque, an aspect that really shines in this exhibition."  
-Noah Becker, Whitehot Magazine

"Though a native of Pennsylvania, Morgan maintains the critical distance she learned in art school, crafting sly self-portraits and depicting mountain men, stoners, and other backwoods stereotypes with knowing humor, compassion, and imagination."  
-Sharon Butler, Two Coats of Paint

## Critical Study: *World*

Morgan's work comments on stereotypes based on geography and class. The terms "country bumpkin" and "redneck" are addressed with irony and humor, however her self portraits make an important commentary on today's culture and pressures to look certain way, specifically as women, to be accepted. Morgan's work also looks as desire and what influences human desires and bad behavior, something that drives the world specifically through media's motto of "sex sells."

"There is the expression in art, to "paint or make what you know." I know myself very well- in fact, I am hyper aware. I use myself as a diaristic model; I make cartoons about my emotional discomfort, or feeling trapped in-between the urban and rural, or self-loathing indifference or confidence."

-Rebecca Morgan

"The painting or drawing IS beautiful. However, when the content and scene of the work is repulsion, the viewer can get stuck in-between the admiration of technical prowess and the uncomfortable subject matter. I like making images that are emotionally complex. Maybe because that is a reflection of myself!"

-Rebecca Morgan

### Art making:

- Create a series of small self portrait images that explore self **perception** where each image is of a different medium
- Create 3 blind **contour** drawings of the face using personal mirrors.
- Using magazines, cut out features of a face or images that represent the artist and assemble to create a collage self **portrait**
- Photograph the self and use Photoshop to digitally alter the face in some way showing **distortion**.

### References:

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