

## The cult of selfie

### *Sky Is Falling: Paintings by Julie Heffernan*

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Julie Heffernan is obsessed with herself.

Not in a bad way. Rather, the artist creates fantastical paintings full of darkness and light, life and death.

Heffernan—whose works go on display beginning on Sunday, October 20, at the Crocker Art Museum in an exhibit titled *Sky Is Falling: Paintings by Julie Heffernan*—also embeds contemporary messages in rich palettes of muted colors and intricate detail, reminiscent of Baroque and Renaissance art, but with a more modern, surrealist feel. Sensual and provocative, she invites the viewer to examine larger worldly messages through her constant self-examination.



Julie Heffernan, "Self Portrait as Animal Skirt," oil on canvas, 2011.

COURTESY OF THE CROCKER ART MUSEUM

In her "Self-Portrait as Animal Skirt," a pale, nude female dons a headdress of multicolored flowers, and her arms rest on a large flowing skirt of animal carcasses. The figure's pose is graceful and elegant, like that of European royalty, but the bright blue background and nature-infused coverings suggest an otherworldly setting.

Heffernan employs classic technique to create vast, dreamlike stories with incredible detail. She draws viewers in with strange occurrences in naturalistic settings, or realistic still lifes in invented backgrounds. The eye may focus on the beautiful woman draped on stones in the foreground of a painting, but an explosion in the background of the painting pulls the eye and lures the viewer into Heffernan's grand, twisted worlds.

Though she now lives and creates art in Brooklyn, New York, Heffernan remains tied to her Northern California roots. She earned her bachelor's degree in fine arts from UC Santa Cruz and is currently represented by the Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco as well as the Mark Moore Gallery in Culver City.

The Crocker exhibit will feature some of Heffernan's self-portraits along with other modern surrealistic oil paintings. The exhibit is organized by the Palo Alto Art Center, the paintings borrowed from various Northern California collections. Sunday, October 20, through Sunday, January 26, 2014; \$5-\$10. *Crocker Art Museum, 216 O Street; (916) 808-7000; [www.crockerartmuseum.org](http://www.crockerartmuseum.org)*

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