



Private Lives

BY KRISTA SMITH

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Artist **Annie Morris**, 29, has two solo shows on exhibit this September—one at the Allsopp Contemporary, in London, and the other at New York City's Jeannie Freilich Fine Art. Born and raised in London, Morris had her first brush with fame at the age of three: "I was taught nursery school by the [late] Princess of Wales." Morris was selected, along with schoolmate **Clemmie Hambro**, as a possible flower girl for **Diana's** wedding to__Prince Charles.__ "She got it," Morris tells me with disappointment in her voice. But then she quickly laughs, saying, "I got a pretty white box with Princess Diana's wedding cake. I've kept it all these years—Princess Diana's fruit cake is in my desk." Not a bad consolation prize. Last year Morris relocated to downtown Los Angeles to prepare for her exhibitions. "The studio spaces here are excellent—much better and bigger than in London. It's a perfect place to really work—way less distractions."

Influenced by **Paul Klee** and **Robert Rauschenberg**, Morris studied painting at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, in Paris. "I went to Paris because I always wanted to learn French. I was only going to go for a year, then ... I saw the Beaux-Arts—this fantastic kind of weird, wonderful school." She ended up staying for four years. Morris completed her education at the Slade School of Fine Art, in London. Her work comprises a series of collages, sculptures, and paintings using wooden clothespins, painted postcards, and various other materials. "At school [in France] I worked in the sculpture department, although I was painting. I'm always really attracted to different materials, not just canvas. My work is usually made up of lots of smaller pieces that come together to make one big piece. I like almost a ridiculous amount of detail."



Her break came in 2003 when she illustrated good friend **Sophie Dahl's** best-selling novella, *The Man with the Dancing Eyes*. Since then it has been a whirlwind. At 25, she had her first gallery show. "A book is fairly different to execute. An exhibition is like a play—it comes down and it goes back up. I showed lots of paintings with pigment, lots of birds and huge oversized women, and I had about four peg pieces. We sold everything but one painting—which I donated to my mum."

Last year **Christopher Bailey**, the creative director of Burberry, commissioned Morris to make a dress entirely out of her meticulously painted clothespins. The garment, roughly 30,000 pins in all, made the cover of London's *Independent Magazine* and then was displayed in the window of Colette, the high-end fashion store in Paris. She quickly became one of Britain's most collectible young artists.

When asked whom she would most like to walk through her upcoming shows, Morris says **Louise Bourgeois**, the sculptor-artist. "She has this salon in New York every Sunday. She's done it for over 30 years—I think she's in her 90s. She doesn't leave the house. You bring your work to her, and she gives you a mark. If she came to the gallery and gave me a 9 out of 10 ... that would be pretty good."

Krista Smith is *Vanity Fair's* senior West Coast editor.



Annie Morris in her studio, in downtown Los Angeles. Photograph by Jason Bell.

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