



Beyond Feminism: 8 Creatives Empowering Women From Behind The Scenes

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It's one thing for an artist to weave political tropes into their work; it's quite another for them to throw themselves into the line of fire. But, illustrator and writer Molly Crabapple is fearless. In the past few years, she's been places few of her peers would dare to tread, documenting the Syrian refugee crisis in Tripoli, the economic collapse of Greece, and even Guantánamo Bay. Her visceral visuals bring a lurid reality to her stories that more traditional reporting lacks. It's hard to simply browse to the next page — and that's the point. Though Crabapple only recently started her official journalistic pursuits, she's been active in sociopolitical dissent for a few years. In fact, she turned her Zucotti Park-bordering apartment into a makeshift headquarters for Occupy Wall Street protesters back in 2011 and created murals inspired by the movement. She has since been hailed as Occupy's "greatest artist" by Matt Taibbi.

Crabapple's drawings contain fascinating paradoxes. They are ornamental and inspired by burlesque and carnivals but incredibly dark in theme. In a world of MFA-trained abstractionists, they are the epitome of gritty, refreshing rebellion. But, of course, she's a bit of a rebel herself — a sometimes nude-model and art-school dropout, she taught herself to draw while working at a Parisian bookstore, using *Alice In Wonderland* and *A Tart's Progress* as her guides. Soon she was teaching others at her anti-art academy, Dr. Sketchy's, an amazing creative cabal that paired life drawing lessons with generous libations and burlesque vibes.

That same picaresque spirit underlined her surreal murals, which rapidly grew in popularity even before she became associated with political upheaval. Now 30 and working on her first book, *Drawing Blood*, she seems poised to truly transcend the boundaries of media, decimating any distance between art and action. Also, her writings on sexism and aging and privilege in the arts are piercingly accurate, vital reads.