



Talking to My Hair

Date

1994

Primary Maker

Alice Maher

Medium

Etching and aquatint on paper

Dimensions

27 x 20 cm

Description

This is a two colour intaglio print (etching and aquatint) on paper. It depicts a young girl with her hair growing straight out in front of her. It is as if it is blinding and overshadowing her. Maher has used hair in many works before and has taken inspiration from hair's appearance in mythology (such as Coma Berenices and Andromeda).

'This is one of a number of etchings made in 1995 at the Dublin Graphic Studio. The series is called 'The Conversation', and in each image of that series two elements co-exist with and 'speak' to each other. In this etching the girl's hair has begun to grow and take on a life of its own. It stands in front of her like an independent creature even though it is still attached to her head. Its billowing tresses hide her face, so we do not know what the nature of her conversation might be. Perhaps she is hiding behind her hair, or perhaps it is growing out of control and taking over her body? This is not a self-portrait, but at the time of making the etching I was very interested in the language of hair, its meaning in history and culture, and most particularly its place in the formation of the female psyche. Many stories and fables refer to the monstrous growth of hair with its power to both fascinate and repulse. In 'Rapunzel' a girl's hair becomes her means of escape as well as her downfall. In a well-known French fairy tale the young 'Melusine's hair grows wildly until it covers the town and then goes on to smother the whole country. Eventually a magic sword cuts off the offending excess and Melusine goes back to being a 'normal' girl. In 'Talking to my Hair' we are not sure at what stage of transformation this girl and her hair find themselves, nor are we sure where their conversation will lead.' Alice Maher (2010)