

art Confidential



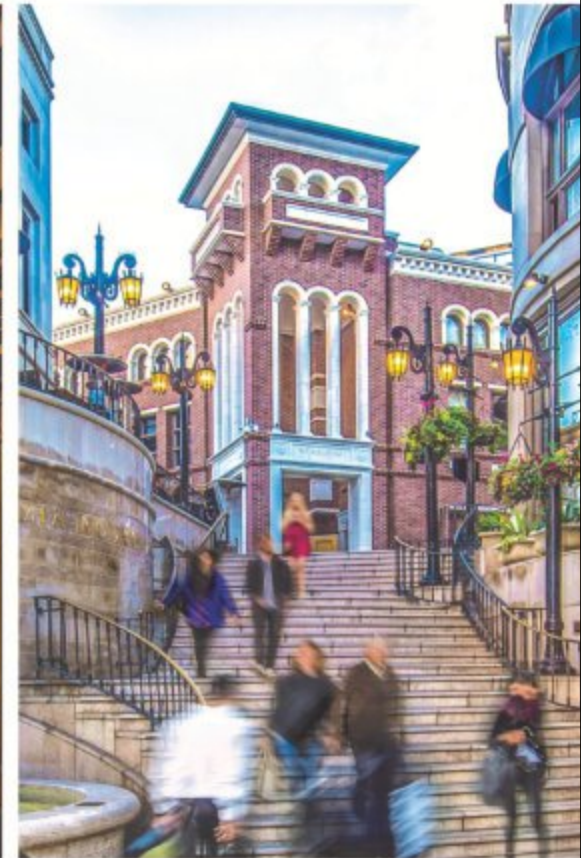
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SHANE GUFFOGG
AT THE STILL POINT

DEMYSTIFYING NFT'S



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Summer is one of my favorite seasons. A time for vacationing, enjoying the outdoors, and feeling the rays of the sun. Growing up in the south, I have a fondness for the warm balmy nights I enjoyed for many years. As the heat from the day withers, you are left with an evening ripe for a night out or a dip in the pool. When I see films or photographs depicting those southern evenings, my senses jump alive as I can almost feel the night moisture on my skin and hear the rhythmic ticks of cicadas in the yard. Nostalgia is a powerful thing.

In this issue of Art Confidential, we explore a bit of nostalgia from Hollywood, when stars were stars. For our cover story we had the honor of sitting down with the incomparable Loni Anderson. Her timeless charm and genuine demeanor remains strong after four decades in the world of entertainment. Her journey through the art world started many years before her career blossomed as an actress. Aside from the art of acting, Loni has a personal art history from teaching, to sculpting, to collecting which our readers will enjoy learning about.

We also profile the extraordinary Shane Guffogg. To say his work is captivating would be an understatement. His *Still Point Series* mesmerizes the viewer like a sledgehammer of abstraction and color. The work fulfills on an emotional level, yet possesses an intellectual depth harkening to the scientific origins of life. It simultaneously evokes the physics of string theory with images of ribbon on Christmas morning. I thank Shane for inviting us to his studio and home.

I would like to again thank our dedicated team that made this Summer issue possible. Their passion and reverence for art allows us to bring you unique stories and perspectives that we hope provide our readers with a universal appreciation for all things creative.

Enjoy the issue, embrace the art within yourself, and create louder.

Wesley Kemp

Editor-in-Chief



CONTENTS

Culture & design

- 12 NO STRANGER TO TRAILBLAZING
- 20 THE MECURIAL DANCE OF IRIS VAN HERPEN
- 28 MECHANICS REALLY DO MATTER
- 34 PRINCE OF THE BEACH
- 40 FACING WEST, LOOKING EAST



20



34

COVER

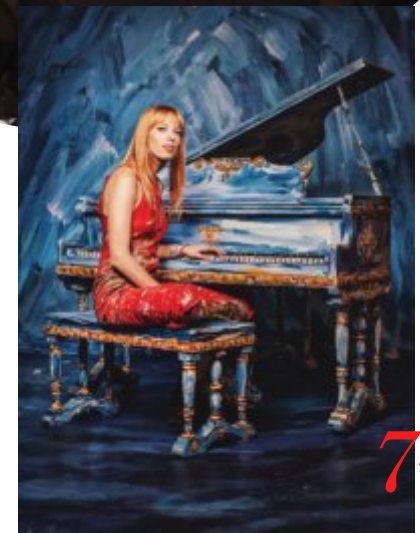
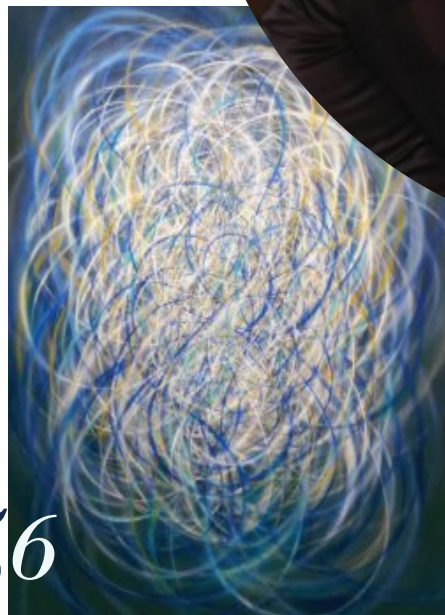


48

Special features

- 48 THE ARTFUL CHARM OF LONI ANDERSON
- 56 SHANE GUFFOGG AT THE STILL POINT
- 66 DEMYSTIFYING NFT'S
- 74 ALEXA MEADE NORMAL RULES DON'T APPLY
- 82 FOUR...THREE...TWO RODEO

56



74

Oldworld

102

**90 MASTER OF THE VENETIAN RENAISSANCE
TITIAN**

**96 LAST GENIUS OF THE RENAISSANCE
BERNINI**

**102 THE TEENAGE PRODIGY
ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI**



Newworld

114



108 OLIVIA STEELE NEON FIRE

114 THE INNATE CREATION OF IRA REINES

122 FINDING PEACELOVE THROUGH UNCONVENTIONAL STYLE

128 A SPARK FOR THE CREATIVE

132 CURATING WITH CORE CONNECTION

138 VALUE BEYOND THE CANVAS

BOWERS MUSEUM

— FEATURED EXHIBITION —

TREASURES IN

GOLD & JADE

MASTERWORKS FROM T A I W A N



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dc Culture & design

NO STRANGER TO TRAILBLAZING

By Keturah King

**THE MERCURIAL DANCE OF
IRIS VAN HERPEN**

By Barbie Brady

MECHANICS REALLY DO MATTER

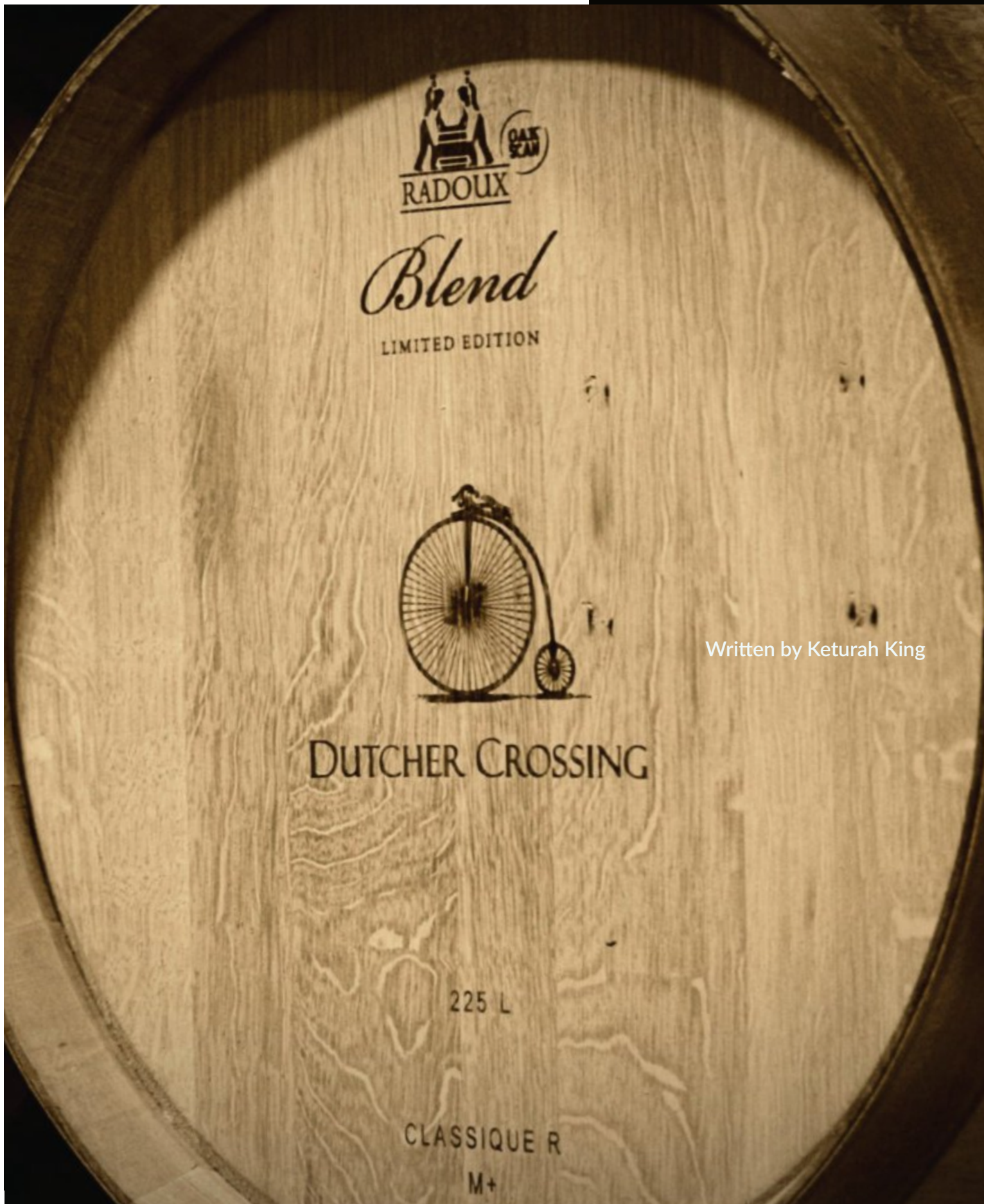
By Barbie Brady

PRINCE OF THE BEACH

By Sara Debevec

FACING WEST, LOOKING EAST

By Ariel Maccarone



Written by Keturah King

NO STRANGER TO TRAILBLAZING

The wonderous worlds of fine wines and fine art have been inextricably linked for centuries, like the perfect flowers of a wild grapevine. According to Liv-Ex (the global marketplace for the wine trade) just as recently as 2018, wine was a more stable investment than gold! A comprehensively fitting fact when one recalls that gold was first discovered in California as far back as 1848.

Now, whilst French Burgundy may have taken pole position as the premier wine region in the world again this year, The Golden State of California is proving to be a mighty adversary with its robustly rich, red fruited, full bodied Pinot Noirs, and charmingly creamy Chards.

These California Chardonnays are slowly moving away from the

big, oaky flavor profiles from days of yore to more refined, softer fermentation processes. This, in turn, has birthed an explosion of premium quality across American wine country, making our homegrown varietals comparable - and in some cases even better - than the crustier European counterparts.

The Art of Wine itself is a many splendored joy for those with discerning palates; whether that be in the making, or indeed, the consumption of the aforementioned tippie. And while 2020 may have brought indoor wining and dining to an abrupt halt for most of us, winemaker and Dutcher Crossing Winery proprietress, Debra Mathy, steadfastly refused to let anything beyond grapes get in between her and the production of the best New World vintages & varietals that serve as ambassadors to her picturesque vineyard.

Location plays an important role in producing delicious decants of one's favored ruby reds and terrifically toothsome whites, and the award-winning wines at Dutcher Crossing Winery spare no expense in exhibiting beautiful terroir. The charmingly bijou winery is nestled at the junction of two idyllic creeks: Dry Creek and Dutcher Creek, in Sonoma County, Northern California, USA.

As the first single woman to own a winery in the county, Mathy is no stranger to trailblazing. Born and raised in Wisconsin, she decided to venture into the wine industry after a high school trip to the famous wine-soaked shores of the Côtes du Rhône region in

“It took time to prove that I wanted to be here and I knew what I was doing and I was going to be part of the community...”

France. “You know, the only reason I took French was to go to France. We went to the Southern Rhône area and Paris...I had never even seen a vineyard until I went to France”, recounts Mathy nostalgically. “I had permission to actually taste wine and I don't know where I thought wine came from, but it was magical! And I came home and said, “I want to [get into the] wine industry!””

Mathy shared her, at the time, fanciful aspirations with her father who chuckled and jokingly chided her to get a degree and a “real” job. Alas, the clarion call of California wine country was clearly too clamorous for her to ignore. So, Mathy sojourned from the vernal corn fields of Wisconsin to the vigneron of Sonoma. The move, however, was not without its share of challenges. Mathy's beloved father was sadly diagnosed with stage four cancer. Realizing the necessity for his daughter to pursue her dreams wholeheartedly, he not only encouraged her to purchase the vineyard, but also decided to embark on the mammoth project with her. Unfortunately, three short months

before the vineyard sale was complete, her father passed away. An avid cyclist, Mathy carries the last gift her father gave her - a vintage penny farthing bicycle - everywhere, in the form of the company logo emblazoned on all Dutcher Crossing wine bottles. “It represents our journey into wine country together, since he couldn't be here on a daily basis.”

When Mathy purchased the 35-acre vineyard 14 years ago, it produced a mere five wines. Today, Dutcher Crossing sits on 75 acres of estate-designated vineyards and offers over 30 wines from a variety of wine regions in





Mathy credits the exponential growth of the vineyard and brand to her genuine love of what she does and the young professionals she mentors.



Mathy carries the last gift her father gave her - a vintage penny farthing bicycle - everywhere, in the form of the company logo emblazoned on all Dutcher Crossing wine bottles.



Sonoma, Napa, and Mendocino counties. Mathy credits the exponential growth of the vineyard and brand to her genuine love of what she does and the young professionals she mentors. “I find their success almost as enjoyable as [watching] the winery’s success...that’s my favorite part.” She also derives joy and inspiration from getting acquainted with each customer that visits the vineyard. “It’s one of those businesses that is something different every single day, which is really, really nice.” Whether she’s making the rounds blending wines with her winemakers, inspecting grapes whilst strolling through one of her many vineyards, or in her office going through the business accounts and spreadsheets - Mathy can always be found hard at work further developing her wine-craft.

As the first single woman to own a winery in the county, Mathy is no stranger to trailblazing.

To both her and her chief winemaker, taste is the most prominent attribute of all Dutcher Crossing wines. The intense flavors of the well-structured, premium fruit Mathy grows leads to longer mouthfeel length on the palate, more complexity in the wines, and the most ambrosial aromas one should be lucky to get a whiff of. Her personal favourite white wine varietal? The Dutcher Crossing 2019 Sauvignon Blanc (which won the Gold Medal at the San Francisco International Wine Competition). One might delight in pairing this beautiful, mineral white that is bursting with citrus and tree fruit flavors with either goat’s cheese, seafood or a simple vegetarian salad, in order to fully enhance and complement the depth of flavors.

However, if opulent, firm reds are de rigueur, Mathy recommends you titillate your tastebuds with a sophisticated bottle of Dutcher Crossing 2018 Terra

de Promissio Pinot Noir. This vintage promises to excite with its delightfully layered notes of cocoa, strawberries, red cherries and oak. One might decide to pair this luscious wine with an exquisite mid-rare tenderloin medallion of beef, veal, game or piquant poultry.

Should you desire an even bolder red with which to celebrate or mark a special occasion, look no further than Mathy's prized Napa Cabernet. Named for her dear dog, the Dutcher Crossing Dutchess Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon is big, rich and incredibly deep. You will find that this muscular & extracted scarlet wine leaves beautiful hints of vanilla, black fruit, chocolate and leather lingering on your palate long after you have polished off your glass of the remarkable vermilion *vin*.

Oenophiles will want to pair this gorgeous bottle with juicy, tender meats and mature, hard cheeses.

Mathy is undoubtedly beloved by her employees - old and new alike. She credits the staff she retained from the winery's previous owner for helping her learn as much as she could about the mouthwatering selection of Dutcher Crossing wines. And as she was taught, so she teaches. Mathy affably extends her time to inspired mentees who wish to follow in her footsteps. In fact, if you close your eyes, you can certainly feel and almost even taste the overflow of camaraderie, care and compassion exuded in each Dutcher Crossing wine sample. Mathy shares that she is simply passing the torch on to those who wish to grasp it, thereby illuminating the path for more young women to enter the industry.

With the exception of her winemakers, none of her employees received formal enological education. Instead, she trains her employees experientially on site. And in her bid to positively disrupt the industry - her core staff is made up of mostly females.

Why is this disruptive, you ask?

Historically speaking, winemaking has been widely regarded as a 'boys club' of sorts. Mathy herself faced backlash when she first moved to Sonoma. She recounts, "It took time to prove that I wanted to be here and I knew what I was doing and I was going to be part of the community...those were kind of big challenges for me."

“you don't have to do things the ‘wine industry’ way, you just have to do things the right business way.”

Ever willing to impart knowledge and enlighten customers, colleagues and mentees alike, Mathy shares the most important piece of advice she has learnt over the last 14 years, “you don't have to do things the ‘wine industry’ way, you just have to do things the right business way. And if you work hard enough, the sky's the limit.”

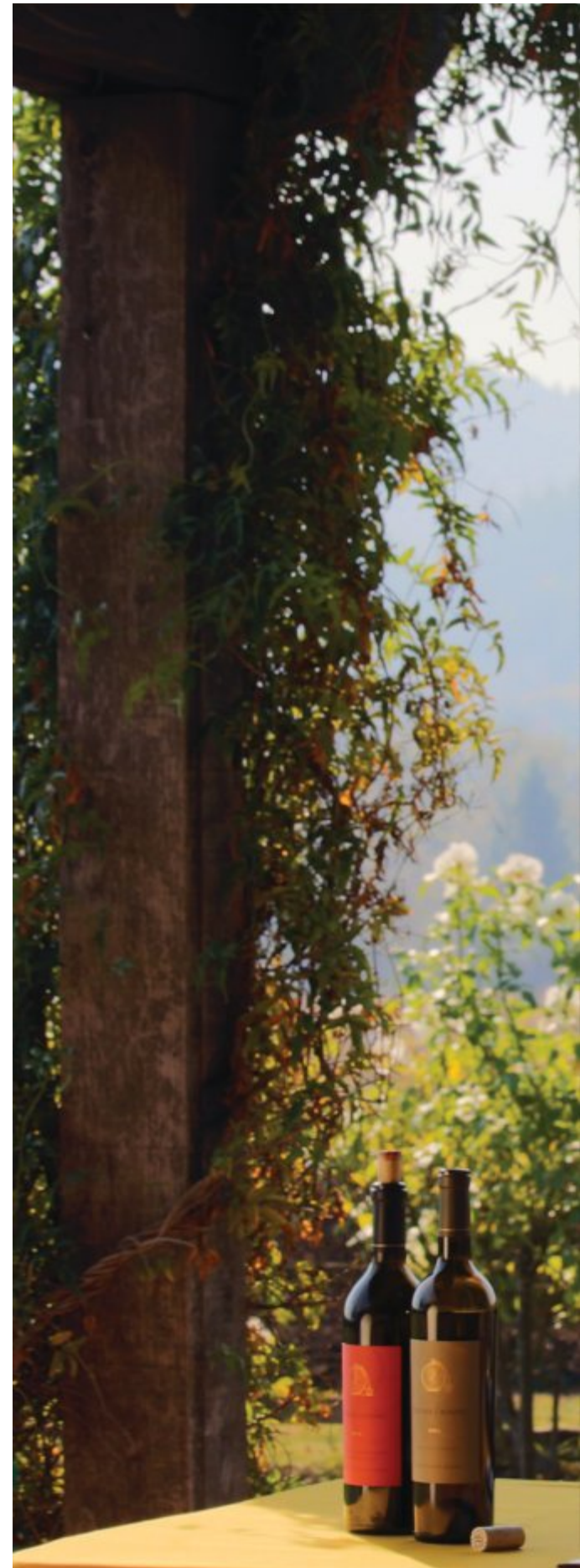
With a plethora of accolades and awards to her name, Debra Mathy is an unstoppable force. This inspirational woman turned her passion into her portfolio and is undoubtedly one to watch in the New World of wines.

Quickly becoming synonymous with luxury, Dutcher Crossing Winery is garnering a ubiquitous presence worldwide. And the Fine Art world couldn't be more pleased.

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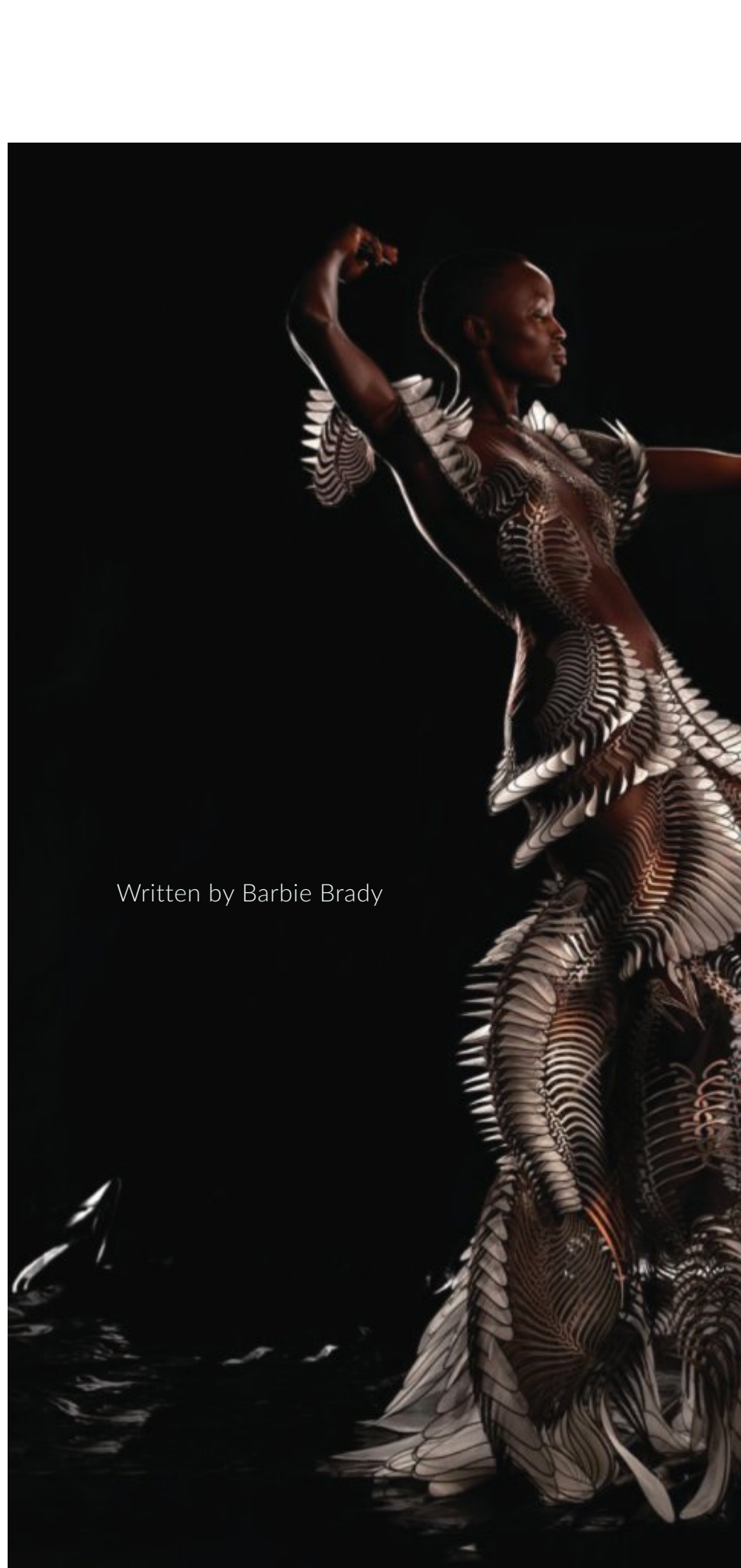




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Written by Barbie Brady

The Mercurial Dance of Iris van Herpen *by van Herpen*

If clothing is a necessity and fashion is a luxury, then the vivid creations by Dutch designer Iris van Herpen can only be described as art. Van Herpen started her storied career at the tender age of 23 after studying Fashion Design at ArtEZ Institute of the Arts Arnhem. She interned at Alexander McQueen in London and Claudy Jongstra in Amsterdam, then bravely embarked on her own unique path. Combining transformative, symbiotic, intricate patterns, textures, materials and skill, she creates fashion that is more like a vivid dream, and less like anything else out there. Her ability to go beyond limitations and to recognize fashion and architecture as true expressions of the feminine voice, allows her a freedom and intensity that is unparalleled by any of her contemporaries.

Van Herpen launched her label, Iris van Herpen in 2007. After only 2 years she began to win Dutch fashion and innovation awards for her work. Her open-minded approach to technique provided her with a roadmap to explore

“My design is exactly the opposite of what fashion generally is today.”

cutting edge technology while maintaining a deep reverence for craftsmanship and attention to detail. Her inspiration comes from the natural world but is influenced by the human impact on that world - rooting Van Herpen in the midst of both.

“My design is exactly the opposite of what fashion generally is today. I go back to forgotten craftsmanship and the love for handwork, and at the same

time I’m embedding new technologies and collaborations with artists, architects, and scientists.” – Iris van Herpen

By 2011 Van Herpen had started to use 3D printing as an element in her work. This revolutionary breakthrough in technology allowed her to create shapes and textures which fabric alone could not do. Painstaking details combined with exacting execution allowed for one-of-a-kind moments that could be worn. Yet she didn’t stop there. Her use of unorthodox materials expanded to polymer liquid, metals, alchemy, magnetism, lasers, bones, energy, iron resin, silicone and so much more.

It was at this time that she was invited to become a guest-member of the Parisian Chambre Syndicale de la Haute





Photo: Bryan Huynh

Couture. Part of the Fédération française de la couture, this distinction is quite rare for those who aren't born French. The Fédération criteria for being considered Haute Couture is rigorous. In order to earn the right to call oneself a couture house and use the term "haute couture" in any way you must adhere to some very specific rules. Your designs must be made-to-order for private clients, customized for them specifically with multiple fittings. You must have a physical workshop in Paris that employs full-time staff that includes no less than twenty technical people. And you absolutely must present two collections each year that consist of 50 original designs (once in January and once in July) representing looks from day to evening. It's a tall order for any label, but a definitive leg-up for a label that is only 5 years old.

A custom piece by Van Herpen can cost anywhere from \$20,000 to \$100,000

This level of execution and innovation doesn't come cheap. A custom piece by Van Herpen can cost anywhere from \$20,000 to \$100,000 and that's if you can get a slot in her appointment book. Some of her creations take 2 years to finish and can be touched by 50-100 skilled experts. Some of her most notable clients include Lady Gaga, Björk, Katy Perry, Beyoncé, Scarlett Johansson and Cate Blanchett to name a few. She's been featured in performances, music videos, red carpets, and on album covers. However, her notoriety doesn't stem from these famous associations. In contrast, it's from the work itself. As that's where the true magic of her mind lies.

"The symbiotic relationships found in nature's intricate web, the invisible forces that structure architectural patterns, and the mercurial dance in which the body and mind intersect are

influences that shape the visionary creative process" – IrisvanHerpen.com Her work is other-worldly. She generates shapes that are reminiscent of nature but call into focus elements like air, earth and water. They are alien designs that celebrate the female form. Insect or amoeba? Alien or animal? Her use of 3D printing allows for precise sculpting of shapes to drape and move on the body. Boundaries between the known and unknown emerge. Her models and clients appear to be one with the garments, all movement is in sync. The fashion and the feminine flow together. And the effect is sensational. Like exotic birds, or creatures of the sea, she transforms the model into something magnificently caught between all that

we know and all we can imagine.

Van Herpen's boundless ability to collaborate with architects, technicians and

scientists provides not only inspiration but a fresh, untapped energy that is entirely new. For this reason, her work has been included in many museums worldwide. Her first solo exhibition happened in 2012 at the Groninger Museum in the Netherlands. However, within just a few years, she had work included in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City, the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Rightly so, as a museum is where this sort of magical art belongs.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in particular loves to collect the work of Van Herpen and has several unorthodox pieces in their collection. One piece entitled *Bird*, from the Fall/Winter 2013/14 collection has actual bird skulls with glass eyes and studded with pearls then dipped in silicone. These bird skulls adorn each shoulder and hips. Thousands of laser-cut nude feathers

cover the garment giving the illusion of movement, fur, flight, and fantasy. It's a conservator's nightmare. Van Herpen's use of materials is so avantgarde that there is no telling how it will hold up over time. Most plastics tend to break down with oil secretions and ultimately turn sticky and collect dust and dirt from the air. There is no way to know how they will fair. There are already plans to deny these creations light and air in order to sustain them for the ages.

Roots of Rebirth is the title of her Spring-Summer 2021 Haute Couture collection. "Iris van Herpen explores a symbiosis of high technology and the artisanal craftsmanship of couture, through a collection that references the intricacy of fungi and the entanglement of life that breathes beneath our feet." States her website. As the title suggests, the work references roots, vines, webs of delicate thread, mushroom shapes and sacred geometry. You will find plumes of ombre draping, regale kinetic headdresses, scales of precision, and a myriad of feathered forms. Van Herpen uses vibrant color, unexpected shapes, and exquisite tailoring to transform her models into muses from mother nature herself.

Scientist, Merlin Sheldrake said "Thinking about fungi makes the world look different. These astonishing organisms challenge our animal imaginations and make questions of many of our well-worn concepts, from individuality to intelligence." Using roots and spores as guides, Van Herpen organically designs shapes that mirror what's happening in the undergrowth of the forest floor. Twisting and blossoming, weaving and winding, this is the landscape that destroys and yet reincarnates all life.

American artist, Casey Curran, was invited to collaborate on this particular show by making two kinetic crowns that gently frame and reframe the models,





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compounding their movement with its own. His work generally consists of subtle motion generated by hand cranks and based in themes of nature. The act of engaging with his work to provide movement makes the viewer an integrated part of the experience. Likewise, the addition of his “crowns” balanced the bridge of the ethereal and the real as the models walked the runway. Once again proving that Van Herpen knows exactly when and how to wow.

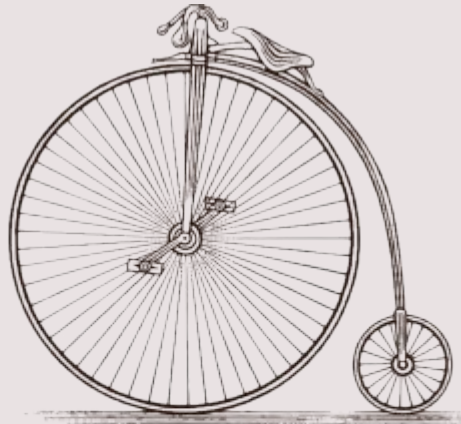
If you, yourself, are not a famous celebrity or person of great wealth, you can always purchase a modest belt or scarf from her online boutique. Belts cost € 1.000 (Roughly \$1217.95 USD) and scarves are much more reasonable at € 169 (\$205.83 USD). You might also try sourcing some of her collaboration shoes that she regularly creates with the help of shoe designer, United Nude. I was able to locate a few of her Iris van Herpen X United Nude AW10 Synesthesia ones on the resale site, Poshmark.com for a mere \$800 USD. A bargain if you'd like to own a piece of fantastical fashion. They might look

challenging to walk in, but are undoubtedly works of art.

Van Herpen has also created three books to date. Each cataloging her stunning sculptural visions for various periods in her timeline of development. A must have for any budding artist, fashion designer or fan of the fabulous. Each diving into the intricacies of concepting, fabricating and finishing these dreamlike signatures of style. They contain extensive photography and interviews providing additional insight into the inner workings of her fabulous mind.

There are no current plans on the horizon to open any ready-to-wear retail locations. Iris van Herpen's elaborate creations and her couture sensibilities truly can't be watered down to satiate the masses. And isn't that refreshing? A true artist, in every sense of the word. Her label is kept afloat by the custom bespoke design orders from the wealthy and the gracious museums and collectors around the world who recognize its value by its aesthetics and beauty.

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Mechanics Really Do Matter



Written by Barbie Brady
Photographs by JL Cederblom



Craftsmen in the 16th century figured out how to turn a clock into something small enough to wear on one's person.

Pocketwatches became all the rage by the 17th century as a symbol of efficiency, fashion and status. Wristwatches at that time were almost exclusively worn by women and marketed as bracelets. The pocketwatch held favor until the early 20th century, when military men started to wear wristwatches as well since it was a simpler solution for men at war. The British dominated watch manufacturing for much of the 17th and 18th centuries and geared most of what was produced towards the wealthy. A few centuries later and technology reimagined the functionality of the humble wristwatch by making it smart. Our watches talk to our phones, track our fitness, receive and send messages, play music and do so much more than simply tell time.

You might think that the humble wristwatch, regardless of how expensive or high-end it might be, would be completely out of fashion in this current technology-based climate. However, you would be mistaken. The well-made watch is an investment that has stood the test of time. And yes, the mechanics really do matter. Truly timeless timepieces are still being hand-made. The ones that hold and increase their value are those that are entirely mechanical, meaning spring-driven without batteries. And added complications (or the ability to include the date, day of the week, alarms, chronographs and automatic winding mechanisms) definitely add to the value and the desirability of the watch. Additionally, the type of metal used, and whether it includes any gemstones in the design increases its worth. All original parts are necessary to maintain the value of a watch. Even something as simple as the crystal needs to be repaired or replaced by the

manufacturer in order to keep your investment intact.

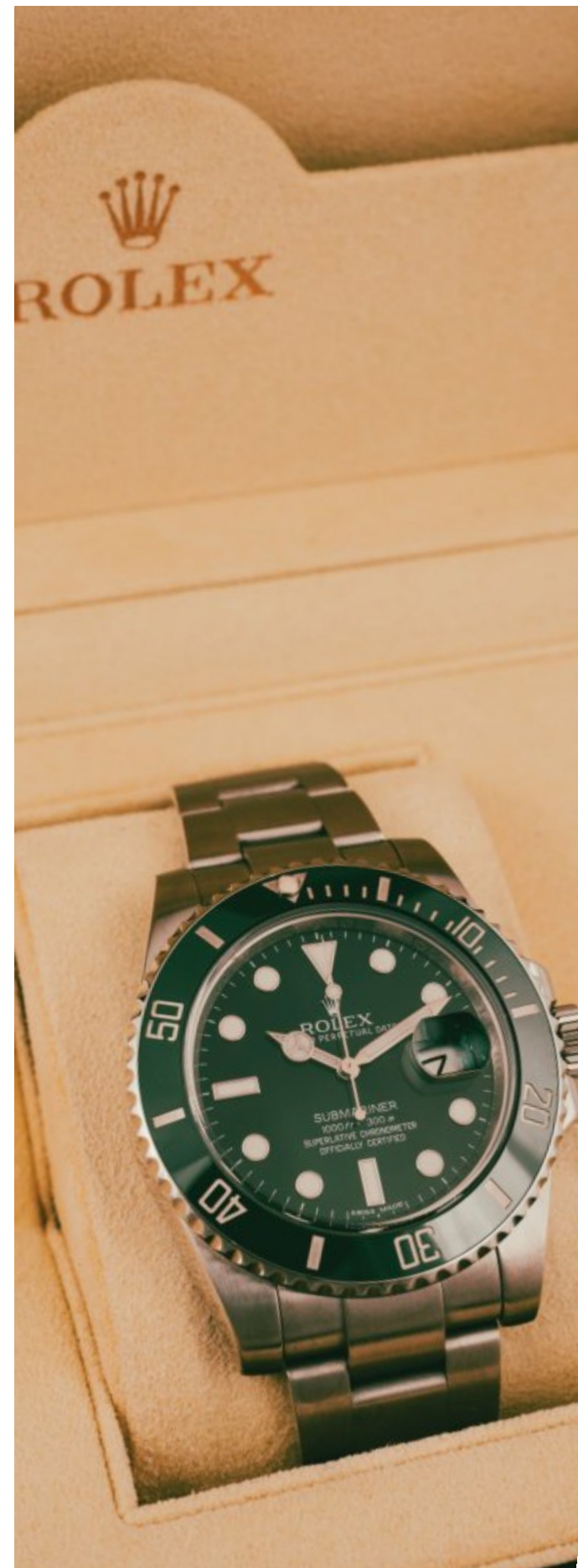
We sat down with our resident jewelry expert, Peter Sedghi from Luxury Jewels of Beverly Hills, and talked watches. If you're a novice and looking to purchase something special in the way of a watch, we have some tips of the trade to help guide your quest. And if you are something of a connoisseur, we hope this article helps reinforce your own investment decisions.

The watch market right now is so hot that Sedghi can't manage to keep inventory in the store for more than a few days. His top 3 favorite brands right now are Rolex, Audemars Piquet and Patek Philippe. All high-end luxury brands that can retail anywhere from \$10,000 USD to \$100,000 plus. "Due to COVID and the world-wide quarantine all of the major watch manufacturer factories had to completely shut down. This caused a shortage of inventory.

The well-made watch is an investment that has stood the test of time.

With a lot of people getting PPP money and the help of the government stimulus, believe it or not, people are looking to invest in watches." With the increased desire to buy, and the shortage of supply, watches have increased in value by double and sometimes triple in some cases. Take for instance a basic, stainless steel Rolex Daytona. Only 6 months ago, you could have picked a second-hand one up for maybe \$4500 if you were lucky enough to find one. Now that exact same watch would cost you \$8 – 11,000.

Sedghi tells us that we'd be surprised at how popular watches have become with young people right now. After school, most days, Luxury Jewels will get kids as young as 12, or 13 coming in



just to look at the watches. “They have done their research as well, knowing which brands are hot and exactly what details to ask about.” Aspirational future customers to be certain, these teens might just surprise you with their knowledge on what’s important, and what features are desirable.

So why buy a watch? You have the time at your fingertips with your cell phone. There was a historic dip in the watch market from about 1973 until around 2007 when people got very used to carrying their time telling devices in their pocket in the shape of a phone. However, the status and the style of the humble wristwatch never really went out of fashion. Men, in general, have far less jewelry options than women. The purchase of a fine watch is always a winner. But also, if you are going to wear one, why not make it something



that increases in value year after year with a little care?

Where do I start thinking about a watch? Like all expensive purchases, consider your budget. You can spend thousands of dollars on a quality time piece and you should be sure that you can afford making that leap. Come up with an amount that you can afford to part with and then start doing a bit of research to see what your options in that price range would be. It is not only wise, but prudent to consult with a respected jeweler before purchasing something that might not be all that

was promised. Obviously, shopping directly from Rolex or Cartier themselves would be one way to secure your investment. But you can find some amazing deals second-hand if you know what to look for and who to consult.

What are some things to literally watch out for in shopping for a second-hand luxury watch? First is to make sure the seller is reputable. Do your research, ask around, get friendly with some jewelers who can help guide your decisions. Make sure you see if the movement (the mechanics of the watch) have been changed. It’s one thing to have a watch cleaned, but entirely another to pop out the old

Sedghi tells us that we’d be surprised at how popular watches have become with young people right now.





With the increased desire to buy,
and the shortage of supply,
watches have increased in value by
double and sometimes triple in
some cases.



impacts the value. Most luxury watch makers won't sell replacement parts to wholesalers anymore so if someone assures you that they can get an actual replacement Rolex crystal and do the work, they are most likely telling tales. It is also extremely important to have the original diamonds or gems in the watch. Some jewelers will drill into a plain watch to add such embellishments and this seriously hurts the overall value, even if they are seemingly adding a precious stone into the mix.

In summary, now is a great time to buy or sell a luxury watch. Be smart about your sources and know as much as you can about the origins and the originality of the watch you are considering. If you are selling, be sure that your watch is entirely original. If there is anything on your watch that needs replaced, it will be worth it to take it to the retail location of the original manufacturer. For example, a crystal on a Rolex might cost you anywhere from \$1600 – 2400 USD to replace. However, an unofficial crystal replacement can decrease the value of your investment by tens of thousands of dollars. And to make matters worse, the unofficial crystal replacement can also invalidate the manufacturer's warranty and Rolex won't even touch it once it's been done.

While technology marches ever forward, a good, quality wristwatch will never go out of style. Even if that means wearing your status on one hand, and your smart watch on the other!

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movements and replace them for something less desirable. Make certain the parts are original. If the crystal or the band has been replaced, but not officially by the watch maker, this

If you are going to wear one, why not make it something that increases in value year after year with a little care.



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Prince *Of the* Beach



Written by Sara Debevec
Photographs by JL Cederblom

I met Tao Ruspoli in the Spring of 2017 in a small derelict town on the shores of Salton Sea, called Bombay Beach. Together with friends, art patrons and entrepreneurs Stefan Ashkenazy and Lily Johnson White, he co-founded Bombay Beach Biennale - an annual art gathering in response to the environmental disaster that fell upon the Salton Sea in the 1980s. Tracy Chung, one of the biennale organizers and art collectors, who I had met a couple years back at a gallery in New York, invited me to create an immersive talk show documenting the experience that indulged my fascination with Site-specific art and dereliction.

I was already aware of the artist interventions happening in that area but Bombay Beach was so much more than I could have imagined. "Many people don't know that Salton Sea is the largest, body of water in California, created by accident in 1905 when they were damming the Colorado river to bring water into Southern California," explained Tao. "It was the breach in the dam that caused it. For two years they couldn't control the flooding and the contents of the Colorado River spilled into this low, ancient riverbed, 250 feet below sea level," he added. In the 1950s and 1960s the area became a popular tourist destination visited by the likes of Frank Sinatra, President Eisenhower and The Beach Boys, but in 1980s, due to farm run offs and the increasing salinity of the water, the sea got contaminated and most of the wildlife died, turning Bombay Beach into an abandoned resort town.

Open to conversation and bursting with enthusiasm for the movement he had started, Tao was coordinating everything from moving air streams - turned - art galleries to large otherworldly art installations and thought provoking sculptures. Our walk led us to the epicenter of Bombay Beach Biennale, *The Bombay Beach Institute of Particle*



Physics, Metaphysics, & International Relations that's part museum/gallery, part performance space and part sculpture park featuring elegant gardens with chickens and rabbits running around, like a scene out of a Wes Andersen film.

His mother, Austrian - American actress Debra Berger was there too, helping

the institute was a museum where you could hold a real human brain?

Unsure if I met a mad scientist, an architect or a philosopher, I immediately took a liking to Tao, not just because we had similar interests but because talking to him was like engaging with a character from a well written novel. It only got better when I

Tao was coordinating everything from moving air streams - turned - art galleries to large otherworldly art installations and thought provoking sculptures.

Philosophy at Berkeley and went on to become a filmmaker and photographer.



other artists bring their visions to life - with her sleeves up, holding a welding gun in her hand and making sure the work was done before the visitors started arriving for the biennale. This, however was not a public event. It was a secret gathering of art connoisseurs, writers, philosophers, opera singers, dancers, performers and intellectuals, eager to engage with this landscape and turn it into a site of critical contemplation. Did I mention that at

later found out that Tao was the second son of an Italian Prince, Alessandro "Dado" Ruspoli - a very eccentric, rebellious and unconventional man who in part inspired Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita* - The Sweet Life. "My father was friends with all of these amazing creative, people like Cocteau, Dali, Picasso and Orson Welles, who were questioning conventional art, morality and lifestyle," added Tao, who studied

That evening I walked around Bombay Beach, admiring the works of Randy Polumbo, William Attaway, Stefanie Schneider, Alexandra Sand, Steve Shigley and Damian Elwes. I dove into incredible installations, like vortexes scattered around this remarkable town that became a Mecca for hungry intellectuals. Inside the graffitied ruins were philosophy talks by Ivy League professors and towering over the crushed fish carcasses, that make up the

beaches of Salton Sea, was the Opera House - designed by James Ostrer - where world renowned dancers and opera singers shared a stage. Further along, on Avenue E was an eery and retro Drive-In movie theater, made from old, lined up discarded cars. Each place was touched by the hand of an artist, brought back to life and revitalized.

detour,” explained Tao with a glimmer in his eye. “Bombay Beach is a combination of so many things I’m interested in - the desert, Americana and, you know, a more critical kind of perspective on the American Dream, because it really kind of like represents the American Dream gone wrong...this kind of this detritus of America,” he added.

Tao had discovered this weird, sad and beautiful place in 2008 when he came across a book by professor at UC San Diego, Kim Stringfellow. He was immediately drawn to the book’s cover - a rotting airstream in a puddle of strange orange liquid. “I was just so in love with this place right away, even though it smelled funky, even though it felt a little dangerous and I started



...talking to him was like engaging with a character from a well written novel.

“Why do we like ruins? Why are ruins so compelling to us? My friend Mark Wrathall, who is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford, said, that in everyday existence, we think of time as linear. And what ruins represent is a rupture in time. Because if time followed the trajectory that people imagined, then there wouldn’t be ruins right? You see, a ruin is time taking a

Growing up in California, Tao says he had a very normal upbringing, going to public school and moving from house to house a lot but every summer he would go back to Italy and have this otherworldly experience in the castle that’s been in his family’s possession since the 1500s, Castello Ruspoli.

bringing people there. At the time I was married [to actress Olivia Wilde] and I said to my wife, ‘we should buy a house in Bombay Beach,’ and she looked at me like I was insane. I was like, ‘but it’s cheaper than your Jetta!’. He bought his first property there in 2009, on 1st and E now known as the Palazzo.

People would come and shoot music videos at Bombay Beach and have this kind of ‘ruin porn’ attitude towards it. “But there was no curiosity about the



people who live there, about what had happened. That started to get on my nerves as a new home owner in Bombay Beach and I thought, you know, the opposite of this would be to bring high art to Bombay Beach, to bring serious philosophy,” he shared.

Tao has always been interested in everything and filmmaking was the only thing that would allow him to pursue his eclectic interests. He was obsessed with flamenco for a long time and so he made a film about flamenco. Then he was interested in philosophy and

Heidegger and made a film about Heidegger called *Being In The World* (also the name of his podcast). His divorce in 2011 sparked his interest in relationships and sexuality and led him to make the film *Monogamish*. “Why does marriage exists as an institution?



“You see, a ruin is time taking a detour.”

And why does monogamy exist as an ideal? I spent four years traveling the world exploring those questions. My brother had issues with drugs and that inspired my movie *Fix*, about a very charming, larger than life heroin addict, and two brothers who are going through this," he added. Filmmaking has been a kind of therapy for him - a way of understanding and coming to terms with what was happening in his life.

This is the place where the Architect in him fully came to life

Aside from Bombay Beach Biennale that has coincidentally become a life defining project for him, Tao lives in the desert and runs a beautiful compound in Yucca Valley through Air B and B, with luxurious cabins, charming airstreams and trailers surrounding an 80 foot swimming pool that slices right through the middle of Joshua Tree Grove. This is the place where the Architect in him fully came to life and he claims that he has met more interesting people through his compound than he ever would have met living in LA.

When he wakes up in the morning, all he wants to do is play music and he spends most of his time playing the piano and perfecting his interpretation of Chopin's *Fantasia Impromptu*. "I've been playing music since the age of 13 and in a way, it's the most pure art form because it's not necessarily representational of something else. It has its own intrinsic beauty," he confessed. Never in a million years had he thought he would be living in the desert and co-founding an art movement that is the Biennale. If you are interested in diving deeper into the mind of this brilliant, eccentric, eloquent and curious man, be sure to follow his intellectual musings with co-host and neuroscientist Dr. Patrick House in their *Being In The World* podcast, streamed on all major platforms directly from Tao's recording studio in Yucca Valley.

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FACING WEST, LOOKING EAST

FESTIVAL TIME RETURNS



asian world
film festival

Written by Ariel Maccarone



This November, the Asian World Film Festival (AWFF) will return for its seventh year of celebrating the most exceptional filmmakers from over 50 countries across Asia spanning from Turkey to Japan, Russia to India. The mission of AWFF is to bring the best of a broad selection of Asian world cinema to Los Angeles to draw greater recognition to Asia's wealth of filmmakers and strengthen ties between the broad Asian and Hollywood film industries.

The AWFF exists because of a group of passionate film-loving individuals decided to build the world they wanted to live in. Surprisingly, less than ten films originating from Asia have ever won a Foreign Film Oscar. The AWFF aims to change that track record and truly exemplify the spirit of inclusion that many times simply

deteriorates into a catchy marketing campaign. Noble intentions are admirable, but the founders of AWFF have taken the initiative to be the change they wish to see in the world.

When addressing the necessity of a festival that incorporates the many films from Asia, AWFF Executive & Program Director Georges N. Chamchoum remarks, "[By] 2015, it had been 73 years of foreign films at the Oscars, only six movies from Asia had won the Oscar [for Best Foreign Language Film]. I say that at least during those 73 years, at least another four or five movies should have won the Oscar and at least two dozen [should] have been nominated. Traditionally, Academy members look at Spain; they look at Denmark; they look at England; they look at Ireland; but they forget that

there are 53 Asian countries that they didn't even look at. They didn't give us a chance."

The founders of AWFF have taken the initiative to be the change they wish to see in the world.

Chamchoum has been around the film industry for many years serving both as a producer and director. He understands and tries to convey to the Hollywood film market that Asian films encompass far more than what we traditionally think of as Japan, China, Korea et al.

Chamchoum is a proud man with a gentle spirit, but make no mistake he is also very focused on the task at hand. When addressing the origins of the festival he reflects, "The Minister of Culture from Kyrgyzstan,



Sadyk Sher-Niyaz, came to me and said, ‘George, what can we do?’ I had been doing festivals, so I thought, why don’t we do a festival that is geared towards the Golden Globes and the Oscars? Let’s make a festival [at the] end of October, early November during the awards season, and we focus mostly – 80% of our program – on Oscar and Golden Globe [submissions from Asia for Best Foreign Language Film.] The other 20% are from really obscure countries that most people [have] not heard of, like Yakutya,

presenting them to new audiences. “I am the first person to have started to bring films from Yakutya when I used to be the director of the Monaco Film Festival.” he states. “Yakutyan movies never were shown in the West. Today [Yakutya] is one of the leading countries in the movies. I’m very proud of what we’ve done.” These films are beginning to receive the necessary accolades that will open the door to more Asian films. Chamchoum continues, “We’ve won a couple of Oscars, many nominations, and Asia

showcased to members of the Academy, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, and other guilds for enhanced exposure. To date the AWFF has screened over 70 Oscar and 50 Golden Globe submissions for Best Foreign Language Film.

When looking toward the 2021 festival, AWFF has some new things in store as they seek to further the spirit of including lesser-known films and filmmakers as they expand their footprint. This is where Chamchoum gets even more excited about what’s in store with a glowing tone, “[This year] we’re going to do a celebration of African movies. We’re hoping

“I’m very proud of what we’ve done.”

that this will be a yearly event because we think there are a lot of great movies from Africa that nobody has ever heard of.” African Film Day will be a two-day celebration featuring music, food, culture and will accompany the festival’s seven-day Asian Art Show special.

In addition to AWFF’s primary award categories like Best Film, there are also honorary awards for Rising Star, Lifetime Achievement, and Cinematic Outstanding Achievement. Past recipients of the honorary awards include veteran actress Lisa Lu (Lifetime Achievement Award); actress and rapper Awkwafina (Rising Star Award); actress Freida Pinto (Courage to Dream Award); and



Considering Chamchoum a cinema trailblazer would be right on the money.

Bashkortostan and Buriatya.” Considering Chamchoum a cinema trailblazer would be right on the money. He knows the importance of finding meaningful stories from obscure areas of the globe and

is now the spotlight in Hollywood, especially since *Parasite*. So, now people are looking at Asia differently. That is the whole reason for the existence of AWFF.”

Aside from recognizing the wonderful amount of quality films from the East, mentoring is also a huge part of the festival. Participants are guided through the challenging awards season while also being

One Heart Movement Award



Winn Slavin Humanitarian Award

Red Cross Courage to Dream Award



The AWWF Angel Award



Freida Pinto presents at the AWFF.

actress, screenwriter and director Turkan Soray (Chingiz Aitmatov Advancement of Culture Award).

Several new awards have been added to this year's festival. The One Heart Movement Award is sponsored by The One Heart Movement Foundation and will be presented to the filmmaker whose work best promotes a message of unity and the power of community love.

The Bruce Lee Award is affiliated with the Bruce Lee Family Foundation and will be presented to an individual within the film industry who has demonstrated innovation and excellence within martial arts.

The Winn Slavin Humanitarian Award is sponsored by Winn Slavin Fine Art and will be given to a recipient that has used filmmaking as a means to give back and make a difference throughout the world.

Finally, the Red Cross Courage to Dream Award is sponsored by Tiffany Circle and the Red Cross. It will be awarded to a filmmaker or individual that has shown exceptional vision and cross-cultural compassion in motion pictures.

On June 19th, these AWFF award statues were unveiled at Winn Slavin Fine Art gallery and hosted by designer, Sir Daniel Winn alongside gallery co-owner Randy Slavin; AWFF Co-Founder and Managing Director

Asel Sherniyazova; and Chamchoum. Georges talks about the importance of having such an established artist and gallery like Winn Slavin take their award design to another level. "It's amazing! To me, Daniel is a Godsend. Really. In many ways, I can even say that he ... I wouldn't say 'saved,' but put the Asian World Film Festival on a higher plateau." When remarking on his newfound friendship with Sir Daniel and the gallery, Georges adds, "What I like about this guy is that his generosity is selfless. He is selfless. He thinks more about 'What can I do?' instead of saying 'If I do, can I get something?' He just does it from the heart. We hit it off immediately and became friends...everything I've

seen that he does, he does it with love.” That aspect of his character is something you can see in both the quality and artistry of the new awards to be presented.

Chamchoum also commented upon the six films from Asia that had won Oscars for Best Foreign Language Film up to 2015. These include *Rashomon* (1951) from Japan, *Gate of Hell (Jigokumon)* (1954) from Japan, *Samurai I: Musashi Miyamoto* (1955) from Japan, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (Wòhǔ Cánglóng)* (2000) from Taiwan, *Departures (Okuribito)* (2008) from Japan, *A Separation (Jodai-e Nadér az Simín)* (2008) from Iran. Honorary Oscars were also presented to: Akira Kurosawa in 1989, Satyajit Ray in 1991, Hayao Miyazaki in 2014 and Jackie Chan in 2016.

“I could name at least 10 other great Asian movies that were totally ignored by the Academy, but then I will go into a new diatribe!” Chamchoum laughs. “Six years down the road and we have achieved two wins: 2017 *The Salesman, (Forušande)* from Iran and 2019’s *Parasite (Gisaengchun)* from South Korea. We can now say the rest is history!”

More details about the festival can be found at AsianWorldFilmFest.org.

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TWO KODOS

Special features

THE ARTFUL CHARM OF LONI ANDERSON

By Krista Kleiner

SHANE GUFFOGG AT THE STILL POINT

By Ondy Sweetman

DEMYSTIFYING NFT'S

By Randall J. Slavin, Publisher

ALEXA MEADE NORMAL RULES DON'T APPLY

By Sara Debevec

FOUR...THREE...TWO RODEO

By E.L. Cummings



THE
ARTFUL
CHARM
OF
Loni Anderson

Written by Krista Kleiner
Photographs by JL Cederblom

Gracing the screens since the late 70s, Loni Anderson has achieved notoriety as a certified “bombshell”. Her groundbreaking role as the sexy and smart *Jennifer Marlowe* on the CBS sitcom *WKRP in Cincinnati* earned her three Golden Globe and two Emmy Award nominations. Born in Minnesota with jet black hair, this daughter of a scientist and a model transformed



herself into a knockout that brought back the platinum-blond allure of Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield.

With a love life that garnered its own interest, her marriage to megastar Burt

Reynolds was once the talk of the town. Their high-profile twelve-year relationship largely involved their mutual love of art. Flying across America to explore galleries, Burt generously surprised her with whatever seemed to catch her eye. In complete adoration, he commissioned countless paintings and sculptures of Loni in every style one could imagine. The collection included a bikini pose turned nude painting that he proudly insisted hang over their living room fireplace – that is of course until a delivery man was left stunned at the sight.

EARLY DAYS

Beyond the glam of Loni’s life and success is a lifelong journey through the arts. A doodler since she was a child, she imagined her future to be that of a cartoonist or an animator. This born artist and showbiz girl was a model since she can remember and started musical theater by age ten. Her business savvy, on the other hand, appeared even sooner as she charged her neighbors a nickel to see her sing and dance in their garage at the tender age of five.

Loni wanted to be an actress – an artform that combined a variety of her interests. But as a divorced mom by age 19, she followed her parents’ guidance to attend college and get a degree as a means of being practical and having a backup plan. In college she took every art class she could, studying

clay sculpting, woodshop, block printing, oil painting, watercolor, chalk, metal sculpting and architecture. She also tried every phase of theater from working in the box office, designing sets, building scenery, doing makeup,

Beyond the glam of Loni’s life and success is a lifelong journey through the arts.

creating costumes, and even puppeteering.

In order to support herself and her baby daughter, Loni was a high school student teacher while completing college. Looking even younger than her 21 years, these efforts were not surprisingly challenged by the inability of 16/17-year-old boys to see her as an authority figure and take the class seriously. Tired of their inappropriate overtures and attempts to ask her out, she moved to an all-girl’s finishing school where she was met with a refreshing change. Supported by their genuine interest, Loni incorporated both her vast artistry and sense of style into her work with them.

In college she took every art class she could, studying clay sculpting, woodshop, block printing, oil painting, watercolor, chalk, metal sculpting and architecture.

Set on making her dreams come true, Loni moved to Los Angeles to pursue film and television work. Her process to create a character often starts by



“In your craft, you should appreciate everybody who is a part of the team. They are all a part of your art, and you need to appreciate and understand what it is that they do to help you excel.”

discovering something that sparks a personal connection through a past experience. This became easier later in life as she had more to draw from. She also used wardrobe as a tool. Loni

found that sometimes a simple wig or piece of clothing would help her feel immersed in the character and make things click. From there, she would be free to allow her imagination to propel her.

“In your craft, you should appreciate everybody who is a part of the team. They are all a part of your art, and you need to appreciate and understand what it is that they do to help you excel. You’re all in it together,” she shares.

THE POWER OF ART

Philippe Auge *Mermaid*



yourself and your environment. It prepares you to go out into the world if you have an environment that brings you joy.”



Before she had money to collect art, high schooler Loni would hang her own art and go to poster shops where she could purchase a copy of a masterpiece to frame herself. “So much goes into being a well-rounded person,” says Loni. “Surrounding yourself with pleasing images in your home makes such a big difference in how you feel about

With a taste for French impressionists and glam, Loni now has a vast art collection that ranges from Erte, Icart, Mucha, Vargas Girls, Robert Clarke and Ira Reines. She also has an affinity for current artists such as Philippe Auge, Paul Rouwette, Jose Trinidad, and sculptor Boban Ilic. It’s her taste for art that showcases a strong female



and the movement of the piece. One of the things Loni loves about art is that it is a gift that keeps on giving. Not only does she enjoy the process of discovering art and artists before they bring new life into her home, but she also finds joy in seeing it inspire her loved ones. “You can always leave people art in a will, but sometimes you want to see them enjoy it while you’re still here,” she says. It’s this thinking that has led her to gift pieces to friends and family, including her daughter Deidra and son Quinton.



Art has played a special role in helping Loni as a mother. When her daughter was little, Loni created hand puppets and put on shows to help Deidra come out of her shell. Together, they visited assisted living centers and children’s hospitals where they performed puppet theater. They would take puppets to the doctor and dentist where her daughter would talk things over with them. “It’s a wonderful tool for parents,” Loni says.

character that appears closest to her heart as she proudly described a

“When you love art, you want to be surrounded by it.”

painting of a mermaid in her bedroom. “You can feel her strength,” Loni said as she touched the painting. “She is calm, beautiful, and completely in charge. It makes me feel peaceful to have her right by the bed.”

As her taste in art has expanded over the years, certain important guidelines continue to influence her selections – it is all about an emotional connection





Erte Glamour



Boban Ilic

“I’m the oldest living groupie,” she joked. “And I got my man. I finally got him.”

It was also art that brought Loni and her husband Bob Flick of The Brothers Four together. After meeting at an album signing in 1963 when Loni was still in high school, they kept in touch for a while before she maintained a crush

on him from afar. Reconnecting in the early 2000s while she traveled as spokesperson for COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), a lung disease caused by smoking, they bonded over their love of music and art – including a shared history in puppet theater. “I’m the oldest living groupie,” she joked. “And I got my man. I finally got him.”

LOOKING BACK ON BURT

Despite it being no secret that Loni faced difficulties with Burt, she recalled their time together with the utmost peace and grace. “Without Burt, there would be no Quinton. My son is very important in my life,” she said. A person with no regrets, she has realized that if you like how your life is now, you must appreciate everything that went into making it what it is. “I choose to remember the good and all of the wonderful things we gained as a couple.”

After Burt’s death in 2018, his ashes were placed at Hollywood Forever Cemetery. Loni and Quinton picked out a spot under a palm tree by the water in memory of their shared love of the

sea. Artist Caroline PM Jones is sculpting a monument in his honor – a four-foot pillar and two-foot bust with his famous mustache and cowboy hat. He will be surrounded by other icons that he admired. In appreciation of his adoring fans, they plan to have an unveiling ceremony in September.

GIVING BACK

It's clear to Loni that studying art played an important role in her becoming the math champion of her elementary school through its correlation with spatial awareness. Understanding the relationship between art and learning causes her concern and sadness as art classes have been cut from public schools. Channeling this, Loni has supported the likes of Sir Daniel Winn and Randy Slavin, whom she sees as both inspiring and representative of young artists. Feeling strongly about art of all kinds playing an important role in honing other skills, she hopes to see people in communities everywhere step up to support art in general, as well as the artist within each of us.

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Shane
Guffogg

AT THE STILL POINT

Written by Ondy Sweetman
Photographs by JL Cederblom





Shane Guffogg grew up in the agricultural heartbeat of California's Central Valley on his parent's exotic bird farm, Marke's Aviaries. He learned from a young age the importance of a strident work ethic while dreaming of one day becoming an artist. The Strathmore, Lindsay, Exeter agricultural corridor in the San Joaquin Valley is Guffogg's grounding force behind his rise to prominence as a critical voice in the Los Angeles art scene and his emergence as an international artist of note. This region is also "John Steinbeck Country" where Steinbeck sourced the majority of his literary works that resulted in his 1962 Nobel Prize in Literature. Guffogg has returned to make his mark in the community which he was raised and connect it to Los Angeles, Milan and cities around the world through the power of art.

The journey to Guffogg's current residence is one filled with dusty roads, open landscape, and a beautiful countryside many times forgotten when thinking of California's more popularized coastal region. Not the expected setting to find an artist of Shane Guffogg's caliber, but not all that surprising either. The present day Guffogg Estates Art Ranch is the home and exotic bird farm where Guffogg was born and raised. It was originally a school house named Prairie Center in 1904 teaching all subjects to kindergarten through 8th grade. Its focus was on agriculture for the farming children throughout this sprawling Central Valley community. This schoolhouse was also the site and final setting of Steinbeck's 1939, Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. For the last several years, Guffogg has been converting the property from its former use to a vibrant refuge of art and artmaking. His vision is to transform the space and bring a rich culture of art to the region. While he has only just begun this next

stage of his life and art career, Shane is no stranger to the task. He has done it before, perhaps in a larger way, in Downtown Los Angeles. However, the work he has embarked on now may have more meaning and impact to young artists in the Central Valley who must find their voice and way in the world.

Guffogg left Strathmore to study art at Cal Arts. There he received his B.F.A., while intermittently interning in New York, traveling to the Soviet Union on a Peace Walk, and then Europe where he first witnessed the work of the European Masters. It was at the National Gallery in London where Guffogg first saw a Rembrandt in person. Up until then his only viewings had been drawings and paintings in

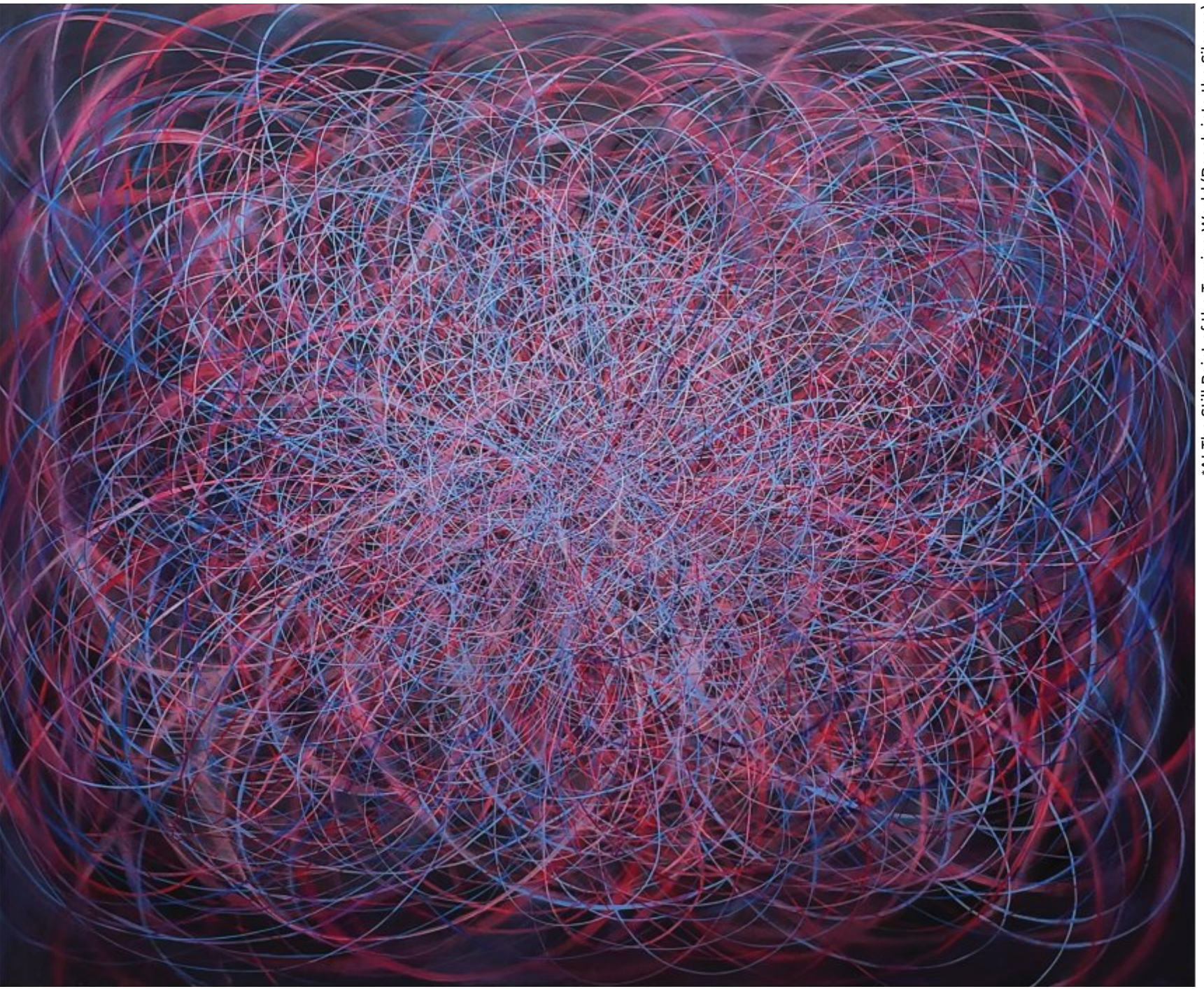
Shane relocated to Venice Beach and began working as a studio assistant for internationally renowned Ed Ruscha.

printed art books. Guffogg had a spiritual experience gazing into Rembrandt's "*Self-Portrait at the Age of 63*" dated 1669. It was one of Rembrandt's last known self-portraits painted in the year of his death. This was the moment that Guffogg, against all odds, sensed he was destined to be a celebrated painter.

From Cal Arts, Shane relocated to Venice Beach and began working as a studio assistant for internationally renowned Ed Ruscha. Ruscha had gained prominence since the 1960s as a leading founder of the LA Art School. His employ by Ruscha lasted from 1989 to 1995 – a critical period of time when Ruscha's career was launching into the international art realm. Shane was immersed in the Los Angeles art scene and mentored by the great male artists of that time whose relevance remain important to artist movements today.



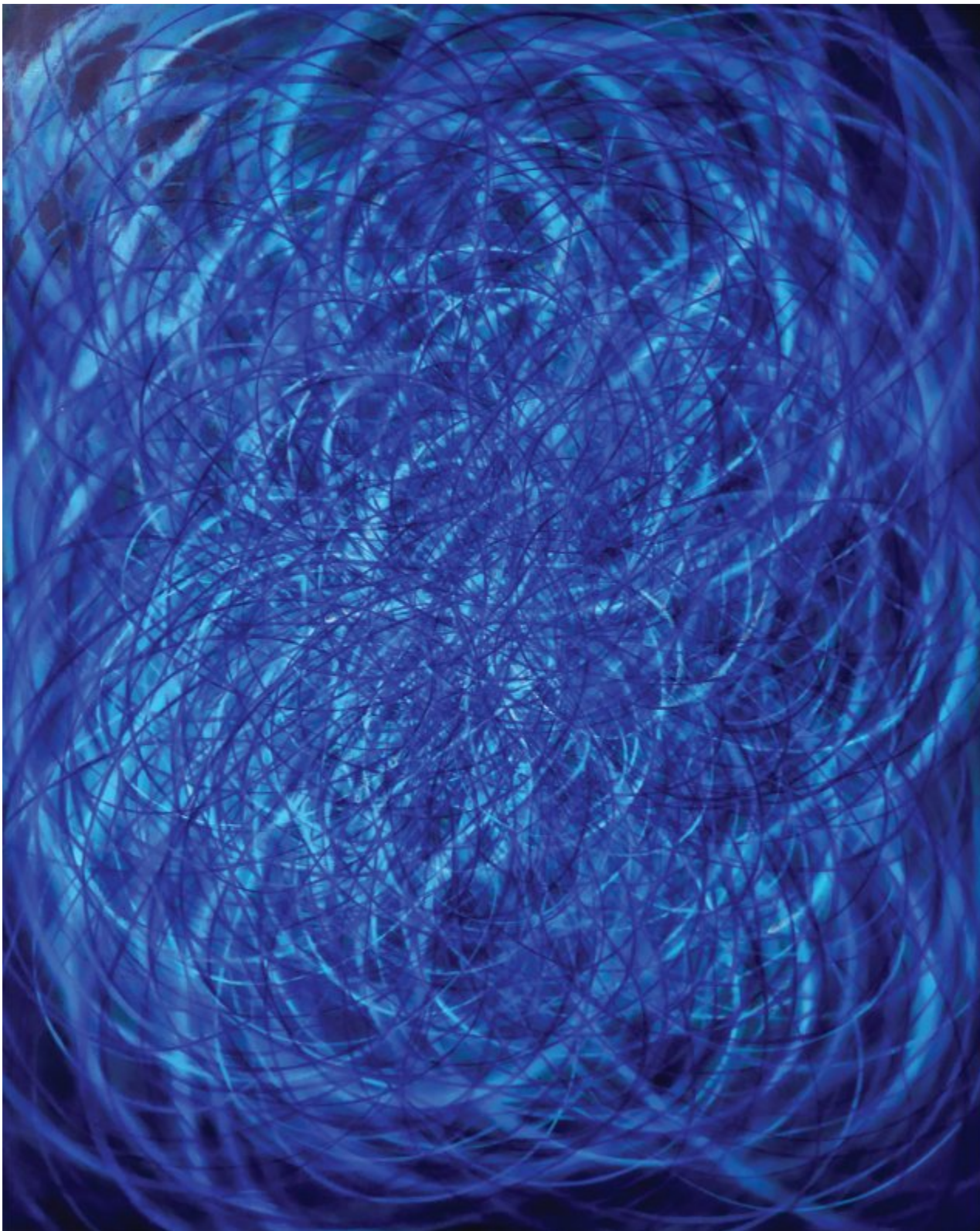
*At The Still Point - The Dahlias



*At The Still Point of the Turning World (Reach into the Silence)



At The Still Point of the Turning World - Behind Us Reflected in the Pool



From 2009 to 2016,
Guffogg began his *At the
Still Point* series, which is
meant to be meditative for
the viewer.



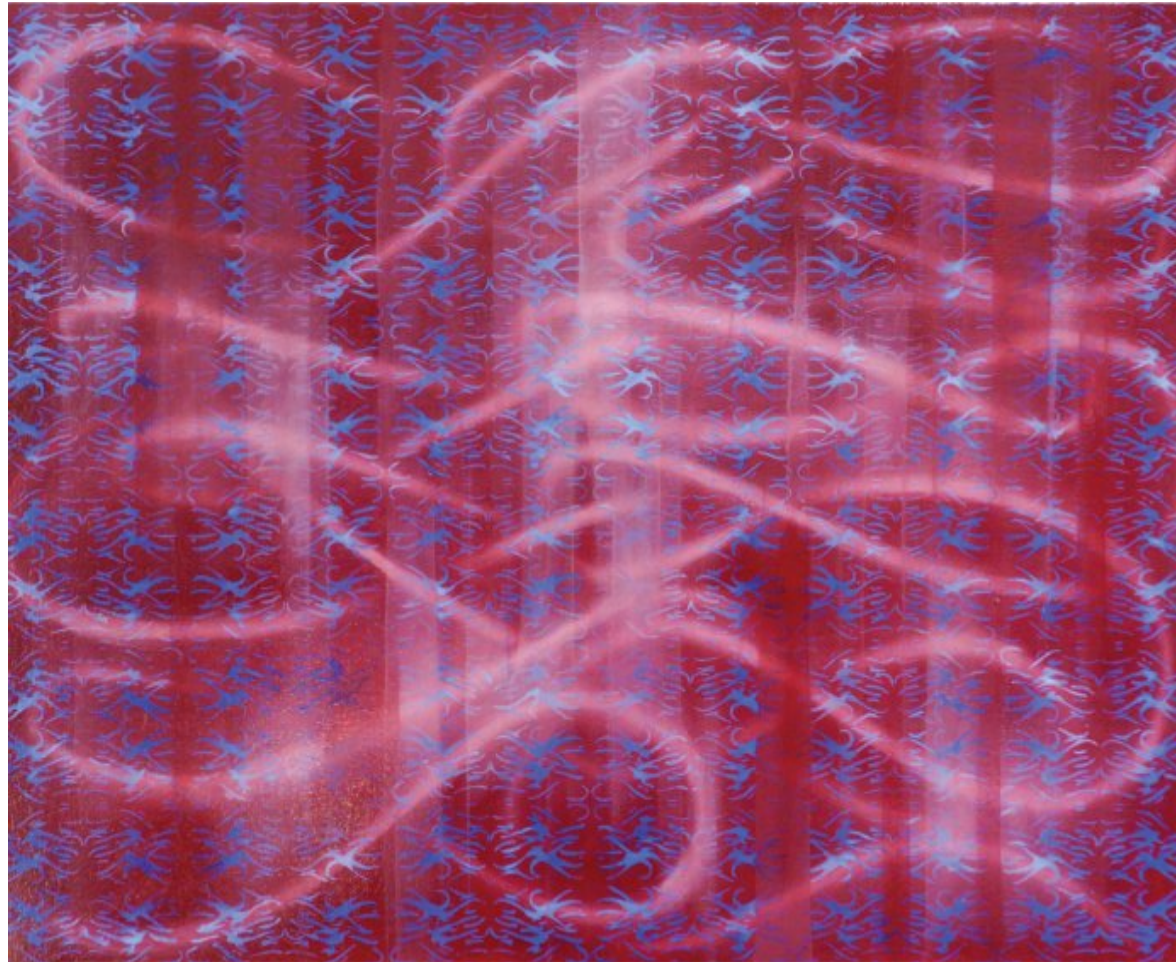


In addition to Ruscha, these included Joe Goode and Billy Al Bengston, whom all showed at the Ferus Gallery. It was while being documented by actor and photographer Dennis Hopper that they became referred to as “The Cool School.” From exposure to these great artists, Shane Guffogg learned everything he now employs in his own artistic rise to becoming a critical voice in the Los Angeles and international art scene.

In the early 2000’s, Shane started a collective of talented Los Angeles painters, which launched as the Pharmaka Gallery in 2004. The group converted a former restaurant into a nonprofit gallery space on the corner of 5th and Main in Downtown Los Angeles. At that time it was one street north of Skid Row in LA’s Historic Bank District. In concert with the Pharmaka painters, its nonprofit board, major donors and Bert Green Fine Art, as well as a few other small galleries, Guffogg’s brainchild was initiated and the Downtown Art Walk was born. What began as less than 100 people (consisting mostly of the artists themselves and a few art enthusiasts) grew into 4,000 attendees streaming through the doors of Pharmaka on a single night, and 20,000 plus filling the streets of Downtown. Thus, other galleries began flocking to the area. While serving as a member of Pharmaka’s board, it was thrilling to watch this dream grow from idea to fruition. Eventually Guffogg petitioned the city, along with other leaders in this art movement, to establish the Downtown Los Angeles Arts District.

For the past 30 years, Guffogg has worked and lived at the Western Avenue Art Collective Studios, building his body of work where his paintings evolved into their present-day abstract, large-scale. The late Leslie Sacks, a blue-chip gallery owner in Brentwood, began representing and showing Guffogg in 2008. He quickly grew into one of Leslie

*Shadows in Motion



Sacks Gallery’s favored contemporary artists whose work could carry on an art historical dialogue with the European Masters in her collection. Drawing on the vast experience he had amassed from working with famed artists, immense traveling, and the creative culture of Los Angeles, Guffogg’s art-making remained heavily influenced by the natural landscape he had grown up in.

It was while being documented by actor and photographer Dennis Hopper that they became referred to as “The Cool School.”

While remodeling a gallery in West Hollywood, Guffogg unfortunately lost his middle finger during a construction accident. This proved as a mixed blessing, forcing him to return to the

family home in Strathmore where the inception of his present day *Ribbon Paintings* were conceived along with his early work in *On Your Mark* (1988). This initial ribbon painting eventually evolved into *Shadows in Motion* (2008) – stemming from a body of work he refers to as his *Pattern Paintings* that were exhibited at Leslie Sacks Gallery until her untimely death. It was with these seminal works that his conversation about the universal human experience began to evolve into a visual language. A language he continues to perfect, refine, and experiment, pushing beyond the edges of his canvases. Each work is a meditation on the ancient past, present and future of the space-time continuum. A concept we all consciously or unconsciously take part in. Each work invites the viewer to explore the realm of the canvas and, in turn, ask deeper questions of the



mystery of human existence and our existential place in the world.

THE WORLD STAGE

In 2012, Guffogg had his first international solo show *1990-2012: A Retrospective* at the Pianta Villa di Donato in Naples, Italy. The event showcased a newly created body of work alongside his earliest pieces conceived in Strathmore as well as those created during his time with the Leslie Sacks and Pharmaka Art galleries. In 2015, Guffogg's *The Observer is Observed*, which featured 76 works of art spanning 25 years, was presented at the Academia National Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, followed by its travel to the National Gallery in

Each work invites the viewer to explore the realm of the canvas and, in turn, ask deeper questions of the mystery of human existence and our existential place in the world.

Baku, Azerbaijan in 2017. In December 2020, at the height of the pandemic, Guffogg's *Path of Light* was featured at the Casa Regis Center for Culture and Contemporary Art in Mosso Valdilana, Italy. It has the honor of being one of the first

exhibitions in this newly opened art center and residency in the hill towns of Piedmont in Northern Italy.

Guffogg's work continues to evolve as he does in his artistic practice. His now converted studio space was once home to hundreds of rare and exotic birds. From that space Guffogg has brought forth beautiful works like 2019's *A Rose is a Rose is a Rose #5* from a series of the same name that he continues today. From 2009 to 2016, Guffogg began





his *At the Still Point* series, which is meant to be meditative for the viewer as well as reflective of the intense sociopolitical landscape our nation has endured as we find our way through the pandemic. *At the Still Point of the Turning World – Only Through Time is Time Conquered* (2017) is a large-scale work that begins the crescendo of the still-point paintings he continues to make today.

We know from Quantum Physics that the forward progression of time may bend back and forth from the past to the future and is not always on one straight forward trajectory. The same is true with the continuum of art; we see culture regress before it progresses. Shane's work deals with these mind-bending topics in a lyrical visual narrative of his own.

As Downtown Los Angeles' rents rose and the Great Recession of 2008 hit, Pharmaka Gallery was eventually closed in 2009 leaving in its place a rich artist center that

brought new life to the DTLA community. A consummate humanitarian with endless levels of ambition to build his career, Guffogg takes with him this massive accomplishment of helping transform the DTLA community to the resurgence of art in Strathmore.

FUTURE VISION

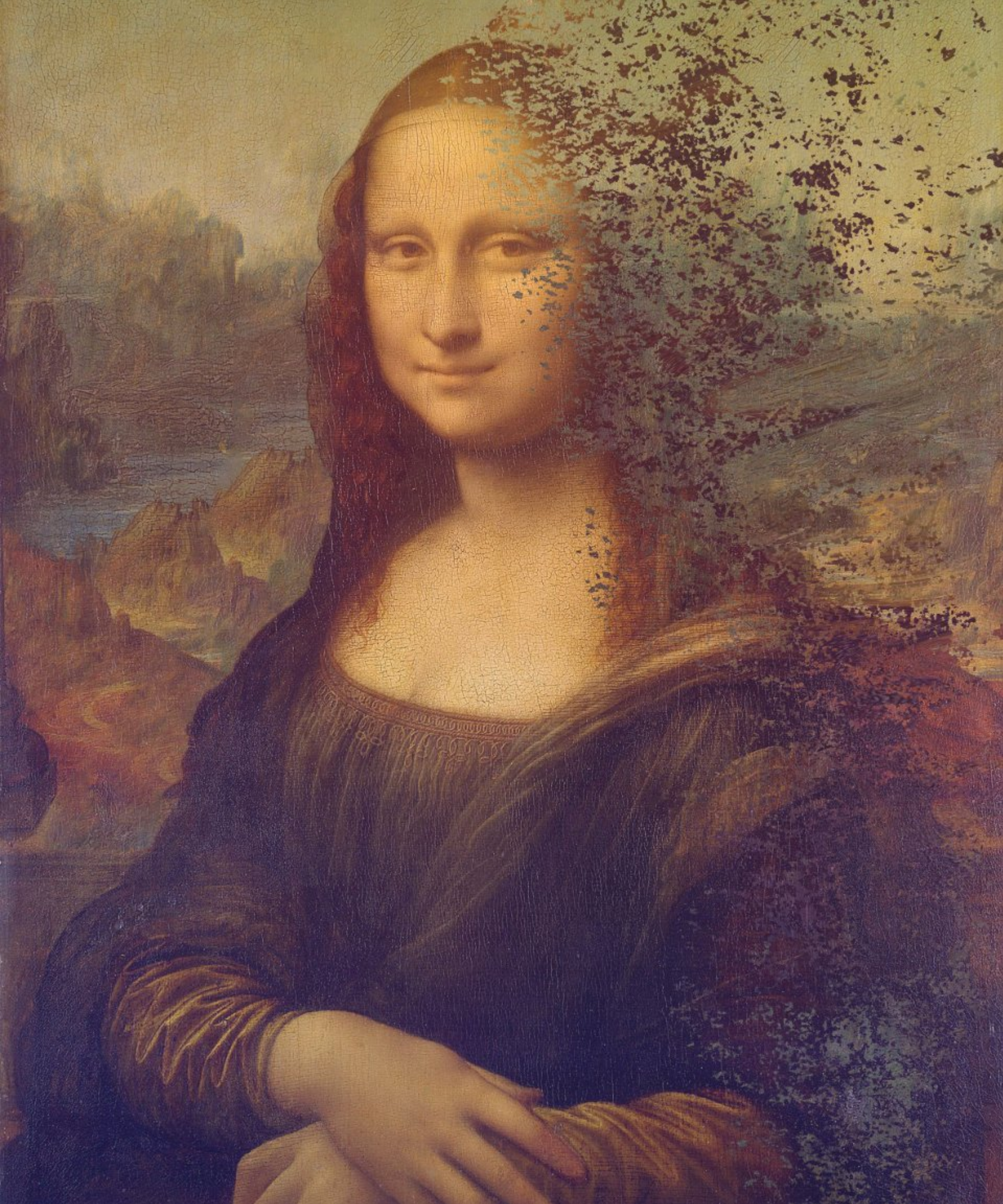
Sharing his time between the Western Art Collective in Los Angeles and the Guffogg Estate Art Ranch in the San Joaquin Valley, Guffogg intends to engage and mold his hometown and local community with art. His plans are to establish this agricultural community as a destination in the Central Valley for wine, cuisine, and art. Aspects that its neighboring Visalia and nearby coastal region of Paso Robles are already well known for statewide and beyond. This vision begins on his art ranch, where he is growing a vineyard that will be bottled as a small vintage of wine with lineage to old vine grapes originally brought from Europe. A vintage grafted with heat resistant and hearty local California vines. In partnership with Exeter's French Chef Fred Imbert of nearby Café Lafayette, Guffogg plans on hosting art events for his collectors but more importantly for the local artists in the region. He intends to build a rich artistic fabric in the communities of Strathmore, Lindsay and Exeter where young artists can have a platform for their work and a supportive system that will usher them into pursuing art.

As we continue spinning feverishly around the sun, against all odds during this flash point of enviro-socio-political challenges in the (hopeful) tail-end of a worldwide pandemic, Guffogg has a still point in Strathmore where people can converge, engage with art, the natural world, wine and hyper-local California cuisine in an effort of celebrating humanity in spite of it all.



Demystifying NFTs

Written by Randall J. Slavin, Publisher
Images by JL Cederblom & Wesley Kemp



You probably saw the headlines in March of this year. Among others, the Wall Street Journal reported “Beeple NFT Fetches Record-Breaking \$69 Million in Christie’s Sale” while the New York Times headline read “JPG File Sells for \$69 Million, as ‘NFT Mania’ Gathers Pace”.

So what the heck is this all about? \$69 million is more than any auction result for most big name real world artists including Salvador Dali and Paul Gauguin. It also makes Beeple, whose real name is Mike Winkelmann, number three on the list of highest priced living artists.

Let’s see if we can cut through the hype and shine some light on the subject.

First, and with all due respect, the Wall Street Journal headline got it wrong, at least superficially. Saying that an “NFT” sold for \$69 million is, at best, a simplification. It’s the equivalent of saying that you bought a title to a new car or a deed to a new house. Specifically, what was sold was a digital artwork collage titled “Everydays: the First 5000 Days” and it was accompanied by an NFT which documented its ownership.

Ok, so what the heck is an “NFT”? NFT stands for “non-fungible token”. Great, that clears it up, doesn’t it? No, not for most of us, so let’s break it down. Something is “non-fungible” if its value is not certain enough to be seamlessly traded for another thing of the same kind.

For example, dollar bills are fungible – if you and I exchange dollar bills, we both start with one dollar of value and we both end with one dollar of value. The fact that we exchanged two physical

objects which are more or less identical (except for the serial number, etc.) with a specific and certain value and we both ended up exactly where we started makes dollar bills “fungible”.

Saying that an “NFT” sold for \$69 million is, at best, a simplification.

Now let’s say you and I trade something else of value like our homes. The odds of our two homes having exactly the same value are practically nil. If we trade our homes, one of us will likely end up with more value than we started with and one of us with less value. Since homes inherently aren’t of the same value, they are “non-fungible”.

Ok, that’s pretty straightforward, but what about the “token” part of NFT?

That’s more complicated, but let’s start with a generic description of real world tokens.

A token is an object that represents a right or store of value but is not in and of itself currency. In the past, if you wanted to take a subway ride you had to purchase a subway token. It was a physical object similar to a coin. You

A token is an object that represents a right or store of value but is not in and of itself currency.

would exchange real currency for the token and the token would allow you to take a ride on the subway. Subway tokens have all but disappeared from

use having been replaced with tickets and electronic passes, but another example of a physical token that is still extant is a casino chip. You buy casino chips with real currency and within the limited environment of the casino, use them more or less the same as real currency. When you leave the casino, you can exchange the chips back to the casino for real currency. Casino chips are tokens which are stores of value, but not actual currency. Outside the casino, they have no real value and can’t generally be exchanged back into dollars.

In the case of NFTs, the “token” isn’t a physical object, but instead is a virtual asset, essentially a digital string of 1’s and 0’s, that represents the ownership rights to something in the same way as the title to your car represents your ownership of it and your right to do what you want with it including drive it, rent it out, or sell it.

But a token that represents ownership rights isn’t worth the paper it’s printed on (or the electricity used to generate it) unless there is some central store or central authority that can be referenced to verify its legitimacy. The title to your car is technically a “Certificate of Title” and is issued by your state’s department of motor vehicles which is the central authority that verifies the legitimacy of the title and therefore your ownership of it. If the title isn’t in your name, then, at least as far as the state is concerned, you don’t own it.

For NFT’s, this is where the blockchain comes in and where most of us who aren’t “digital natives” start to get uncomfortable. NFT’s (and for that matter fungible cryptocurrency tokens like Bitcoin) aren’t controlled,

monitored or enforced by a governmental entity. Rather, they're "controlled" by the blockchain itself which is "controlled", at least theoretically, by everyone who participates in it.

The authenticity or legitimacy of a blockchain token is verifiable by the token itself against a huge number of computers that participate in the

Each token is encrypted which means it is coded in such a way that both a publicly known key and a private key are required to decode the information within.

the nodes that participate in the blockchain.

very similar unique originals. If some sort of reproduction technology is used to create a copy of the original, while the reproduction may look almost identical to the original, it will be in a different medium and contain subtle differences that distinguish it from the original. When it comes to real world art, there just aren't any true duplicates.



blockchain called nodes. Each token is encrypted which means it is coded in such a way that both a publicly known key and a private key are required to decode the information within. The public key exists on every computer that participates as a node in the blockchain, whereas the private key only exists within the token itself. A key factor to blockchain is that it is distributed and decentralized – there is no single store of information which represents the blockchain, but rather that information exists, in many iterations across all of

Alright, now we have at least a surface understanding of NFTs, how do they relate to art and why did a cryptocurrency investor spend \$69 million dollars to acquire a JPG file that came with an NFT?

Let's start with the "how" question.

When an artist creates a physical artwork, it is a unique original. Even if the same artist attempts to exactly duplicate that same artwork multiple times, each one she creates will be subtly different. The "duplicates" aren't really duplicates, they are actually just

Digital art, on the other hand is inherently copyable and the copies are totally indistinguishable from the original. To make matters worse, the method of distribution for digital art is also the method of distribution for copies of it, authorized or not. This has made it extremely difficult for digital artists to make a living selling their digital art. Both physical art and digital art are protected by copyright from their inception, but the copying of physical art is difficult and expensive, while the copying of digital art is as simple as clicking "Save As..."



being sold currently, usually comes with a certificate of authenticity issued and signed or certified by the artist or the artist's agent. These individuals, who are the prime source of authenticity, are generally well known, at least for high-value artworks, and their reputations are at stake.

Physical artwork can also be "authenticated" by experts after the artist and their agent are no longer available, but the original certificate is superior to the often inconsistent opinions of experts. When a forger duplicates a valued artwork, they may duplicate the certificate of authenticity and other paperwork to convince their mark that the forgery is the "real" thing. Believable fakes with convincing forged documents do exist, but are very rare. Everything else is usually very easily identified as a fake.

So with physical artwork, the identities of those who are authorized to issue certificates

Utilizing NFTs for digital art doesn't actually change any of that, but it does establish ownership of the original in a way that isn't copyable. So there may be thousands of exactly identical copies of Beeple's "Everydays" on computers all over the world, but there is only one NFT and who ever owns the NFT owns the "original" digital artwork.

Art collectors want to buy artwork that they can prove is theirs, because that's where the value lies. In the realm of

physical art, that means actual possession of the artwork backed up by some paperwork that demonstrates the acquisition. In the world of digital art, that means an NFT.

High values on digital art secured by NFTs come with their own set of problems.

The first problem is similar to one that exists for real world art as well – authenticity. Physical art, at least that

of authenticity are generally known. Those certificates can be forged by con men but the act of doing so constitutes the crime of fraud and because it's real world activity, it's potentially traceable back to the perpetrator.

The process of creating an NFT (often referred to as "minting") is quite complex and must be done on a computer which is designated as a blockchain node for the crypto network the NFT will reside on. Most NFTs are

created through the website or marketplace on which the creator intends to list the NFT secured artwork for sale. Those sites allow a subscriber to create an NFT (for a fee) by clicking a few buttons and answering a few questions. At best, the subscriber's identity and authority to create the NFT is self-attested. That pretty much means that anyone can create an NFT for anything, pretending to be anyone, even if they don't have the right to do so, because no one is checking.

To make matters worse, blockchain tokens are anonymous, though perhaps not in the way you might think. When we think in terms of an anonymous owner, we usually think in terms that the owner of the object is completely unknown. That's not entirely true, as whoever the current owner bought the asset from or through probably knows who they are, but it's fair to say that their identity isn't provably known to the public.

The blockchain record of ownership of a particular token is reportedly infallible, but it only knows account numbers, not the identities of the account owners. In that respect, blockchain account numbers are like numbered Swiss bank accounts. However, with a numbered Swiss bank account, the bank generally knows (but won't disclose) the identity of the owner. But a blockchain account attached to a physical crypto wallet is entirely anonymous – no one but the account owner actually knows they own the account.

The lack of verification of the right to create an NFT coupled with the anonymity of account ownership could make the forensic tracing of an unauthorized token back to the original

creator impossible. So while creating an NFT without authorization is just as much fraud as creating a fake certificate of authenticity, it's far less likely that you'll get caught. Combine that with the fact that, unlike in the real world where you would have to commit multiple crimes – forgery, counterfeiting and fraud – to produce a fake, in the NFT world you only have to commit one crime. As with anything new and virtual, it could be decades before the courts clearly determine that creating an NFT without authorization is actually fraud.

...it could be decades before the courts clearly determine that creating an NFT without authorization is actually fraud.

The second problem, which is unique to digital art, is that you generally don't actually take physical possession of the asset. It's important to note that the digital art itself isn't embedded within the NFT. Instead, the NFT points to a place on the internet that the digital art resides. If that place on the internet goes away, so does your asset -- unless it's duplicated somewhere else. If it is duplicated somewhere else, your NFT points to the file at the original location and it has yet to be tested if your ownership is limited to the file at the location detailed in the NFT or if it includes all possible iterations of the file. Further, if the file at the tokenized location goes away, how do you prove that the "duplicate" file is actually identical to the original without having the original for comparison?

What about the why? Why would someone spend \$69 million on a JPG file by a relatively unknown artist?

I'll give you some information and let you draw your own conclusions.

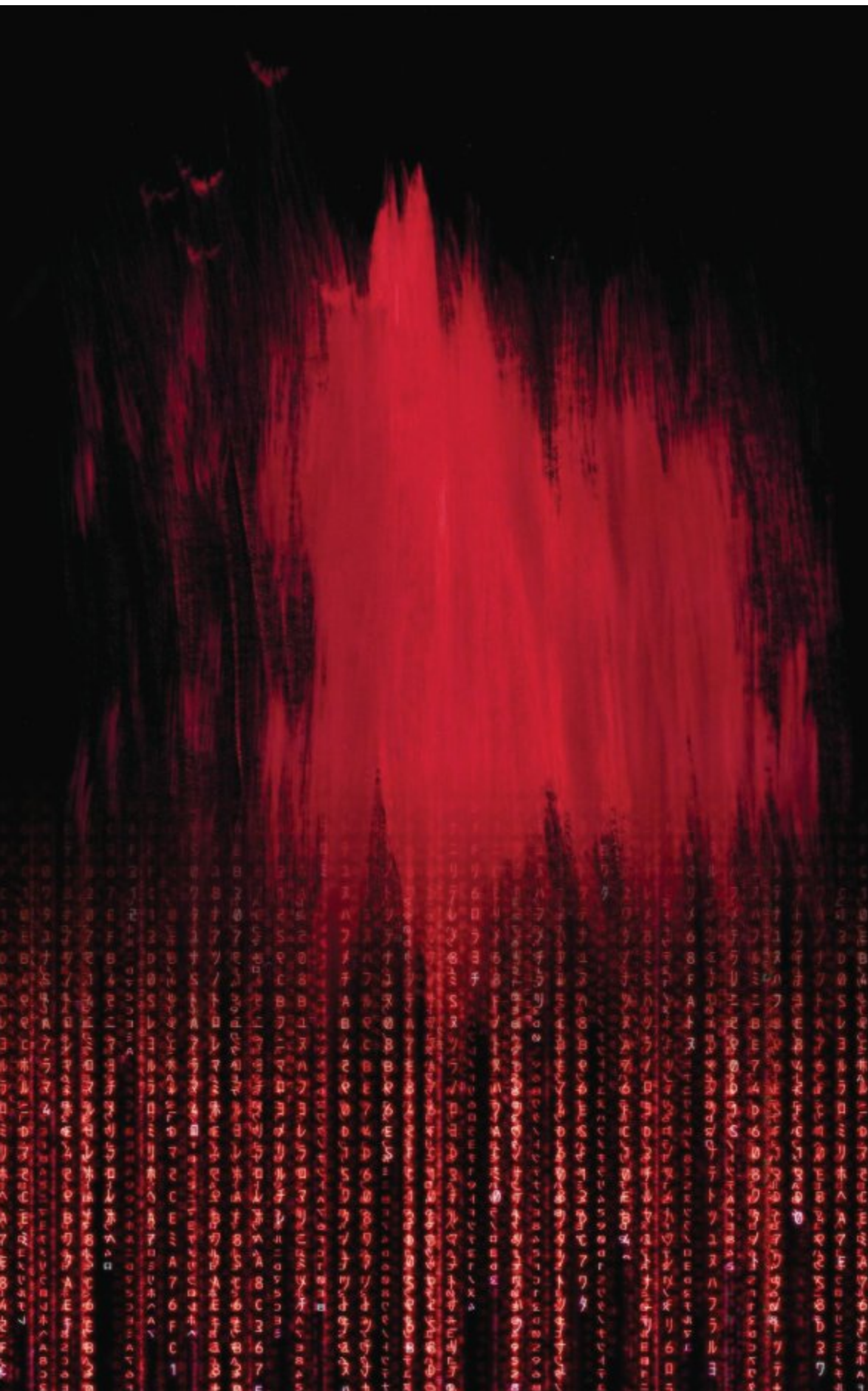
1) As of October 2020, the most that a Beeple artwork had sold for was \$100.

2) Christie's two-week long online auction of "Everydays" brought in 33 bidders, 30 of which were previously unknown to the auction house. In the last 30 minutes of the auction, the high bid went from less than \$15 million to \$69.3 million – more than 10 times the successful bid for a 10-second Beeple video that was auctioned in the previous week.

3) In theory, the auction of "Everydays" makes every other Beeple digital artwork secured by an NFT worth millions.

4) This isn't the first time that blockchain secured assets have seen a sudden, inexplicable surge. In 2017, there was a flurry of new cryptocurrency "initial coin offerings" that eventually were questioned by the Securities and Exchange Commission as unregulated financial instrument offerings. The market deflated and investors who bought into the crypto hype lost untold millions.

5) According to "The Art Newspaper", many of the promoters of the 2017 surge have become involved in the NFT market including the buyer who spent the \$69 million, Vignesh Sundaresan, a long-time crypto investor who was part of the 2017 cryptocurrency craze and reportedly raised \$47.5 million on his Lendroid Support Token -- which is now effectively worthless. Sundaresan also owns an NFT index fund called Metapurse, in which Beeple himself has a 2% ownership.



If you're coming to the conclusion that Beeple's digital art is actually less important, at least transactionally, than the NFT that documents its ownership and that there is more hype than substance around NFTs, you're not alone. Beeple himself is quoted as saying "I absolutely think it's a bubble, to be quite honest."

However, the fact that NFTs are heavily overhyped doesn't entirely negate their potential in the art world. The basic idea that NFTs can be used to allow digital artists to make a living is still valid, even if this particular instance was manipulated.

In the context of real world art, one of the more interesting potential uses for NFTs is as a way of tracking provenance. Provenance is effectively like a chain of custody that documents how an artwork went from the hands of the artist to the current owner. It's a key factor that art authenticators and collectors consider in evaluating the authenticity of real world artworks. The problem has been that there is no centralized way to track provenance. Instead, it's tracked through physical documents (which often get misplaced) and, for high-value works, through auction records.

There is also potential for real world artists to leverage NFTs and digital reproductions of their artwork to promote and expand awareness of their artistic message beyond the circle of traditional art buyers. What remains to be seen is whether the current hype and the inevitable crash will destroy the NFT art market altogether or whether it will survive.

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Randall J. Slavin is the Publisher of Art Confidential Magazine and a 24 year veteran of the art industry. He has served as an artist agent, primary dealer, business curator, and gallery owner during his career. Although his formal education is in business, information Systems, and economics, he has been surrounded by art his entire life as the son of an artist.



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Alexa Meade

Normal Rules Don't Apply

From Shadows to NFTs

Written by Sara Debevec
Photographs by Mikey Monaghan



Alexa Meade's art always takes me to another dimension, and I never quite fully grasp how she does it. Walking into her installation at 29 Rooms in Los Angeles back in 2017 really made me think about the limits of my perception and how easily the eye can be tricked.

Multicolored coats, hats, parasols, and glasses, all painted over in Alexa's unique style, were hanging on racks, allowing visitors to dress up in her work. I picked out my favorite pieces and walked into a painted room. One that matched my new outfit and transformed me into a two-dimensional portrait - a spectacular illusion created with Alexa's painting technique. I was, at once, bewildered and in complete awe. How has this artist condensed me into a painting - a mere hologram of my existence? Yes, I wanted a photograph taken, I wanted a whole photoshoot. How else was I to explain to all my friends what happened?

Behind a crowd of mesmerized faces all waiting in line to experience the magic that was unfolding before their eyes, was the artist, fully enthralled in the process and technique she developed in 2009 that involves painting over shadows to compress 3D objects. She was wearing paint splattered overalls and leaning over a parasol carefully painting astrological symbols and constellations on its surface. "I like to create a sense of magic and wonder through my art," she explained, "a world where normal rules don't necessarily apply."

She was in her senior year of college, finishing her degree in Political Science when she had this idea to put black paint on shadows. She started experimenting and painting on objects that made her discover by manipulating shadows, she can master depth perception. "Many of our spatial depth cues rely upon information from shadows and the fact that I am able to take shadows and accentuate them or dramatically change them in some fashion, makes it merely impossible [for people] to understand the geometry of that space," said Alexa.

**"Many of our spatial depth cues
rely upon information from
shadows..."**

Alexa Meade has been a working artist for over a decade, traveling the world and collaborating with major brands and musicians like Ariana Grande, whom she painted for the *God is a Woman* music video. She has also done live activations in Coachella, Cannes Lions, in the middle of Tokyo and all around the world.

The process...involves painting over shadows to compress 3-D objects.

In 2018 her *Immersed in Wonderland* exhibit inspired by Alice In Wonderland, had its debut on Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. She had taken over a 4000 sq ft space and turned it into a large painted art installation that people were able to walk into and become part. Most recently she has also been Artist in Residence at Google. "I created a light installation in the Google office that we then captured with their 3D imaging technology Light Fields. With that, we are able to recreate the entire scene in virtual reality or augmented reality," she added. I wasn't surprised to hear her work has expanded into virtual reality, but I got especially excited when I heard about her NFT drops.

Alexa's art is part painting, part performance, part installation, part sculpture, part video art and up until recently, only collectible via limited edition photography. Although her video artwork has been exhibited in museums such as the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and Lincoln Center in New York City, the moving image remained non-collectible. The emergence and popularity of NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens) has opened new doors for Alexa, enabling video art to fall under the category of a collectable artwork and medium. "I am pretty excited that with this technology, finally this art - that belongs in the Lincoln Center - can now belong in an art collection as well," she added. "I have an incredible archive of really beautiful video artwork [that has finally] found its time and maybe was made ahead of the time in which it could actually be appreciated," said the artist. Alexa's clips are short loops that range from 8 to 30 seconds. However, for her upcoming drop on Nifty Gateway, she's going to be releasing a full five minute short film.

She first became interested in cryptocurrency in 2012 and owns a physical Bitcoin from back in the day. It wasn't until Beeple's artwork sold for \$69 million in March this year that she realized she needed to brush up on her

*Rosa Dreams





*Aya's Crystals



technology. “I reached out to a bunch of people in my network and extended network who work in tech and primarily in crypto. I asked them to explain the technology to me, and how does this all work, how does this make sense. And they were able to point me in the direction of other people, deeper in the NFT space, which also includes some NFT collectors. So, during my education period, I was able to really learn a lot very fast and also become integrated in the NFT community. From that I got

Sheila Vand and that was a piece from their milk series where she painted on Sheila’s body as the artist lay in a pool of milk. That body of work inspired the Ariana Grande music video that ended up getting 300 million views. So, the Alexa - Sheila collaboration with milk paintings was a pivotal moment in her development as an artist that led to the evolution of something much greater. “I did that drop on Open Sea and then I did my 3rd drop in June on Foundation and that was another collaboration with

different from those who buy her art in the normal gallery setting. “For NFTs you have to own crypto and the people who are making the main purchases are crypto OG’s who are fully native in everything in crypto land.” That has been a critique of NFTs as the people who don’t necessarily have a background in fine art are also the people who are making the curatorial decisions. “But it’s also refreshing to have people outside of the confines of the art world lift their voices up. A lot of



*Bold Enough to Wait

invited to private Telegram groups or to speak at Clubhouse panels and hang out in places where other NFT artists and collectors meet,” explained Alexa.

She did her first drop on the platform Foundation in early April this year. For that drop she did five pieces. Two of them were collaborative with model Alli Harvard and the rest were other video art selections from her portfolio. In May she did a drop with performance artist

“I asked them to explain the technology to me, and how does this all work...”

model Alli Harvard. We’ve been creating new art together during the pandemic,” continued Alexa.

Alexa found the aesthetic of people who are looking to collect NFT's is quite

the artists that have really succeeded as NFT artists wouldn't have a home normally in the gallery art world. And so, I think it's kind of cool that the keys to the kingdom are being handed over to a next generation business model,” claimed Alexa.

Her next drop on July 16th will be on Nifty Gateway. It’s a short film *Color of Reality* that speaks to racial injustices in America through the mediums of

painting and dance. The film is a collaboration between Alexa and movement artists Jon Boogz and Lil Buck as well as producer Kalie Acheson. Since she found her interest in NFTs, Alexa has been doing one drop per month. “There are wild fluctuations and volatility in anything related to crypto and we have already seen the market correct in late May - and the value of Bitcoin all of a sudden drop - but that doesn’t mean that the

“I want to try to help more female artists understand how they can make the most of this technology.”

owners, the numbers are substantially less. Needless to say, female artists are greatly underrepresented in the NFT space and Alexa has been tirelessly helping them get their voices across. “The technology is intimidating, and you really need a mentor if you want to try to navigate the space. I want to try to help more female artists understand how they can make the most of this

*Reframe of Alexa and the Canvass



fundamentals of technology aren’t strong,” adds Alexa. She is fascinated by this new medium regardless of what the market for digital collectibles may be in the future. “I am just interested in the technology long term,” she added.

As her large-scale installations remain tentative due to the pandemic, her focus is on NFTs and its educational aspects. She has recently been at the Miami Bitcoin conference where she gave speeches at two related events.

Alexa has been involved in virtual public speaking at conferences with a several thousand live audience. Alexa has also participated in more intimate webinars with groups of about 30 and Q & As explaining and walking artists through how to create an NFT.

The statistics, according to 2021 Gemini Report, show that among crypto holders in the US, 74% are male, 77% are under the age of 45 and 71% are white. When it comes to female crypto

technology,” said Alexa. With boundless energy and enthusiasm for the NFT space, Alexa continues to shift perspective in the digital realm, creating ripples in Ethereum and empowering artists like herself.

a

FOUR...
THREE...
TWO *Rodeo*

Written by E.L. Cummings
Photographs by JL Cederblom &
Fabian Lopez



WS WINE SLAYIN

Poised atop the European inspired walkway of Two Rodeo Drive sits a sensorial experience that provides an oasis of civility just steps from Beverly Hills' bustling Wilshire Boulevard. Maya Angelou's quote that "people will never forget how you made them feel," could easily apply to the lasting impression of a visit to the Winn Slavin Fine Art gallery.

Often, traditional gallery visitors find themselves aimlessly meandering through a cold, stark space with staff showing little to no interest in their guest's purpose. This is not the case here. As a friend greets you for a warm reunion, so too will you be welcomed at the open doors of Winn Slavin. New age music dances seductively in your ear as the chicly dressed staff beckons you with their smiles. There is a warmth here that is familiar while also completely against the grain of more common, tepid art spaces.

While waiting for gallery manager Travis Walters in the intimate seating area on the second floor, I was transported by

Simple accents that may go unnoticed are intended to be overlooked.

the luxurious scent of Casablanca lilies, a staple of Winn Slavin when in season. The crisp white leather couch was juxtaposed by the soft embrace of a lush white pillow, like a cat soliciting affection. Just as I considered reaching for the decadence of a gold foiled Ferrero Rocher hazelnut chocolate, one of many that filled a long-stemmed decanter, Travis appeared and rescued me from my temptation. I chose not to begin my interview with a mouth crammed of chocolate.

These nuanced details, each meticulously curated by co-owner Sir

Daniel Winn himself, are no accident. Simple accents that may go unnoticed are designed to be overlooked. A haphazard display of tags or a curiously placed floral arrangement would distract from the art instead of directing the gaze to it. Walters jokes that the gallery, "doesn't expect much, just perfection." It is in that perfection that we, as visitors, can drop our shoulders, take a deep breath and meditate in the beauty of Winn Slavin Fine Art gallery.

Walters explains that Sir Daniel Winn and Randy Slavin are the first gallery owners he has worked with who share his outlook on building a community. They see each guest as a potential long-term relationship with whom they can build a rapport, without focusing on quick sales or the bottom line. Their goal is not to sell someone a piece of art and never see them again. "Everyone gets the same level of service and treatment, regardless if you have any chance of acquiring something or not," he assures. "Obviously, we want to sell things. But on a deeper level, our main goal is to open people's eyes to the world of art."

The Shanghai Art Museum's 2019 joint exhibit of Salvador Dali and Sir Daniel Winn, which showcased Sir Daniel's own Existential Surrealism alongside classic Surrealist paintings which contributed to Dali's fame, inspired what was to be the subsequent retrospective - Sir Daniel Winn and Picasso. As many have mused Sir Daniel a modern-day Salvador Dali, the resemblance of his own artistic abilities to Picasso's are eye-catching. Just as Picasso was skilled in a variety of artistic mediums, Sir Daniel has also mastered such talents as sculpture, sketches and paintings of various size and scale. For this retrospective, as inspired by Picasso's Cubism, Sir Daniel once again took a classic movement and infused it with his own Existential Surrealism.







According to Walters, “He took a more literal view of Cubism and actually incorporated cubes into his works of art. You see all the different cubes, but you see the imagery coming through.” Walters explains the challenge of such an endeavor. “Not only do you have to keep the base image,” he says, “but you have to work with the lighting [of each cube], the shading, the complexity and make it all work. And him being a master, he’s able to do that.”

While the Shanghai Art Museum had to put the Picasso/Sir Daniel retrospective on hold because of COVID-19, many of the works created for that show are currently on display at the Winn Slavin Fine Art gallery for anyone fortunate enough to be in Los Angeles. However, Walters is confident that, as the world continues to move past the global challenges of the last year and a half, the exhibit will resume soon so that these works may be viewed by the global audience for which they were created.

They see each guest as a potential long-term relationship with whom they can build a rapport.

In absorbing the baronial paintings, each with photographic detail, it’s breathtaking to realize that the images of the human form and faces are all derived from Sir Daniel’s imagination, not models or pictures. His early training as a surgeon cemented the structure of minute anatomical details, which now feel as though they breathe along with us. When his subjects gaze out from their canvas, they almost seem to peer through their painted veils and into our souls. Another astonishing discovery is the time during which they were created. It’s hard to imagine even one painting, much less an entire

collection, consummating within a single year. However, 2020 was no ordinary year. For some, their greatest creation during our collective confinement was a sourdough starter. And yet, in this year of so much global pain, death, despair and anxiety, Sir Daniel seems to have found his greatest muse yet to inspire his latest expression of Existential Surrealism.

While Walters wouldn’t share details of the timeline for these recent works, he appears justifiably awestruck when speaking about the accomplishments of this “modern day renaissance man,” as he calls him. “I joke that he’s not human,” muses Walters when discussing Sir Daniel’s work. “Not only is he a master painter, he’s also a master sculptor.” From our vantage point, Walters points to an elegant display of awards which could almost be mistaken for artwork themselves. One award includes his recent Gold Medal win in the overall painting category at the prestigious Mondial Art Invitational. That same year, he also won the Silver Medal in the sculpting category. The Gold Medal winner in sculpting was his own collaborative

work with another sculptor represented by the Winn Slavin Fine Art gallery, Ira Reines.

Including Sir Daniel Winn and sculptor Ira Reines, the gallery carries twelve different artists, providing guests with a refreshing heterogeneity that invites



discussion and a deeper exploration. Each artist is internationally known, many of whom are also in major museums. Walters, who has been working in the fine art world for close to two decades, says that he can usually

tell when someone makes a connection to a piece in the gallery. It's at that point that he shares more information about the artist and the work of art. After spending several hours discussing various pieces throughout the gallery with him myself, it's clear that this tutelage is a distinct delight.

"Another thing that I love about this gallery," he considers, "is that a lot of

The gallery carries twelve different artists, providing guests with a refreshing heterogeneity that invites discussion and a deeper exploration.

effusive erudition from the people who work there is that we are let in on some of these secrets. Yet the true gift we take from the Winn Slavin Fine Art gallery is the discovery of our own secrets that these works of art lead us to find in ourselves.

More information about the Winn Slavin Fine Art gallery can be found at WinnSlavin.com

at



these works of art have a deeper symbolic meaning attached to them. Then, not only can you enjoy it from a purely aesthetic standpoint, but then you can enjoy it in deeper, subliminal, subconscious way as well."

One could spend an entire afternoon going down the rabbit hole of potential symbolism in the various art and artists on display. Clock gears suspended in

Each artist is internationally known, many of whom are also in major museums.

acrylic, apples melting, masks of horns and transparent sheets of paint all hold Sir Daniel's secrets. The pleasure in visiting a gallery that inspires such

do @ Old world

MASTER OF THE VENETIAN RENAISSANCE

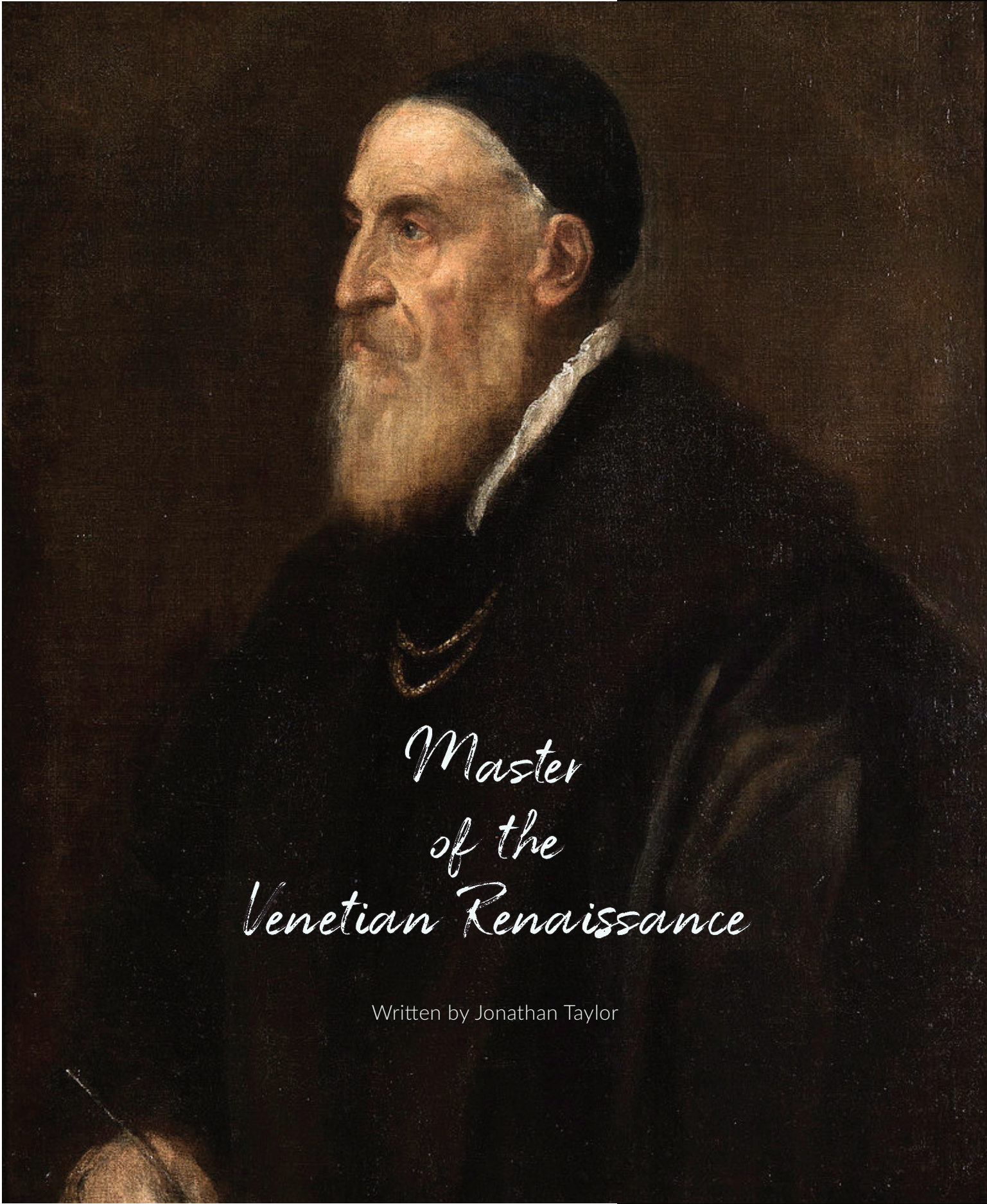
By Jonathan Taylor

LAST GENIUS OF THE RENAISSANCE

By Joseph Lawrence

THE TEENAGE PRODIGY

By Ariel Maccarone

A detailed oil painting of Titian, an elderly man with a long, full white beard and mustache. He is shown in profile, facing left, wearing a dark, heavy robe with a white ruffled collar. The background is a dark, textured brown. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his beard and the folds of his clothing.

*Master
of the
Venetian Renaissance*

Written by Jonathan Taylor

TITIAN

Tiziano Vecellio, better known in the English language as Titian, was born in Cadore, Italy, a quaint town near the Dolomites. He is considered by many as the most important painter of the Venetian school from the 16th century and one of the most versatile and innovative Italian Renaissance artists, adept at immortalizing in paint both the religious and the mythological.

His use and application of intense color created an immense influence on the future of the western art world. A success story from the beginning, Titian was sought after by royalty far and wide throughout Italy and as far away as the Habsburgs in Germany. Along with Giorgione, Titian is considered a founder of the Venetian School of the Italian Renaissance.

Titian's documented career spanned 68 years. He was the first painter in western art to free the brush from the task of precisely describing tactile surfaces, volumes, and details, using it

He always maintained his lifelong interest in color...

instead as a tool for the direct perception of light through color and the expression of feeling.

Titian lived until 1576. Despite the contemporary perception that he lived to 99, art historians now believe he was likely born between 1488 and 1490. No independent work by Titian is recorded



*A Man With a Quilted Sleeve

before 1508 when, according to his friend Ludovico Dolce, he assisted Giorgione in painting frescoes on the exterior of the German commercial headquarters in Venice.

Although Titian's artistic manner changed drastically throughout his life, he always maintained his lifelong interest in color, saying, "A good painter needs only three colors: black, white, and red." Titian's style developed early in his life and was refined more vigorously as his career progressed. He was an innovator, employing the new medium of oil paint, which allowed him to create many layers of paint to reproduce flesh tones more accurately. He also employed "impasto," a technique of

raised brushstrokes using thick paint to create texture. Ever a perfectionist, he would turn his artwork to the wall for months or years at a time before returning to it anew with a fresh outlook as he added additional layers and glazes. Towards the end of his life, he painted more with his fingers than brushes, which he felt gave him superior control over blending colors.

Ludovico Dolce wrote that Titian arrived in Venice at the age of eight with his older brother seeking apprenticeships and found work with the mosaicist Sebastiano Zuccato. Dissatisfied with Zuccato's tutelage, Titian apprenticed for Giovanni Bellini, where he formed a group with other



*Assumption of the Virgin

young artists, Lorenzo Lotto, Giorgione, and Sebastiano Luciani.

By 1510, he had begun working independently after departing Giorgione's workshop as an assistant due to a significant rivalry between Giorgione and Titian. Distinguishing between their work during this period remains a controversial subject for many art historians. Many artworks previously believed to have been Giorgione's were re-attributed to Titian in the 20th century, including *Christ Carrying the Cross* and *Annunciation* in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco.

Towards the end of his life, he painted more with his fingers than brushes...

A Man With a Quilted Sleeve, a portrait completed early in Titian's career, was painted around 1509. In the painting, Titian subverted the barrier effect common to Italian Renaissance painting and brought the picture into a personal space. A turning pose, with the head slightly tilted and an eyebrow raised, increases the emotion of the portrait. There is a broad spiral motion in the depth of the head and arm which suggests that Titian was aware of contemporary developments occurring in Florence.

Perhaps the most influential and innovative aspect of this painting is merging the shadowed portion of the man with the grey background. The great artist of the Flemish Renaissance, Rembrandt van Rijn, borrowed this model from Titian in at least two self-portraits during the 17th century.

In 1512, after a short stint in Padua, Italy, Titian returned to Venice, becoming superintendent of Venetian government projects and tasked with completing Giovanni Bellini's unfinished artworks in the hall of the great council. Titian was also a well-versed businessman who invested his earnings and acquired quite a large estate in Venice by 1531. Early records documenting his business prowess include a patent and a binding contract to paint the successive

Doges of his time, yielding him an annual 20 crowns with an additional eight crowns per portrait and exempting him from certain taxes.

Moving from earlier styles, Titian began to take on larger, much more complex projects, initiating a monumental stylistic approach. With the death of Giorgione in 1510 and Giovanni Bellini in 1516, Titian was left unrivaled in Venice, becoming the foremost Venetian artist for the next sixty years. Between 1516 and 1518, merely eight years after his first known independent work, he painted the *Assumption of the Virgin* for the high altar of the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa Dei Frari, a grand execution measuring 22.5 feet tall by 11.6 feet wide. This work, which received considerable attention from Venice's elite, confirmed his growing reputation as the master of the Venetian Renaissance.

Breaking with firmly established tradition, Titian omitted all landscape elements.

The *Assumption of the Virgin* is divided into three distinct sections, separated by spaces filled with light. The ground harbors the Apostles, a tightly packed group of men holding dramatic expressive poses, shielding or reaching for the heavens as the Virgin Mary ascends. The middle section, consisting of the Virgin Mary, swathed in beautiful red and blue robes, elevated above the men with an expression of astonishment and awe. Cherubs hold her up among the clouds, lifting her towards the heavenly light as an angel hands God a crown to bestow upon her head. The heavens in the third section consist of God the Father reaching and waiting for the Virgin Mary and accepting her into the kingdom of heaven.

Breaking with firmly established tradition, Titian omitted all landscape elements. He employed chiaroscuro throughout the work, creating dramatic



* Presaro Madonna



*Bacchus and Ariadne

employed by Michelangelo. Titian's devout skill and unique use of color are also evident in his mythological paintings; many created for royalty, including Philip II of Spain and Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. One such example is *Bacchus and Ariadne*, an exquisite oil on canvas. Initially intended for the great artist Raphael, this commission was granted to Titian upon Raphael's death in 1520.

In 1538, Titian was removed from the Venetian government placement of La Sensoria in the Fondaco Dei Tedeschi and replaced by his rival Il Pordenone. After losing the title to Il Pordenone, Titian devoted his time back towards the Venetian government and painted "The Battle of Cadore." Within a year, Il

and beautiful contrasting elements. His use of color is unforgettable -- broad effects which are noticeable from a distance, dominant hues of reds, blues, and greens in the garments of the apostles and the traditional blue and red of Mary's mantle and tunic, all set against a clear blue sky below and the golden heaven above. It is a composition of grand simplicity, a rhythmic structure in massive visual chords that reaches the observer directly and immediately. The monumental painting, done in oil on 21 separate broad cedar planks mounted horizontally to the chapel wall, was Titian's first commission for a church in Venice.

Titian worked on many beautiful and extravagant *Assumption* artworks throughout the 1520s, including the *Pesaro Madonna* (1519-1526), which required an extremely patient plan

By the early 1540s, Titian was regarded throughout Europe as an equal to Raphael and Michelangelo.

and supremely displayed Titian's artistic freedom, order, originality, and style. The artist was able to conceive and express an utterly new technique where groups of donors and holy persons, traditionally grounded, moved into aerial space. Titian's rise to fame continued in the 1520s with frequent commissions from nobles and royals, not only of Italy but abroad, securing his reputation outside of Venice.

Diagonal placement and angular views are seen throughout Titian's artwork, defying the traditional flat symmetry of Renaissance art. Equilateral triangles were used extensively by Titian in his artwork, similar to Raphael's use of spiral compositions and the block structures

Pordenone died from poisoning, perhaps by Titian's hand, and Titian was reinstated to his former position.

The Battle of Cadore, based on a historic battle against Rome in Titian's birthplace, was destroyed in the 1577 fire at the Doge's Palace. The painting is widely considered to be Titian's attempt at rivaling Leonardo da Vinci's *The Battle of Anghiari*, Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina*, and Raphael's *Battle of Constantine*.

By the early 1540s, Titian was regarded throughout Europe as an equal to Raphael and Michelangelo. In the last three decades of Titian's life, he worked mainly for Philip II of Spain and as a portrait painter. Titian became much more critical of his work, and his previous perfectionism transformed into obsessiveness. He would sometimes set aside paintings he was



*Christ Carrying the Cross

dissatisfied with for a decade before returning to them.

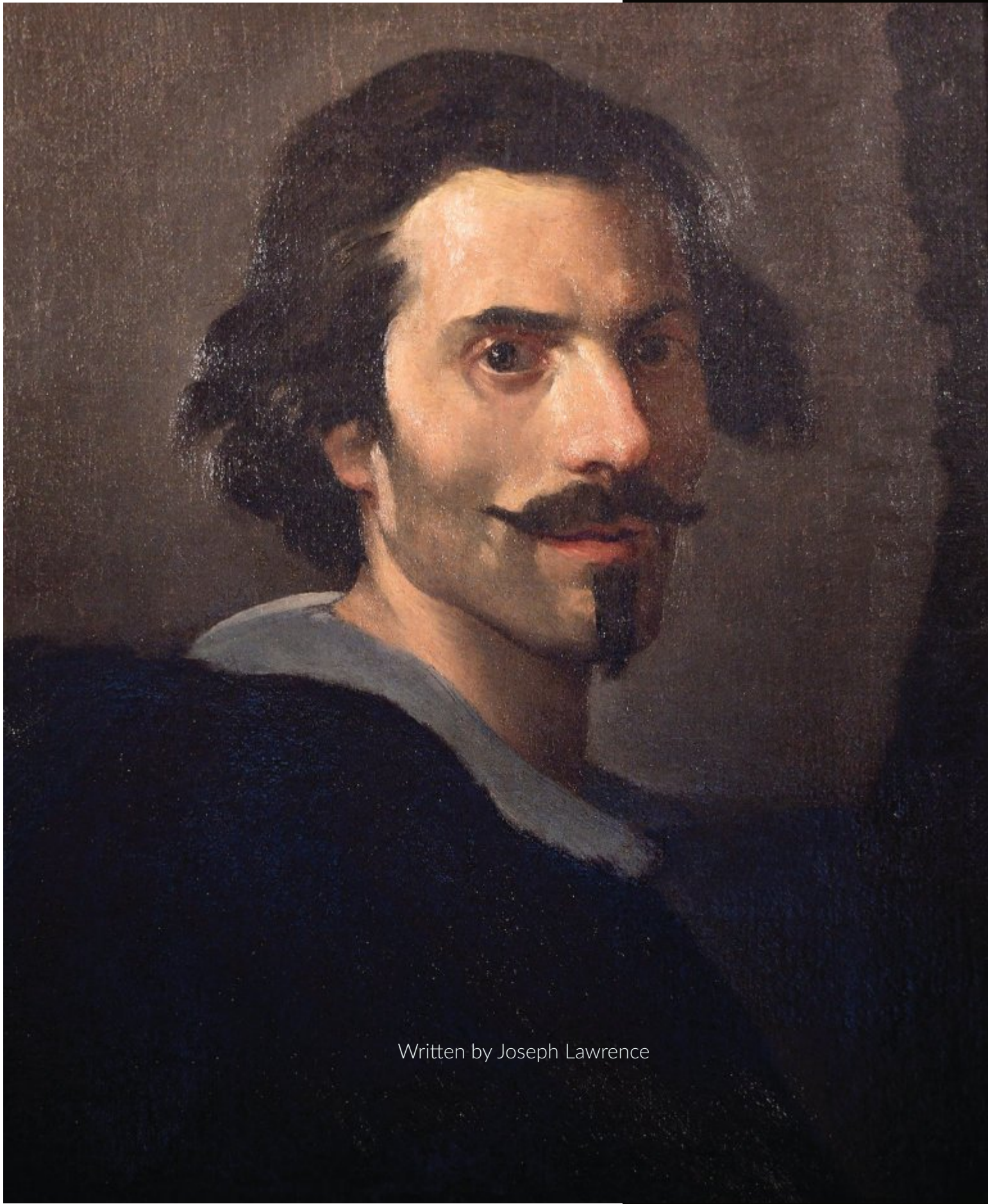
During this period, Titian also began reworking or completing copies that his students had made of his earlier works. This created attribution issues as it became unclear which works were entirely by the master's hand and which were simply his additions to the works of his pupils.

One of Titian's last works, unfinished at this death on August 27, 1576 as the Black Death swept through Venice, was *Pietà*. A dramatic, nocturnal painting

emphasizing suffering, Titian intended the painting for his tomb. Titian wanted to be buried in this hometown of Cadore, with the painting hanging over his grave. However, the plague made transporting the body impossible. The Chapel of the Crucifix in the Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa Dei Frari, where he had painted *The Assumption of the Virgin*, was Titian's final resting place. The *Pietà* might perhaps have still been sent to Cadore, but his son's death a few days after his own resulted in a dispute over the estate, and the painting was never sent.

Titian's early innovation carried through his entire career. For every problem which he confronted, he developed a ground-breaking solution. He would identify and conceptualize a new technique and make it a reality to complete his projects. The emotion, tragedy, mystery, and divine expression, along with the heroic brilliance and grand scale of Titian's work changed the face of art, not simply in Venice or during the Renaissance but indelibly into the future.

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Last Genius of the Renaissance

Written by Joseph Lawrence

Nothing drives change in human civilization more than war and pandemic. As medieval Europe transitioned into the 15th Century, it would do so with roughly half of its population wiped out by the Black Death, arguably the single most catastrophic event in the recorded history of Western civilization.

For the descendants of the plague's survivors, a new beginning was at hand. They had become the benefactors of a continent laid waste by a cataclysm they barely understood. And yet, led by Italy, Europe not only emerged from plague times but entered into a period of "rebirth" that would forever change basic western tenets of art, architecture, philosophy, politics, and literature.

Today, popularly referred to as the Renaissance, that period of rebirth is most associated with breakthroughs in the arts -- monumental innovations from the minds of remarkably gifted men whose contributions continue to influence our world to the present day.

The names of these "Renaissance Men" are well known to us. In Italy, Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael had become synonymous with the revolution in the arts that took place in Europe between the mid-15th Century and the mid-16th Century. These men formed the trinity of the top talent of their time. Still, perhaps the most influential Italian Renaissance artist in shaping the society of his day was Gian Lorenzo Bernini. He laid the foundation for the Baroque period of art and architecture.

Bernini was born in Naples at the end of the 16th Century, decades after the deaths of Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Rafael. By the age of six, he was recognized as an artistic prodigy. His parents, aware of his innate gifts, had moved him to the Italian capital of Rome and arranged for their son to meet the Pope when he was just ten

years of age. Upon meeting the young Bernini, the Pope reportedly proclaimed, "This will be the next Michelangelo!"

For the Renaissance artists, one of the most popular subjects was the portrayal of martyred saints.

Like the Renaissance masters who preceded him, Bernini's innate talent would encompass multiple disciplines. But it was in sculpture that Bernini would first make his mark. His earliest works in boyhood were collaborative efforts with his father, Pietro, a sculptor of some repute. It was only a matter of time before the younger Bernini, who was already known personally to the Vatican, would be occupied full time with Papal commissions. The church was still reeling from Martin Luther's Reformation, and the Vatican was eager to recruit and groom devout and talented allies for its Counter-Reformation efforts.

His style was taking on a certain realism not seen in the work of his Renaissance predecessors.

For the Renaissance artists, one of the most popular subjects was the portrayal of martyred saints -- pious men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for their faith. The evolving style of the devoutly Catholic Bernini was well suited to such depiction.

When the Roman tax collector, Saint Lawrence, was burned alive for giving pilfered tax money to the city's poor,

legend has it that he made a cryptic request of his executioner: "The fire is not hot enough, please add more wood."

With this presumably on his mind, Bernini committed to sculpting a masterpiece, one of the first that would be done independently without collaboration and meant to showcase his maturation as an artist. Committed to authenticity, Bernini burned his own leg while simultaneously looking into a mirror to sketch his agonized facial expression. By so doing, he could convey the same pain on the face of his white marble protagonist. The *Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence* remains one of Bernini's classic creations to the present day.

As the young Bernini forged ahead, his style was taking on a certain realism not seen in the work of his Renaissance predecessors. Depiction of emotion, which would later define the Baroque period, was a signature hallmark of his burgeoning approach to his subject matter. By the time Bernini had completed a series of larger-than-life commissions for Cardinal Scipione Borghese, one of his chief patrons, onlookers proclaimed that Bernini was conveying in stone a humanity that



Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence



Baldacchino

The Baldacchino has also been called the first Baroque monument in Italy.

even the best painters of his day couldn't produce on canvas.

Cardinal Borghese, known to have an insatiable desire for the arts, allowed the

young Bernini free reign in depicting even the most sensual subject matter, unfettered by the otherwise conservative values propagated by the church.

Borghese's early support and patronage gave Bernini the impetus to depart from previous norms and explore new ways of working in an ancient medium.

However, it was another Cardinal who would become most synonymous guiding Bernini's career, working in tandem with his young protégé to, quite literally, change the face of Rome. Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, who would become Pope Urban VIII, was the man with whom Bernini worked most closely and in the period deemed Bernini's artistic prime.

Though Bernini would receive commissions from no less than eight Popes during his lifetime, Urban's influence was as much as a mentor as a patron. Pope Urban was so influential that he directed the young sculptor to

Portrait of Constanza Bonarelli



The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa



Salvator Mundi (last sculpture by Bernini)

branch out from his chosen medium of sculpture into painting, and more importantly, to a course of self-study of the architectural arts. Pope Urban understood that the partnership with a talent such as Bernini would invigorate the faithful and help rewrite the history of the fabled Italian capital.

During Pope Urban's reign, many of Bernini's most iconic projects came to fruition. Perhaps the most famous of these is the *Baldacchino*, the

During Pope Urban's reign, many of Bernini's most iconic projects came to fruition.

immense colonnaded canopy over the altar at St. Peter's Basilica, which itself covers the tomb of St. Peter. The structure is an amalgamation of architecture and sculpture, a towering masterpiece in bronze and gilt showcased annually when the current Pope performs a televised midnight mass on Christmas Eve. The *Baldacchino* has also been called the first Baroque monument in Italy, an early manifestation of the artistic style that would take hold in Europe and forever be associated with Bernini.

Bernini was appointed Chief Architect of Saint Peter's and the Palazzo Barberini, much to the chagrin of older, more established, and formally trained Roman architects. And even as Bernini added city planner to his resume, he continued sculpting personally, ultimately receiving commissions from European royalty and nobility from outside of Italy. His exquisite portrait busts were highly coveted, and his ability to capture the subtle nuances of his sitters made them treasures of Italian Baroque.

One such bust, *Portrait of Costanza Bonarelli*, is widely considered the first sculptural bust ever by a significant European artist depicting a commoner. This commoner, however, was Bernini's lover, the wife of one of his assistants. With Costanza eventually taking up with Bernini's younger brother Luigi, the affair would spiral out of control, resulting in a brutal assault on Luigi by an enraged Gian Lorenzo. Ultimately, the Pope himself intervened to resurrect Bernini's reputation and spare him from state punishment.

After the death of Pope Urban VIII, Bernini's relationship with the Papacy became strained. During his twenty-one years with Urban, the pontificate spent lavishly, with Bernini commissioned to create statuary, funerary monuments, tombs, fountains, and all manner of architectural works.

But the opulence came at a cost significantly depleting Vatican coffers. This, plus a structural failure at one of Bernini's bell towers at Saint Peter's, caused Urban's successor, Pope Innocent X to distance himself from the artist.

Bernini was not dissuaded, however, and a commission during this period for the Cardinal of Venice resulted in a masterpiece of Baroque

sculpture and one of Bernini's most celebrated works, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*. The work as a stand-alone sculpture would be spectacular by itself. Yet, Bernini created an entire environment surrounding the central figures, a diorama of sorts, showcasing another of Bernini's talents, that of stage design.

After the death of Pope Urban VIII, Bernini's relationship with the Papacy became strained.

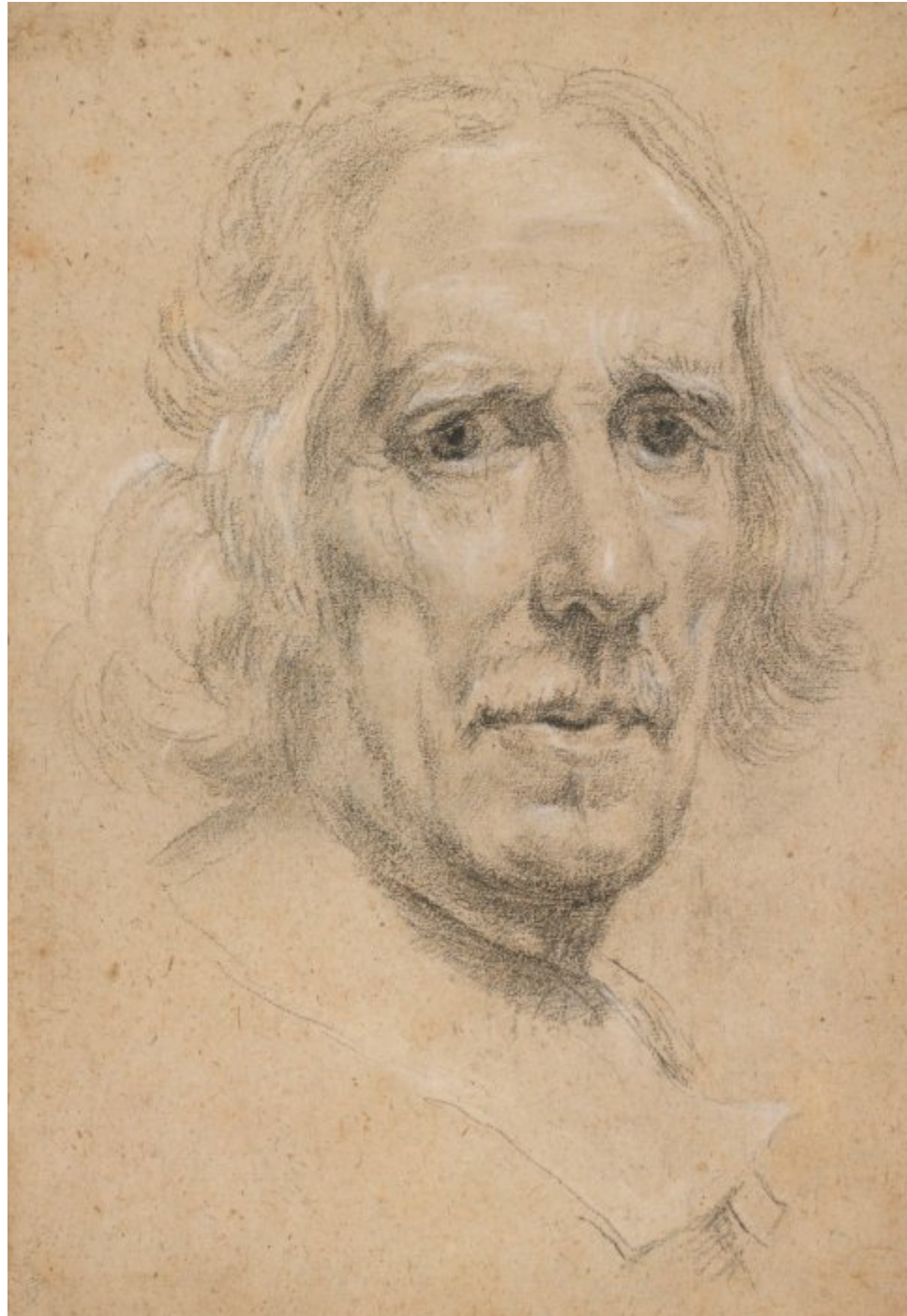
As Bernini grew older, he increasingly focused his efforts on architecture. Under the auspices of Pope Alexander VII, Bernini, the Chief Architect of Saint Peter's Basilica, embarked on the project that would forever cement his association with the Vatican and Rome. Bernini would redesign Saint Peter's Square in a style that would depart from previous norms of established design in a monumental undertaking. He remade the gathering place of the faithful in a way that Bernini himself would refer to as the "arms of mother church" coming out from the basilica to embrace the faithful. Bernini reimagined the piazza in a way that was to serve as a showpiece for the church's Counter-Reformation campaign and welcome the masses into perpetuity.

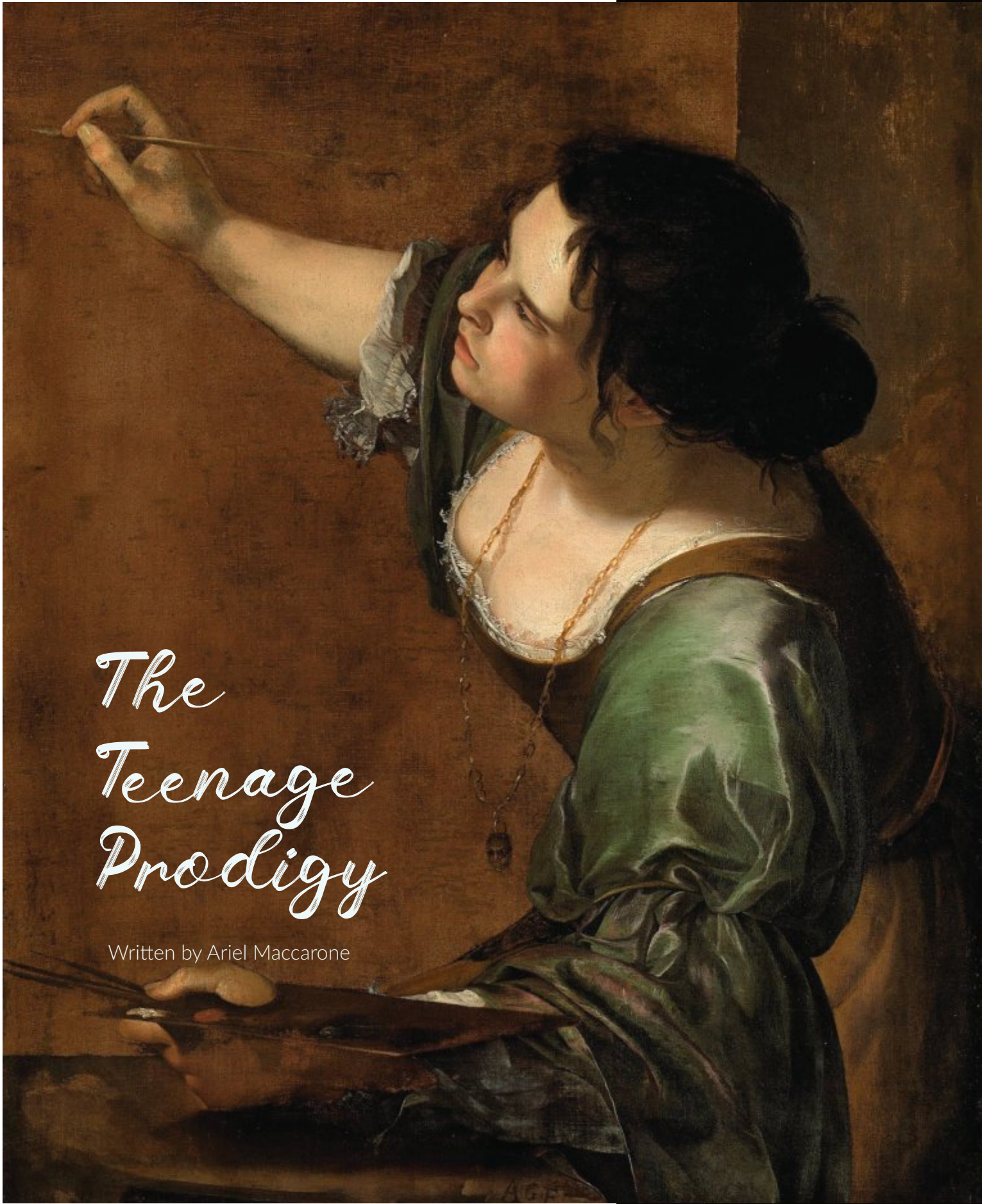
Even by today's standards, Gian Lorenzo Bernini had a long and productive life living to 82. He was always a compelling figure, handsome and self-assured, with a list of talents nearly too numerous to mention. That he may have been a political tool of the Papacy was a fact not lost on him. Most historians believe he embraced his role as a sort of "Counter Reformer," motivating the faithful through his collaborations with the many Popes who entrusted him with the church's most important projects.

By Bernini's death, his known catalog of works of art and architecture numbered in the hundreds. Although born Neapolitan, Bernini would forever be associated with Rome, the Eternal City, where his indelible contributions can still be seen throughout. As many commentators have observed, "What Michelangelo was to Florence, Bernini was to Rome."

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Bernini Self-Portrait





The Teenage Prodigy

Written by Ariel Maccarone

Artemisia Gentileschi

Our deepest beliefs are stubborn companions. Even self-awareness does not free us from them completely.

Within every thought and action are our truths. We see what we are ready to see. We know the world we are ready to know. Baroque art is the story of a world coping with the loss of blind faith, and in that loss, discovering something uniquely human.

Following on the heels of the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648) and Scientific Revolution (1543-1687), Baroque movement (c. 1600-1750) embodied the existential crisis faced by Europe. Momentum from discoveries by Kepler, Descartes, and others widened the boundaries of what people believed was possible. Telescopes Galileo built and brought to Italy allowed people to “see into the heavens and see what God sees.”

The 15th century invention of the printing press furthered the spread of these new ideas by drastically increasing the amount of literature available and the number of languages into which it was translated. Traditionally, classical Christian scripture was written in Latin, which usually only the clergy knew. The average Catholic thus relied heavily on the Church to midwife their spiritual relationship with God.

Enter Artemisia Gentileschi in 1593 Rome, Italy.

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653) was a teenage painting prodigy whose skill rivaled that of even Caravaggio, forerunner of the Italian Baroque movement in art. Her skill was so advanced that some questioned whether her father Orazio painted Artemisia’s first signed and dated work, ***Susanna and the Elders (1610)***.

Although Orazio trained all his children in painting, it was only Artemisia who showed exceptional skill and artistic

Her skill was so advanced that some questioned whether her father Orazio painted Artemisia’s first signed and dated work.

maturity. In a letter seeking patronage for Artemisia from the Duchess of Tuscany, Orazio claimed that upon viewing his daughter’s work, the duchess would recognize Artemisia had no peer.

Orazio was a master painter himself and even commissioned by the court of Marie de Medici. As a friend and contemporary of Caravaggio, Caravaggio’s influence is noticeable throughout the work of both Gentileschi’s.

The Italian Baroque style of painting attributed to Caravaggio was an outgrowth of the Church’s mission to regain the hearts and minds of the people. Instead of continuing in the Renaissance tradition of communicating spirituality through scenes rooted in the serene and eternal, Italian Baroque style reflected the human experience more than the heavens.

Artemisia’s work expresses the power of what it means to be human; to find meaning in this life rather than exclusively from spirituality that transcended human limitations. Unlike Renaissance’s fondness for horizontal and vertical lines, Artemisia’s art favored diagonals to guide the human eye. Instead of depicting perfectly composed scenes, she captured energy and movement by depicting fleeting moments in time. Artemisia portrayed subjects in physical positions that could realistically not be held for long. As in other Baroque paintings, emotional intensity was further heightened through dramatic manipulations of light

and shadow in a technique known as chiaroscuro.

Although Artemisia’s work beautifully executes the Baroque style, she also left her own mark on art history when she completed ***Self-portrait as the Allegory of Painting (La Pittura)*** between 1638 and 1639. The piece earned attention not just for the skill of her hand, but also for the philosophical implications it posed.

Artemisia’s *Self-portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (left) depicts Gentileschi painting herself, who is in turn represented as the “Allegory of Painting” (La Pittura). The artistic tradition of personifying each of the fine arts as a woman is an illustration attributed to iconographer Cesare Rippe.

“This painting is significant not only because it is one of the earliest self-portraits by a woman in the modern age ... [but it is also] one of the first self-portraits by an artist of either gender displaying themselves in the act of painting,” explained Natasha Moura to WomenArt.com. “Artists rarely referred to their work directly or showed the tools of their profession.” In addition, women rarely occupied professions within the arts.

In an article for The Guardian, Jonathon Jones explains:

She captured energy and movement by depicting fleeting moments in time.

“[When she painted] *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* ... in about 1638 to 39 she was at the peak of her career, a court artist to Charles I of England. This raw baroque image was painted in London – another reason it’s a national treasure. Gentileschi portrays herself as the incarnation of an emblematic device, for painting was personified as a woman in 17th-century thought. But



*Mary Magdalene Pitti

*Susannah and the Elders (1610)





Artemisia's work expresses the power of what it means to be human

with the same vigor until centuries later.

In 2019, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles acquired a painting by Artemisia that had been held in private collections for centuries. In the fitting language of karma, Artemisia's painting *Lucretia (1627)* set a record-breaking \$5.3 million USD at auction.

"This recently rediscovered work sheds a new light on a crucial and hitherto overlooked moment of her career, when the painter is transitioning from the Caravaggism that had been the hallmark of her formative years to a more graceful and idealized manner which will characterize her maturity," said Davide Gasparotto, senior curator of paintings at the Getty Museum.

"Lucretia is a powerful and compelling example of Artemisia's most significant type of subject, the representation of dynamic female figures which appear in control of their own destiny; but with its lyrical and sophisticated expressivity, its creamy impasto and vibrant brushwork, the painting is also suggestive of new directions in her artistic itinerary".

As reflected in Artemisia's work, the Italian Baroque style was the Church's direct and dramatic appeal to the senses and human emotion. It was the Church's attempt to nurture renewed intimacy between people and their once deepest belief systems.

I'll leave the final thoughts to Artemisia herself: "As long as I live, I will have control over my being."

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Lucretia (1627)

she transforms allegory into muscular reality. She is not a symbol of painting but a real woman who paints."

Artemisia continued to paint until her death in 1653 at the age of 60. She produced masterpieces for dukes, kings and even the Medici family. Although

during her life her work did not fetch prices surpassing her male peers, she remains one of the first women in European art history to make a living from art. However, not long after her death, Artemisia's name faded from the art community and would not resurface

d@Newworld

**OLIVIA STEELE
NEON FIRE**

By Sara Debevec

THE INNATE CREATION OF IRA REINES

By Joseph Lawrence

**FINDING PEACELOVE THROUGH
UNCONVENTIONAL STYLE**

By Krista Kleiner

A SPARK FOR THE CREATIVE

By Ariel Maccarone

CURATING WITH CORE CONNECTION

By Ondy Sweetman

VALUE BEYOND THE CANVAS

By Krista Kleiner

Olivia Steele



Neon FIRE

Written by Sara Debevec
Photographs by JL Cederblom

“This can kill you,” Olivia Steele points to a high voltage bombardier located right next to her kitchen table, as she walks me through the instruments and materials she uses to bend glass and make her neon word sculptures. This is where the magic happens and in the glass community it’s called the platform, but usually it doesn’t just causally sit in someone’s living space. Among the welding instruments, long thin tubes of glass and a pumping station is a vintage mercury bottle from the 1960s - a sentimental gift from one of her teachers. “This too can kill you,” she adds. As I look around the beautiful, well-lit gallery, that is her home, I can’t help but feel safe among her words that envelop the space like moonlight.

Steele is an internationally recognized conceptual light artist specializing in neon glass and text-based art.

Steele is an internationally recognized conceptual light artist specializing in neon glass and text-based art. She has a studio in Berlin, Mexico City and Los Angeles, and from these three cities she supplies the world. She is also known for her public interventions that have gained widespread attention. From historic landmarks and facades in London to beach barren roads in Mexico to the skylines of America, her illuminating sculptures critically engage with the space and the viewer. Most recently she has been setting her words

on fire in her art park at Burning Man that inspired her permanent metal word sculptures filled with propane.

Glass bending is a dying art because signage used to be all neon and now it is mostly LED. It is a very delicate process that requires patience. “You also have to remember that things break while you are in the process of creating, so it teaches you temperance and sometimes you just have to stop,” she says. “Working with glass, working with fire, working with electricity. It’s all a metaphor - at least for me. I get burned, I get scraped, I get electrocuted. It happens, you know, but it’s like mad science and it’s taught me a lot about me. It’s a meditation in a way, because you’ve got to be present,” adds Steele, whose work I recognized first at the rooftop of Petit Ermitage Hotel in West Hollywood. A purple neon sculpture that said “See you on the other side...” I don’t know if it was the words or her handwriting, or the warmth of the neon that drew me in, but I felt like from that moment on we had created a bond.

Now as we sit on her sofa, under the pink neon sign that says “This is where it gets interesting,” she tells me that installing her work is half of the art. “One thing that sets my work apart from any other neon artist is the precision and the detail of installing, and where the bends go, and how to hide the wires, because it comes in pieces,” she claims. She doesn’t want to deal with any repairs. It has to be done



It teaches you temperance
and sometimes you just
have to stop.



Photo: Joshua Magnus

perfectly. "Some things are quotes and some are from me. *Paradise is where I am*, that's a quote by Voltaire, *Everything you can imagine is real* is from Picasso. *Everything you need is Inside you* - it's kind of paraphrased from Rumi. It's a mix. And it's just like, you know, I don't own those words, but I'm bringing them out, to get them out. Because they don't need to be stuck in

It's a meditation in a way, because you've got to be present.

businessman, but also really a philosopher and a student of divinity. He always had a book in his hand, read every sign. He was just, like, thirsty for knowledge. And he would always have these one liners and these truisms for everything that would just shut me up," says Steele. This was her introduction to these profound words of wisdom and empowerment that have been so



a book. That's the beautiful power of art, it's to put them in a different form," continues Steele.

She was born in Nashville, Tennessee to a mother who was a country music singer and father who was a businessman. Her mother was like the Martha Stewart of Nashville, hosting dinner parties all the time. She also had a great eye for interior design and was extremely crafty. "My dad was a

You're taken out of this world, and you're in survival school.

prevalent in her work. What's her favorite truth? I ask - "Trust The Process" she says as she opens her hand to show me she even has it tattooed on her wrist in her handwriting.

Growing up she thought she was going to be a professional horseback rider and she went to boarding school for that. On the third week of the third year of her boarding school she got kicked out for breaking five major school rules in



Hat: *Teressa Foglia*
Skirt: *Olivia Steele*
Steeletheshow.com



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Visual Communications and Psychology. It wasn't until she pursued a masters degree in London in lighting design that she found her calling in multi-disciplinary art. Over the years she has also branched out into film, fashion and product design and even has her own line of merchandise under the *Steele The Show* brand, where she offers stamped jewelry, scarves, towels, blankets, books, handbags and other creations.

"Love has brought me to all the cities that I've lived in," she shares, while petting her sweet cocker spaniel *Patron*. "I mean, everything has ended. But I stayed. You know, something's got to bring you there..." Her artistic journey started when she co-founded *Pret A Diner* with her then German boyfriend. It was an immersive dining experience in surreal locations with Michelin star chefs, an art gallery and a shop. "Our first one was in Berlin, in an old coin factory, which was abandoned. And that is where I have my studio now, I never left." This mobile pop-up dining model was her first gallery too, where she started installing her work. Over the next three years she designed 14 restaurants and numerous temporary environments.

one day. Shortly after she got sent to a reform school known as the wilderness program called Second Nature in Utah that changed the course of her life. For the next 49 days, everything was taken away from her including her shoes at night. "You don't have a tent, you have a tarp that you're backpacking every day with your pots, with your pans, with water, and you don't eat hot food until you can learn how to bust an ember with a bow drill set. So...survival. You're taken out of this world, and you're in survival school. And there's therapy twice a week, and you're in a group, and you have to, like, earn your way up through the levels. It's super fascinating and very effective. My parents had no idea what I was really up to," she recalls, "but it was what essentially got me interested in studying psychology."

After completing her high school studies in Switzerland, she graduated from University in Paris with a degree in

Public art is her favorite part of what she does. "It's that ability to touch people that you'll never meet." Her dream is to create a piece of art that's visible from space, get a big piece of land somewhere and create a piece that everyone can understand - a symbol. As she grows, she wants to work less and do more, create art on a larger scale and raise the vibration in the collective consciousness through short punctuated truths and signs. If you ask me, she is already doing that. *a*



THE INNATE CREATION OF IRA REINES



Written by Joseph Lawrence



The wunderkind Ira Reines exhibited a knack for sculpting at a very young age.

In the art world it is often said that the truly great ones are born great, the aptitude for artistic creation being innate, the realization of artistic stardom being predestined. If this is true then acclaimed sculptor Ira Reines has followed the template to a tee.

The wunderkind Ira Reines exhibited a knack for sculpting at a very young age, something not lost on his parents as they marveled at his abilities which were beyond his years. This early realization of prodigy closely mirrored the early years of the Renaissance sculptor, Bernini, who was one of the artists highly admired by Reines. In Bernini's case, it was not only his

parents but the Pope himself who saw the brilliance in the young artist, coveting him as a future addition to the church's stable of artisans meant to inspire the faithful and consolidate church power throughout Europe.

Ira Reines would examine in depth the work of Bernini as well as Michelangelo and other Renaissance masters when at

age twenty, he made a pilgrimage to Italy to dwell among past like-minded talents. It was also around this period that Reines was offered his first job, sculpting medallions for a Connecticut based company at the behest of its Director who had been impressed with the young Reines' sculptures.

Back in the 1920's, two revolutionary new art forms were coming into prominence. Surrealism was the new avant-garde sensation in Europe and in America a new decorative art and design style known as Art Deco was defining the "Roaring Twenties." The latter style was essentially the brain child of one man, the genius Erte, often called the "Father of Art Deco."

These collaborative sculptural works became an international sensation, sought after and coveted by major museums and Hollywood royalty alike.

Erte fashioned a career out of his popular design sensibility, applying his style to set design, jewelry and graphic art. But Erte also wanted to see his design vision manifested in sculpture. Unfortunately Erte lacked the skills necessary to bring this vision to fruition. Thus began a journey for the great visionary to find a master sculptor capable of bringing his popular artistry to the three dimensional medium. After an exhaustive vetting process, the young award-winning virtuoso Ira Reines was selected to be the sole collaborator in a partnership that would last until Erte's death eleven years later.

These collaborative sculptural works became an international sensation, sought after and coveted by major museums and Hollywood royalty alike. The very first formal unveiling by the star tandem was at the French Embassy





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in New York. From that introduction the works would eventually become part of the permanent collections of some of the world's most notable museums including The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The Smithsonian, and

London's Victoria and Albert. While they were available on the open market, the sculptural masterpieces were quickly snatched up by the likes of Barbara Streisand, Johnny Carson, Elizabeth Taylor and Sir Elton John. At one New York gallery unveiling an enthusiastic and excited photographer seemed particularly smitten with these treasures in bronze. That man was none other than pop icon Andy Warhol.

Erte's passing in 1990 freed Reines to pursue a stylistic evolution unencumbered by oversight. Reines had become contemplative of life's deeper meanings, rebirth, renewal, evolution and ascension. His personal artistic style was now evolving, reflective of the philosophical tenets that the more mature artist pondered. This transformative period crescendoed when a personal tragedy befell the artist. Within a period of a few months both of Reines' parents died. The sculptor found himself feeling lost and alone. Ira Reines channelled his grief through his work, further refining his technique and ascribing to his work the symbolism that spoke to his deeper interpretations of the human experience. Reines would coin his new style "Sculptural Etherealism."

Thus a new chapter was at hand for Ira Reines. The technical brilliance Reines' work was known for was made further compelling by the addition of proprietary patinas, giving his bronze sculptures the look of polished stone. Reines started to fuse his alluring figures with abstract metal pieces randomly created when molten metal from a white-hot crucible was allowed to splash and harden across a concrete floor. Reines had also taken his artistic process into a monumental phase. He had mastered sculpting on a grand scale and larger than life pieces were being

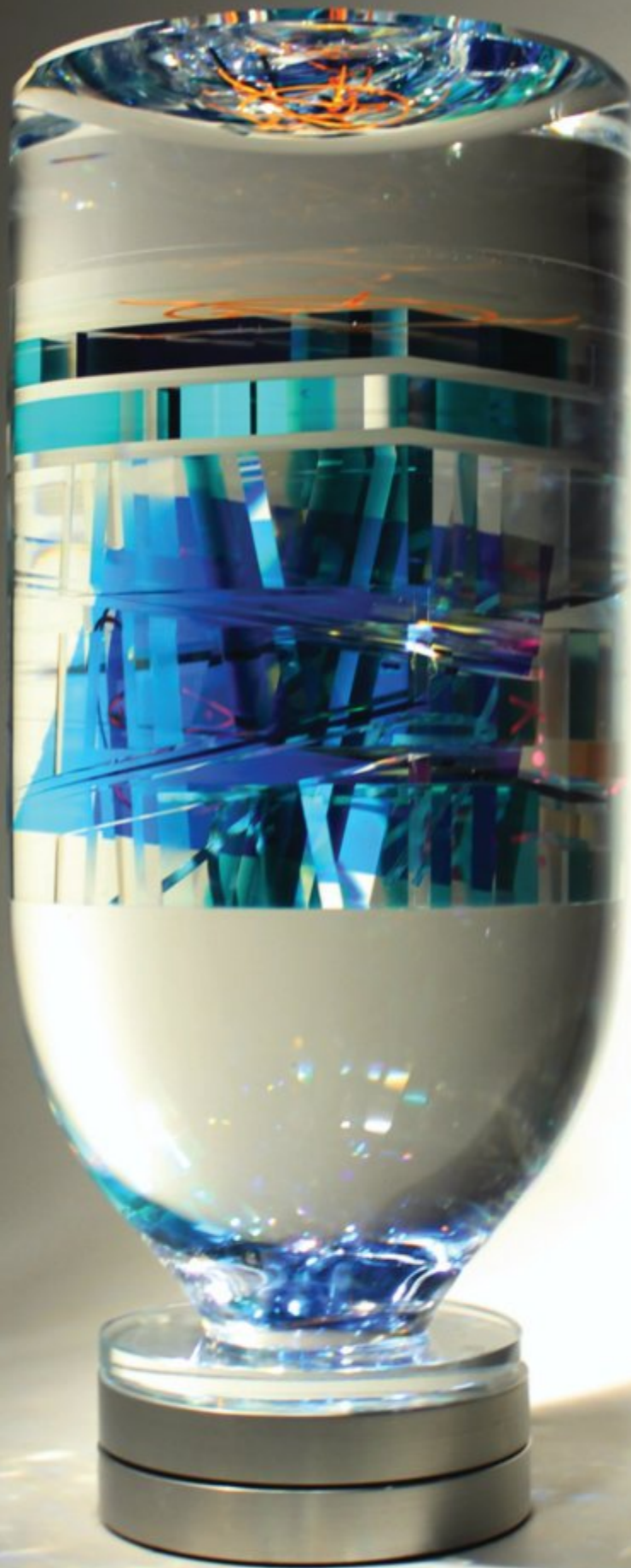
created on a commissioned basis for both private collectors as well as public installations. Among some of Reines most noteworthy installations are the breathtaking "Neptune" bronze permanently displayed on the grounds of The Society of the Four Arts in West Palm Beach, Florida and the bronze "Aurora" permanently exhibited on the grounds of Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina.

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In the early 2000's, Reines signed on with one of America's foremost art publishing companies, Masterpiece Publishing in Orange County, California. And with the signing also began a collaborative relationship with Reines' friend and mentor, artist Sir Daniel Winn. Together the two gold medal winning sculptors refined the sculptural and metallurgical process, and collaborated on large scale works while at the same time also pursuing their separate stylistic endeavors. The work of Ira Reines continues to bedazzle and engender desire for ownership among collectors worldwide. The one time child prodigy has now reached the pinnacle of a storied career that has spanned decades and transitioned centuries. And perhaps, just perhaps, the best is yet to come.

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Finding PeaceLove Through Unconventional Style



Written by Krista Kleiner



Millions of people have uncovered new mental health conditions in the wake of COVID-19; and millions more have had existing challenges exacerbated. At a time of rising awareness around this hidden pandemic, we at Art Confidential would like to take a moment to acknowledge those who have been valiantly working to bring this topic to the forefront of society. One of those people is Jeffrey Sparr.

It wasn't until he tried painting on a whim that he discovered a gift that would change the course of his life forever -

Spending the last twelve years advocating for mental health awareness and support, Jeff is living proof of the power creativity has to transform lives. Diagnosed with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in college, he has spent

the last 30 years fighting an invisible opponent. It wasn't until he tried painting on a whim that he discovered a gift that would change the course of his life forever – and in turn, touch the lives of countless people around the world.

Jeff describes his art as being an unconventional style that explores the illusion of mystery, intrigue, and inclusion. As much as I am a fan of both him and his artwork, the impact of his artistry reaches far beyond each of his inspiring creations as he works tirelessly to share this gift, and ignite it in others, through a nonprofit he co-founded called *PeaceLove*.

In 2009, Jeff and his cousin Matt paid a visit to an intensive treatment unit for children at a local psychiatric hospital with a cart full of art supplies. After sharing his story and personal struggles, Jeff challenged the children to paint whatever gave them peace of





Jeff describes his art as being an unconventional style that explores the illusion of mystery, intrigue, and inclusion.

mind. Not only did the children have fun, but they discovered their ability to express themselves through art in a way they weren't able to with words. It was this experience that inspired the creation of *PeaceLove*.

PeaceLove promotes mental wellness by using creativity and expression to inspire, heal, and communicate. They believe that everyone deserves a healthy and creative environment to share their emotions. With a mission to create peace of mind, their workshops are a place to create fearlessly and honestly without judgement - a place to be vulnerable, celebrate, and empower each other.

Together, Jeff and his cousin Matt have created a movement that continues to have rippling effects in our community. Garnering the support of Johnson & Johnson, CVS, the American Nurses Association, Blue Cross, Michaels, Guitar Center, Zappos, The One Heart Movement, and many more, they are committed to sharing the power of creativity with others.

Through their work, *PeaceLove* has helped over 100,000 people of every age and walk of life discover a universal truth – there is magic in the making. Through live workshops and on-demand classes, they share simple activities to help people express what they're feeling, even if they have no idea what that is.

In light of the grueling toll the COVID-19 pandemic has had upon us all, *PeaceLove* and Johnson & Johnson have teamed up to support our community through a program called Scribl.





Offering new 20-30 minutes classes every month, their on-demanded videos can be accessed anytime, anywhere. They are also offering live 60-90 minutes scheduled group workshops facilitated by a trained *PeaceLove* CREATOR that can be customizable to any group, theme or issue.

It has been a long and steady road to getting to where we are today with mental health awareness. Now, let's turn that awareness into action.

Please go to www.peacelove.org to learn more and create your way to peace of mind.

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A SPARK FOR THE CREATIVE



Written by Ariel Maccarone
Photographs by JL Cederblom

We are biologically-driven meaning-makers. By being curious about the world – by asking questions about the who, what, when, where, why (and sometimes how) – we built a cohesive story that taught us how to live. “Avoid that creek,” “Hunt here,” “Gather there,” “Do not eat this.” It all taught us a way of moving and being in the world that enabled us to thrive – or at least live.

The muse – that seductive container for whatever “it” is that drives us to create – is as old as the stories of our first civilizations. In the beginning, we simply needed to be able to attribute meaning to what happened around us, to understand the rules of everything not within our control. We learned how to work with the environment – admittedly less so in recent decades.

Through muses, ideas and meaning find a vessel in which to thrive.

Generation after generation, we learned the ways of the world by seeking meaning within objects. Eventually, our need for knowledge evolved beyond the need to just survive. We wanted a reason to live other than simply that the alternative was considerably less appealing.

So, muses entered our lives in order to hold that for us – to contain that which we cannot integrate with completely, not in the tangible way our brains wish they could engage with our minds. Through muses, ideas and meaning find a vessel in which to thrive.

For surfers like my brother, the ocean is that muse. The experience of riding inside of a wave is a spiritual act for him. It catalyzes a feeling he is unable to access without the sea. For my friend Jes, it was music. Even though she was a chef who lived and breathed cooking, it was the alchemy

of music that inspired her recipes. Multimedia artist Sir Daniel Winn had a different muse, one that was neither the sound nor the sea. His muse had a name ... and it was Maggie.

When I met Maggie Huang in June of 2021, she had been living in Diamond Bar, California for about a year. Originally from Hangzhou, China, Maggie participated in a study-abroad program in Canada as a teenager and

completed high school in Vancouver. Following high school, she attended Toronto University and recently graduated with an undergraduate degree in business.

At the time she graduated, the job market was not the friendliest. Not since the '90s has there been an ideal time to graduate college, but post-2020 was especially painful. Fortunately, Maggie was able to move



to California and has made a life roughly 30 miles outside of Downtown Los Angeles. She says it's likely that she'll return to school, probably to pursue a graduate degree in business. But for now, she is content with not immediately being able to see around every corner of what is to come.

When I ask Maggie if she's ever been labeled a muse before, she says no and that she was surprised to be called one. There's inevitably a degree of pressure in it, and I sense she recognizes that. She says she hopes to live up to it.

Maggie's own muses include the novel *Letters to a Young Poet* (1929) by Rainer Maria Rilke and the film *Good Will Hunting* (1997). However, she said most of her inspiration comes from her conversations with others – especially conversations with strong differences of opinion. Certain podcast journalists inspire her because of this – because they use their lives to create conversations rooted in curiosity, empathy and respect.

She is content with not immediately being able to see around every corner of what is to come.

Maggie is open. She wants more of life, of living, of whatever it means to do this thing we call existing. The way she sees the world hearkens back to our own idealism – that aching beautiful time when we did not yet realize that the world was not ours and that not all possibilities were open to us.

While talking with her, I was reminded of something Kurt Vonnegut wrote in his 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*: “And I asked myself about the present: how wide it was, how deep it was, [and] how much was mine to keep.” Sir Daniel and Maggie are cut from the same proverbial cloth. They both echo the kind of idealism that did not follow all of us beyond childhood; a persistent desire to live deeply.

I think Maggie represents for Sir Daniel what it looks like to choose Life despite all its messy parts. In Maggie, curiosity outweighs the rush to judgement, and that might be the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

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PROGRESSION





Sir Daniel Winn, *Art Couture Innocence* (2021)



Written by Ondy Sweetman
Photographs by JL Cederblom

In 1990, Victoria Chapman was working at the Isabella and Stewart Gardner Museum as a security guard while studying art at The School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston at Tufts University. While on duty at the museum, six months before the largest art heist in the nation, a man approached Victoria asking her if she wanted to take part in a robbery of its European Masters. Out of obvious integrity and a lack of any kind of social deviance or sociopathy, she said no. Later that year on St. Patrick's Day 1990, 13 works valued at \$500 million were stolen including seminal works by Vermeer, Rembrandt and Degas. In 2015, the FBI announced that both thieves were associated with a Boston-area mafia family and had since died. The Isabella and Stewart Gardner Museum continues to search for the missing works in concert with the FBI.

Chapman's personal art practice has evolved since her early days of study at Tufts where she focused on Asian art studies, performance and studio art. As a former cellist who was invested in a more unconventional realm, the lyrical element of music resonates in her work. Victoria moves through the world in a graceful, artful way in every moment from working with artists to carrying

Victoria moves through the world in a graceful, artful way

out the mundane tasks of everyday life. After graduating from Tufts, Chapman returned to her native England to continue her studies in art and philosophy. She secured work at the Victoria and Albert Museum where the inception of her art practice was realized as an assistant to numerous curatorial advisors. This experience employed her interests making core connections in her contemporary art





practice to the historical canon of art. Upon returning to her childhood home of Southern California, Chapman worked for the Laguna Art Museum and the Orange County Museum of Art before venturing into the for-profit realm of the art world. From her wealth of curatorial experience, she became an art director, researching, visiting art

El Nido is a nest of art.

studios, traveling to international art fairs, and gathering selections for senior art consultants building national and

international art collections for the hospitality sector.

Chapman's experience culminated into the desire to launch her own art business that would include artist management, curatorial ventures, liaising and promoting an international artist residency, and establishing an



experimental gallery space focused on providing a select few with intimate experiences with the work of artists.

Chapman relocated from Orange County to the eastern region of Los Angeles where she supports L. Mikelle Standbridge, an American photographer based in Milan, as well as Los Angeles-based artists, Yuri Boyko and Shane Guffogg. Boyko and Guffogg have studios at the Western Avenue Collective in a building owned by internationally renowned artist, Ed Ruscha. In the 1960's, Ruscha and his fellow artists commonly referred to as the LA Art School or "The Cool School" converted a former outdoor shopping mall into individual artist spaces that provided live/work spaces, studios and gallery spaces. This space was held by Ruscha and the LA Art School through the 1980's and continues its tradition as an activated art center by some of today's great contemporary artists.

The Western Avenue Collective is home to SPACE 1028 and The Lodge, as well as Chapman's latest venture – El Nido, an experimental art space. True to its name, El Nido is a nest of art that embraces the viewer in an interactive experience with visual art, music, sound, design, and cuisine. Whereas the Western Avenue Collective is a refuge of art in the heart of the city, El Nido is a space inside the Collective's walls that invites the viewer to suspend belief and imagine one is in a bustling European locale. It could be a nest in Paris or Italy if one stays in the present moment while engaging with the art and the momentary respite that Chapman provides. Artist and designer, Greg Smith designed the space during the height of the pandemic with the intent of creating a feminine space that embraces the essence of Chapman. Having traveled the world extensively visiting galleries, El Nido is unlike any other art space I have experienced given the complexity and depth that

Chapman has been able to infuse into it. Now is the time for women artist's voices to be heard in an art world traditionally dominated by males for

“The works in the exhibition share narratives about transformation.”

two millennia. It is my hope that Chapman's voice, work and creative vision is embraced on a larger scale in the contemporary art scene of Los Angeles and beyond.

El Nido's first exhibition, *“In Your Absence, Something can be Born: An Allegory of Love”* is on view from June 8 – July 12, 2021. The exhibition was conceived from a curatorial standpoint of being in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and the need to transcend death and uncertainty via the experience of art. Using the notion of alchemy, she posits that love is a transformative experience just as making art from everyday materials like paint, paper and photography becomes an alchemical experience the artist infuses their mediums with the energy of their own spirit and the socio-political, time-based landscape in which each artist resides. On a curatorial level, Chapman is interested in using a single narrative to connect a diverse range of mediums and an eclectic group of artists.

In Chapman's words: “The works in the exhibition share narratives about transformation. As the curator, I was interested in a dialogue related to alchemy. This could be based on the artist's materials or a type of transcendence resonating from the finished work. I believe that all objects have a frequency designated by the maker, and it is from this place that art reminds us to bear witness to a greater

understanding.” Chapman's curated artists use painting, drawing, photography, and found historical materials to become sculptural works that weave together a common narrative about the universality of the human experience. The artists featured *“In Your Absence, Something can be Born: An Allegory of Love”* are Erica Shires, L. Mikelle Standbridge, Denis Forest, Shane Guffogg, Dennis Ekstrom, Greg Smith, Yuri Boyko, Takafumi Imura, and Victoria Chapman. While the exhibition prominently features this eclectic group of artists, Chapman's work *Souls of the World* (2011-2021) quietly ties the show together through its process of mixed media on canvas,





L. Mikelle Standbridge, *Veritas no.2, 2019*

Chapman is interested in using a single narrative to connect a diverse range of mediums.

note to this artist residency. It serves as a means of providing time for artists across disciplines, including writers and musicians, to create new works of art. The residency is unique in that it will also include great thinkers of our time, including scientists, philosophers and other academics to explore new work while nestled in the hills of Mosso Santa Maria, located in the Piedmont region of Northern Italy. Chapman not only collaborates as the liaison with artists interested in attending Casa Regis, she also assists in curating its programming- inviting both emerging and emerged artists to participate in exhibitions and community programs.

Victoria Chapman continues to evolve in both her own creative art practice as well as her immersion into the heart of the Los Angeles art scene where she will carry on making cross-cultural connections between a myriad of international locales in the future. This work continues with an exchange between Los Angeles, Italy and England whereby Chapman's El Nido and Standbridge's Casa Regis will collaborate with artist Alice Sheppard-Fidler's English-based artist retreat, The Hide, located between Bath and Bristol. These three artist-run sites are working on turning their own contemporary art practice to structure a collaborative program of opportunities and services across three locations and on digital platforms. Chapman is further pursuing curatorial projects with Reykjavik-based artists Bjarni Sigurbjornsson and Ragnheidur Gudmunds in order to invite the artistic culture of Iceland into this discourse and exchange between a growing international network of artists. While the pandemic is still raging in much of the rest of the world, Victoria is using this time of rebirth to conceive a future for her own creative practice as well as the beautiful souls she gathers on her journey.

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which includes lace as well as layers of paint sanded down during a decade of growth from life experience and process that is worked into the final piece. Chapman invited me into the space to engage with the works while brewing an authentic Moroccan mint tea and presenting an elegant array of hors d'oeuvres where we discussed the exhibition and a myriad of topics from politics to spirituality, to what it means to be a woman in the art world.

Future exhibitions include a solo show of L. Mikelle Standbridge's work – a woman artist who uses true life stories that incorporate mixed media and photography as a mode of documenting the complexities of the human experience. Curated by Chapman, through close collaboration with Standbridge, this show will present selected works from her series *Photo-Bodies: In Between the Edge of a*

Stitched Soul that features Standbridge's ongoing documentation of women's joyous but also tragic experiences with life, birth, survival and death. A resounding undercurrent in all of these works is the responsibility that women hold in society by virtue of their bodies. Further, each work included in the show demonstrates Standbridge's inventiveness to push the limits of photography as a medium by presenting her photographic works as mixed-media sculpture and 3-D installations. Standbridge's exhibition *The Host And The Guest* will be on view at El Nido from July 31 to September 3, 2021 and is available by appointment only via: www.vcprojects.art.

Standbridge is also the founder and director of *Casa Regis – Center for Culture and Contemporary Art*. She and Chapman collaborate to bring American and international artists of



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VALUE BEYOND THE CANVAS

Written by Krista Kleiner
Photographs by Fabian Lopez

When you hear of the incredible art collection Dr. Michael Dao and Dr. Linh Bui have acquired, spanning from Pablo Picasso to Salvador Dali, it's hard to imagine the uphill journey they endured to arrive where they are today.

Both born in Saigon, Vietnam in the middle of the Vietnam War, young Michael and Linh found themselves caught in the north communist's "new economic revolution" when the war ended. Their parents had moved from north to south Vietnam when the war broke out in 1945, taking a stance as being pro-America. It became clear, however, that they could not stay after the fall of Saigon in 1975 as they and their families were on the brink of being stripped of all they had and forced to start anew in the middle of the jungle – a sad fate many faced at

the time. Two strangers taking things into their own hands, they individually found a boat to escape on to avoid persecution at the tender ages of thirteen and fourteen.

After being stuck at a refugee camp in Indonesia for a year, Michael was able to get assistance to come to the United States since his father had served the U.S. military before being killed in battle. This move reunited him his brothers who had arrived a few months prior. Linh, on the other hand, got lucky that a German boat picked up her group and brought them to Singapore, where she stayed for six weeks. Because her grandparents were able to escape a few years prior, they were able to petition for her to reunite with them in California.

As one could imagine, life continued to be a struggle as they adjusted to living in a foreign land and worked to learn a new language. “My parents sold pizza to make a living,” Linh recalls, “so we would do our best to support their business when we could between school and on the weekend. It was hard.” Fate would introduce Linh and Michael in Garden Grove when she entered her freshman year in high school and he his senior year. While college put distance between them, they reunited at USC after obtaining their undergraduate degrees and married soon after.

Today, Dr. Linh Bui is a Doctor of Pharmacy while Dr. Michael Dao is an internal medicine M.D. who also practices aesthetic medicine and owns his own medical group in Garden Grove/Westminster area. Never forgetting their early struggles, they have committed themselves to give back to the community that gave them a fresh start as they reap the fruits of their labor.

Krista: *When did you start to develop your appreciation for art?*

Dr. Linh: *I first started to appreciate art in high school. When we had the chance, we would look at the art at school. We had a dream that somebody we would be able to go to a famous museum and explore famous art because in high school and college, we couldn't afford it. It was a dream.*

Dr. Michael: *I liked to sketch cartoons when I was in high school and took a painting class; but because we were struggling to survive as immigrants, I had to be practical to learn something to make a dependable living. I couldn't afford the risk of being a broke artist like so many end up.*

Years later, when preparing to open his office, Dr. Michael found himself at an auction where he made his first art acquisition – a signed Marc Chagall limited edition lithograph of the Paris Opera House.

Krista: *How has your taste changed over time?*

Dr. Linh: *I've always been fond of colorful art and pieces that showcase nature, like flowers and scenery. Now, I'm more drawn to the artist behind it and learning about that person's backstory.*

Dr. Michael: *I used to be into modern art; but over the past several years, I've become drawn to surrealism and impressionism.*

Krista: *What guides you in making your selections?*

Dr. Michael: *I do a lot of online research. Prior to making any acquisitions, I'm sure to read up on the artist to better understand the value of the artist as well as the specific piece I'm considering. I also consult with Daniel Winn and Randy Slavin who have been trusted advisors to us for the past six to seven years.*

Krista: *What advice can you give to someone who is new to collecting art?*



Dr. Linh: *I think it's important to educate yourself before you buy art. I also think it's important to buy what you like. I also would advise to not buy too much right away. Buy over time. If you can, go to an auction because you can get a good deal on art and contribute to a good cause in the process.*

Krista: *Do you have a favorite piece of your collection? And what makes it so special to you?*

Dr. Linh: *My favorite piece is the first sculpture we acquired by Ira Reines called Celestial. It's beautiful. I love how*



free it feels and how it captures the curves of a woman.

Dr. Michael: *My favorite is the Picasso piece we are hoping to authenticate. I can't disclose its name at the moment, but I can say my next favorite is one of our Salvador Dali pieces – the one of his famous melting clocks.*

While they have far surpassed their high school dream of enjoying art in museums, Dr. Linh and Dr. Michael fervently give back to the community. Regularly sponsoring Vietnamese cultural events and parades that showcase art and music, they formed their own nonprofit – the **Time to Give Back Foundation**. This foundation focuses on supporting the U.S.,

specifically the local southern California community they grew up in.

Dr. Michael: *We donate a lot of student scholarships. And every year we donate 5,000 backpacks with school supplies to the less fortunate students of low-income families. We donate to children of our U.S. military fallen heroes, to local firefighter fallen heroes, and toys for less fortunate children in Christmas season.*

Dr. Linh: *We also donate to a community center for parents of children with autism.*

Dr. Michael: *They ended up naming it after me despite me not asking them to, which was a special honor. We also donated three new ER rooms at the*

Orange Coast Memorial Hospital, which is a nonprofit system.

Krista: ***That's amazing. I have deep respect for all that you do for the community and hope it inspires our readers as it inspires me. How do you feel about art being cut from schools?***

Dr. Michael: *Art is something we hope will continue to be taught in schools, so we are making it a point to not only donate to the Anaheim Unified School District but to also work with their superintendent to make a more meaningful impact when schools open back up.*

Krista: ***I'm so happy to hear that as I truly believe that art is a critical component to learning and our lives. What type of importance do you see art having on us?***

Dr. Michael: *Art is essential to the human spirit. It makes you think – what is the artist trying to say? What are they trying to express? Often times people can have different interpretations, and the same piece of art can spark different emotions from people.*

Dr. Linh: *I find it very interesting to see how art pieces can speak to us differently. Art plays an important role in cultivating imagination.*

Dr. Michael: *We hope our three children will come to better appreciate art despite the world we live in being so screen focused.*

Dr. Linh: *It's a hope we have for all children and for our community as it has brought so much value to our lives.*

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