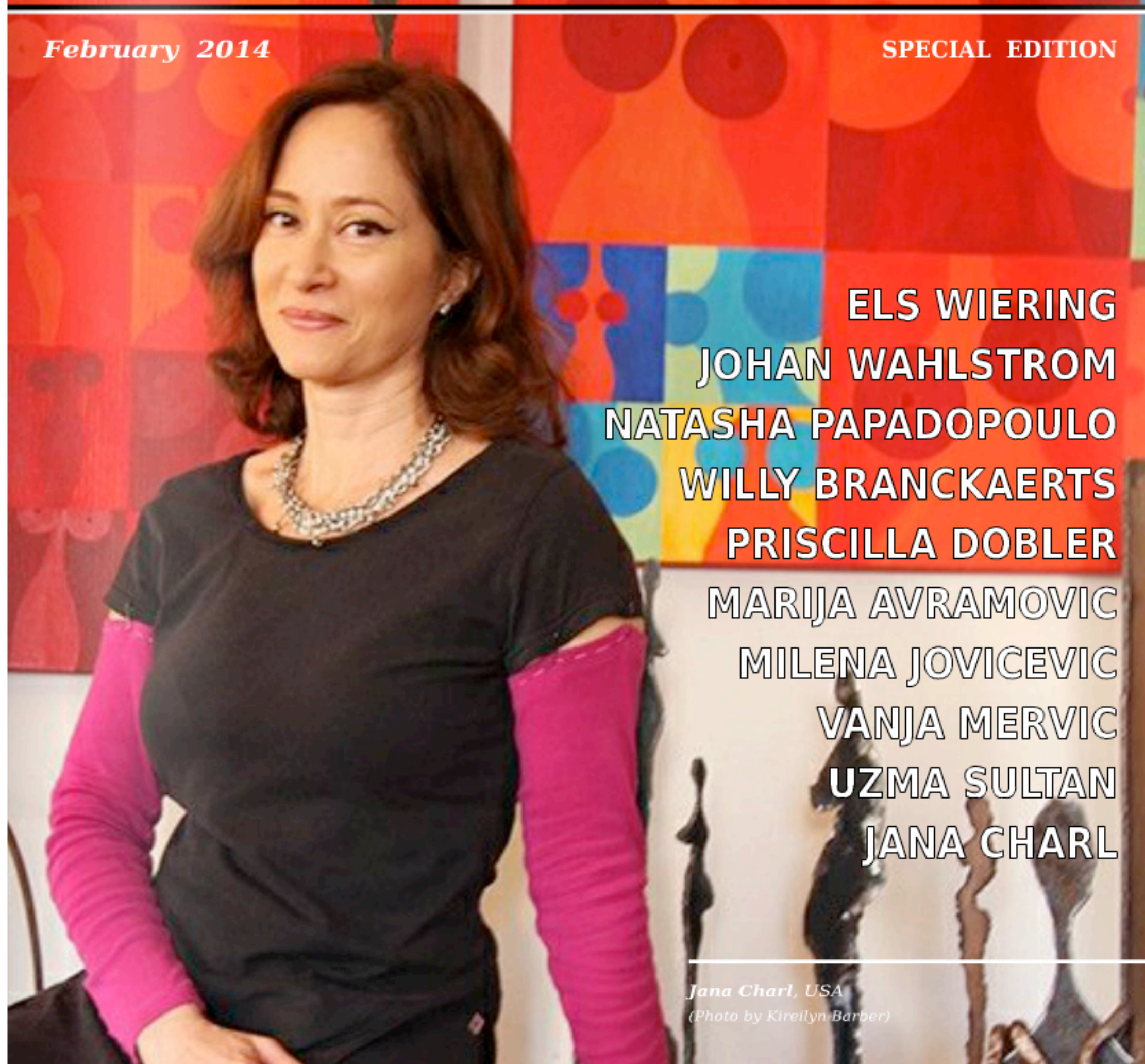


ARTICULACTION

ART REVIEW

February 2014

SPECIAL EDITION



ELS WIERING
JOHAN WAHLSTROM
NATASHA PAPADOPOULO
WILLY BRANCKAERTS
PRISCILLA DOBLER
MARIJA AVRAMOVIC
MILENA JOVICEVIC
VANJA MERVIC
UZMA SULTAN
JANA CHARL

Jana Charl, USA
(Photo by Kirellyn Barber)

ARTiculAction

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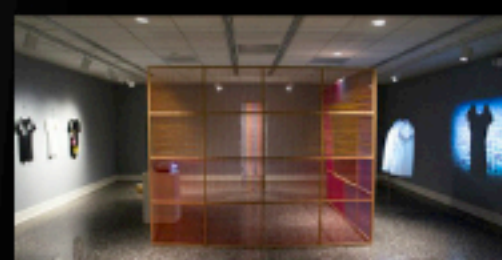
<https://www.facebook.com/articulaction.artreview>

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Priscilla Dobler

(USA)

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Priscilla Dobler is a visual artist whose work explores the critical issues of her identity's construction culturally, politically and socially within her Scottish, American German and Mayan background. She primarily works with wood and textile production, with a major focus on weaving.

Els Wiering

(The Netherlands)

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"I like to build constructions that seem light and fragile, while actually they are very strong. While experimenting with material I research contradictions as lightness and heaviness, strength and vulnerability, space and flat plane. In my work I like to use elements in the environment."

Natasha Papadopoulou

(Greece)

22



"My artwork arrives from an innate need to respond and to imagine perspective ways of interactions between art forms and the visual world. It derives its themes from aspects of popular culture as well as universal images stereotypes, symbols and clichés."

Vanja Mervič

(Slovenija)

30



"I like to think that my work is a constant evolution, therefore I shift between media as often as possible. The idea directs the use of a certain media not the other way around. I believe that each idea, thought, reflection needs to be expressed in a way that suits it best."

Willy Branckaerts

(The Netherlands)

38



"The dreamer should strive, in relation to every thing, to feel the apparent indifference that this thing, as a thing, summons in him. Immediately, instinctively fetch from every object or event that what is dreamable about it and leave all that is real about it for dead. Behold what the wise one should achieve within himself"

(Serbia)

48

"The scenes in my works are pieces of personal universe, sights of spiritual and emotional space. At the same time I wanted to convert an observer in to a witness of a lucid dream or oniric state, and of course to remind him of his active participation in our collective subconscious."

Marija Avramovic



(Sweden)

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I paint to keep myself insane. I paint anxiety to be calm. I paint war to have peace. I paint sadness to be happy. I paint the dark to be in the light. I paint death to be alive. I paint a story so that I don't have to tell a story.

Johan Wahlstrom



(United Kingdom / Pakistan)

66

"Art can be anything and most importantly its the artist's vision that plays a key role. It is also a reflection of the time we live in like the impressionists did something new for their time taking the canvas out of the studio and using paint straight from the tube."

Uzma Sultan

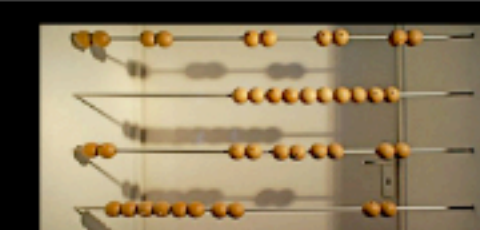


(Montenegro)

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"My work is inspired by everyday- life situations and paradoxes of contemporary society and world we live, that strange place saturated with the media, with an exaggerated production and exaggerated consumption."

Milena Jovicev



(USA)

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"My longest enduring fascination is to capture the human form and psyche utilizing multiple media. Often my interpretation of the female form is anatomically exaggerated, emphasizing the curves that distinguish women as well as define feminine beauty and fertility."

Jana Charl

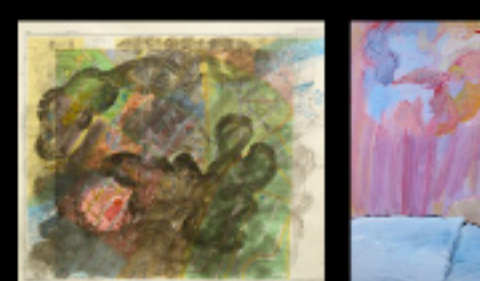


(Turkey)

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"My artwork is based on personal history, on relationships and memory (dreams, space, geography, land). It is broadly related to memory, dreams, space and connotations. These topics are drawn from daily life as much as from unconscious thoughts. Essentially, I'm attempting to create images according to my own psychological needs."

Çiğdem Menteşoğlu



Jana Charl

(USA)

an artist's statement

Delving into the synthesis of unrelated components to form stories is my passion. By sculpting pieces of discarded ranch equipment and scrap steel, which already have a history in their own right, I reveal a new narrative.

My longest enduring fascination is to capture the human form and psyche utilizing multiple media. Often my interpretation of the female form is anatomically exaggerated, emphasizing the curves that distinguish women as well as define feminine beauty and fertility.

I explore how women are perceived and address sensitive issues with a sense of humor and playfulness.

My artwork has been exhibited and sold internationally in galleries and museums.

Jana Charl

Winter: Women on Pedestals

2013

8 x 8 x 8 cm



An interview with Jana Charl

Hello Jana, and a warm welcome to ARTiculAction. I will start this interview with my usual introductory question: what in your opinion defines a work of Art? By the way, what could be the features that mark an artwork as a piece of Contemporary Art? Moreover, do you think that there's an inner dichotomy between tradition and contemporariness?

It's a pleasure to be selected as part of the eclectic group of artists interviewed by your team. The ability of a work of art to communicate an experience to our senses defines it. It is characterized by its impact, which can be personal or universal, instant or lingering, and with a life that is temporary or timeless.

Other than the temporal component, features of contemporary artwork include: testing the boundaries of what defines art; an exploration of innovative materials and forms of expression; and a blurring of the lines between craft, commercial art and fine art. An eclectic amalgamation of "new" and conventional exists; not limited by past paradigms but rather an assimilation of elements. The desire to differentiate results in a dichotomy between tradition and contemporariness.

Would you like to tell us something about your background? Are there any experiences impacting the way you currently produce your artwork? By the way, I sometimes I wonder if a certain kind of formal training could even stifle a young artist's creativity... what's your point?

Exploring the female identity is the thread weaving the majority of my artwork together. I grew up with three older sisters and had two influential grandmothers. Both of my grandmothers were feminists; one was an activist and the other a multi-talented swimsuit and textile designer.

After I'd pushed the limits of what I could do with crayons and chalk, my father introduced me to acrylic painting. As a child, I learned the skills to build whatever



Jana Charl

I wanted in his wood shop. He also taught me how to solder silver which sparked my interests in jewelry-making and welding.

Because I'd already been creating art since early childhood, in addition to being rebellious and naturally challenge-seeking, formal training seemed stifling. I've never liked being told what to do nor what I can't do. Also, I believe passion and innate curiosity are fundamental to producing artwork along with the technical knowledge. Fortunately, I was able to attend schools that truly fostered my creativity and I was able to opt out of conventional art classes by designing independent studies.

My parents considered art a hobby and not an occupation; as a consequence, I felt compelled to prove I was capable of pursuing any career. I chose the path of a broad liberal arts education with a minor in art. I have obtained technical skills but in a nontraditional way, and I view myself as a lifelong student with mentors and teachers that I select along the way.

Before starting to elaborate about your production, would you like to tell to our readers something about your process and set up for making your artwork? In particular, what technical aspects do you mainly focus on in your work? And how much preparation and time do you put in before and during the process of creating a piece?

A supply of materials is essential to my process of creating artwork. I'm a borderline hoarder, always collecting items for future projects. Once I immerse myself in a project I do not want to lose the momentum by hunting for the ingredients. In the case of the steel sculptures, I select discarded metal from a scrap pile at the ranch where I weld in Central Oregon. I'm inspired by what I discover from visit-to-visit because there is no guarantee what will be available.

More often than not, the process evolves while I'm working. Sketching ideas on paper or storing them in my mind, is typically the point of departure and not necessarily the blueprint. I try to remain flexible while I'm working, and let the accidents transform into inspiration... but I can be stubborn, impatient and destructive. Only taking breaks as needed, I prefer to



Autumn: Gallery Opening, 2013, 8 x 8 x 8 cm

complete a project by working on it nonstop. If I revisit a work of art at a later date, it rarely is actualized as initially conceptualized. Some works take years to complete due to my tendency to paint over, deconstruct or reconstruct them.

Technically, the process varies depending on the medium and the obstacles I encounter: the polymer clay sculptures are formed individually or as a series. Cracking occurred as I pushed the size-limit of solid figures which I solved by building aluminum armatures. While assembling the dioramas, the challenge was to find glues that would securely bind the diverse elements.

Against the safety precautions for welding, I work with metal and mechanical parts which are rusty, greasy, dirty and occasionally have remnants of paint. A welder recently told me "*stick to what you know, painting.*" He didn't understand that incorporating the history of the used metal is an intrinsic part of the story I want to communicate. I choose not to work with clean, new steel. The small explosions, fires, and molten splatters are all part of the process and impact the result. Also, I intentionally maintain a certain "unfinished" cru-



Autumn: Gallery Opening, 2013 8 x 8 x 8 cm

deness to my sculptures by employing only the tools available to the ranch workers, in their environment and context.

When I'm plasma-cutting metal or painting with acrylics, I'm highly aware of my breath and the resulting lines waver in rhythm with it. Currently, I'm not interested in laser-cutting the metal for precise and clean lines. Nor do I want my paint-

ings to look like they're pristine computer-generated output; thus, texture is an essential feature.

Layering the acrylic, varying the opacity, not entirely blending colors, utilizing unconventional tools, and at times adding sand, clay and dried flower petals are techniques I experiment with to create textural effects. Another integral part of the process is the mixing and remixing of colors.

Now let's focus on your art production: I would start from your Season Dioramas, an interesting series that our readers have already started to get to know and admire in the introductory pages of this article. Would you tell us something about the genesis of this project? What was your initial inspiration?

I was introduced to the medium of polymer clay when I was invited to participate in an exhibition of 1,000 sculptures (1993, Ars Futura Gallery, Zurich). Although the hundreds of characters that I've created since then can be organized by themes and series, I had never housed them previously as dioramas. The inspiration came when I was in a group show and the gallery owner selected some of my work to showcase in a vitrine at the front window.

When the show ended, I searched for a vitrine to make a beach scene with my venuses in bikinis. I attempted to make a 30-centimeter glass cube; however, I wasn't able to seal the box to hold sand and melted my soldering iron in the process. Eight months later, the concept had expanded to include all four seasons, each with a scene examining society's perceptions of women. My interest to proceed was rekindled by a call for



Summer: Venuses at the Beach, 2013 8 x 8 x 8 cm

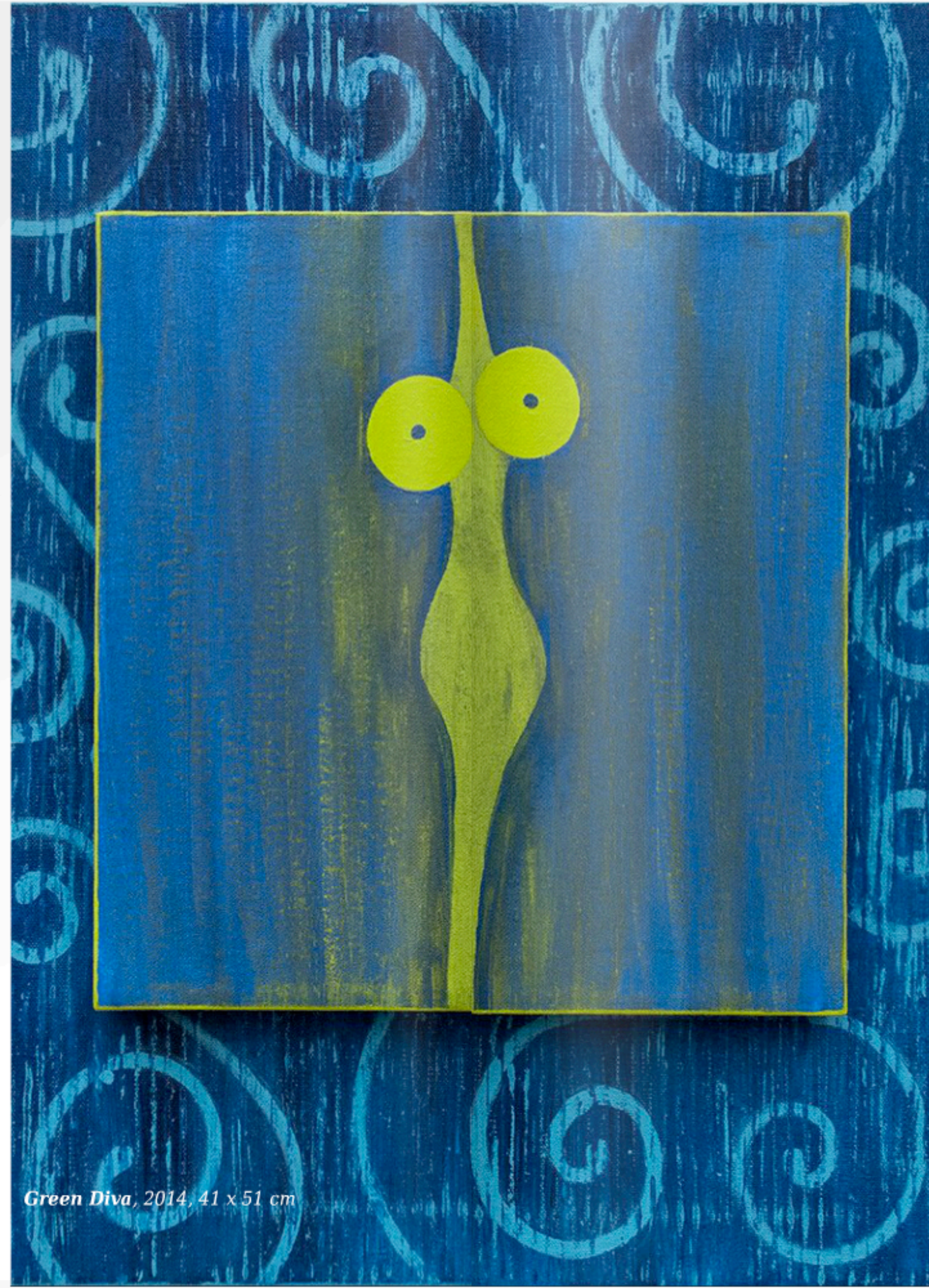
entries for a "Small Worlds" exhibition (2013, Target Gallery, Alexandria, Virginia) juried by the scale model artist Thomas Doyle.

While searching through my stockpile, I discovered the eight-centimeter acrylic cubes and made the decision to work on the much smaller scale. In addition, I had to ensure each one was safely transportable. The effort paid off when **Winter: Women on Pedestals**, was selected for the show. A scene inspired by a combination of available materials and a recent trip to the Carrara region of Italy where I connected with marble sculptors. Shortly afterwards, **Summer: Venuses at the Beach** was selected by 440 Gallery in Brooklyn, New York, for a "Small Works" exhibition. I combined my recurring "ancient fertility god-dess" theme with the California "beach body" images.

A visual of your recent acrylics as Sisters and Green Diva that has impressed me is the synergy between the apparently contrasting ideas of circularity suggested by the shapes of the body and the straightness of the lines that pervades the background: this gives a sense of rhythm to



Sisters, 2014 15 x 15cm



Green Diva, 2014, 41 x 51 cm



Green Vessel, 2014, 15 x 15cm

the canvas: would you tell us more about the evolution of this stimulating technique?

This technique evolved as an effort to develop a style distinct from my father's, which is strongly influenced by Piet Mondrian's artwork. He paints with control and discipline, filling solid colors within the confines of clean black outlines, which evokes little emotion.

Both of these paintings were sketched with paint directly on the canvas. I refined the foreground forms to emphasize the curves which distinguish and define women. In contrast, the background is comprised of layers of not entirely blended colors of paint applied with fervor and a dry brush to enhance the mood.

If I have been asked to choose an adjective that could sum up in a single word your art, I would say that it's "kaleidoscopic": in fact, as our readers can view directly at your website <http://www.janacharl.com/> your Art practice ranges from painting to sculptural works, from graphics to jewelry design... I have to admit that I have

been struck with your capability of delivering on a myriad of projects... while crossing the borders of different artistic fields have you ever happened to realize that a synergy between different disciplines is the only way to achieve some results, to express some concepts?

As an artist I believe that the more tools I have available to communicate, the more freedom I have to creatively (and effectively) express concepts; whether it's through the synergy of multiple disciplines or a single medium. I struggle to draw boundaries between the different disciplines and art practices, consistent with your "kaleidoscopic" description. In fact, the mentor for my art studies in college told me that I had creativity coming out of my pores.

Although the contemporary art scene is in a state of flux, conventional and hierarchical labels are still prevalent. I would love to have lived during the Renaissance (but as a male).

As I can read in the starting lines of your artist's statement, "delving into the synthesis of unrelated components to form stories is your passion" I would like to ask you if in your opinion personal experience is an absolutely indispensable part of a creative process... Do you think that a creative process could be disconnected from direct experience?

In the statement I'm referring to items which I discover that I haven't created but rather incorporate into my creations. The resulting sculptures are directly connected to my experiences which are intertwined with an empathy for others, collective experiences, historical references, and a fascination with story-telling and stories told. Where direct exposure doesn't exist, one's imagination can fill the void.

Also, personal experience is not limited to our conscious awareness; thus, it is difficult to truly separate from it. Even as an observer, I'm not sure one can truly be objective and detached.

And I couldn't do without mentioning your metal sculptures as Bitchforked and especially Chain Necklace and Yellow Skirt, that I have to admit is one of my favourite pieces of yours...

By the way, as you have remarked, "sculpting pieces of discarded ranch equipment and scrap steel, which already have a history in their own right, you reveal a new narrative": even though I'm aware that this might sound a bit naïf, I'm sort of convinced that some informations & ideas are hidden, or even "encrypted" in the environment we live in, so we need -in a way- to decipher them. Maybe one of the roles of an artist could be to reveal unexpected sides of Nature, especially of our inner Nature... what's your point about this?

Both **Bitchforked**, a carved female profile serving as a handle for a pitchfork stabbing into a machine's worn out blade; and **Chain Necklace and Yellow Skirt**, comprised of a piece of steel forming the top half of a woman wearing a heavy chain and yellow earth auger skirt; demonstrate



Chain Necklace and Yellow Skirt, 2012, 86 cm



Bitchforked, 2013, 81 cm

this role. Each sculpture is a product of "recoding" existing visual information. The emergent synthesis triggers previously unexpected associations, deciphering new meaning.

During these last four years your artwork has been exhibited in several occasions: it goes without saying that positive feedback is capable of providing an artist special support... I was just wondering if *the expectation of positive feedback*- could even influence the process of an artist... By the way, how important is the feedback of your audience to you? Do you ever think of who will enjoy your Art when you conceive your pieces? I sometimes wonder if there could ever exist a *genuine* relationship between business and Art...

Basic human nature supports the fact that positive feedback is persuasive. The extent of that influence depends on factors such as one's self-confidence and goals. In the past, I had large gaps between exhibitions because of a fear of losing my passion to create art due to the pressure to appease critics, in order to exhibit and sell it. My graphic design business is the compromise. Its purpose is to earn income which is based on catering to my clients' expectations.

Moreover, I do appreciate feedback but whether I allow it impact my artwork or not depends on how I internalize it. In a productive sense, it can enhance my development as an artist. Ultimately the goal of my artwork is to elicit awareness and a dialog concerning the issues I'm addressing.

Thanks a lot for your time and your thoughts, Jana. My last question deals with your future plans: what's next for you? Anything coming up for you professionally that you would like readers to be aware of?

My motto lately is "*nothing ventured, nothing gained*" in contrast to earlier times where I waited to be invited to participate in exhibitions. Currently, I'm submitting artwork to calls for artists and hope to exhibit in more international venues. I'm also in the brainstorming stage of a collaboration with marble sculptor Marco Ambrosini.

Finally, my goal is to have a solo show in the near future, perhaps in Zurich where I was in my first group show?

An interview by articulation@post.com



Standing in a Forest, 2013, 99 cm



Bolted Down, 2013, 113 cm

She Has Balls, 2013, 127 cm

Screwed, 2013, 98 cm