

ART

H A B E N S

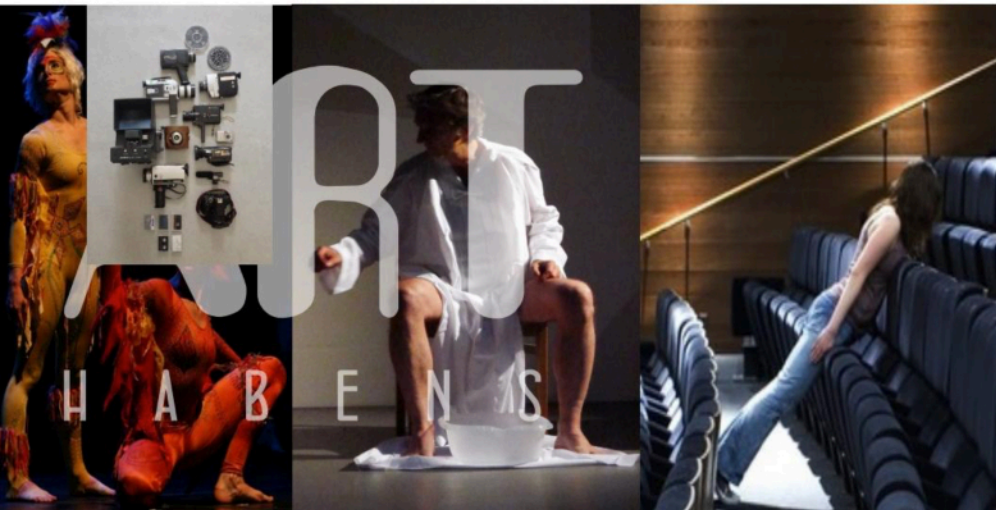
CONTEMPORARY ART REVIEW

ACHIEL JONES
URIEL ZIV
JANA CHARL
MIGUEL AZUAGA
ROY HAHARY
SARAH SAYEED
RICHARD ZEISS
RENANA ALDOR
GILSUK KO

Comfort Distance, video-performance, 05:12, 2015

A work by Gilsuk Ko

ART
Contemporary Art Press



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Richard Zeiss
United Kingdom

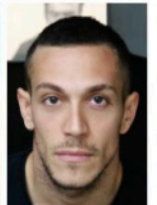
My artistic practice once said "The materials do not represent, signify, or allude to anything; they are what they are and nothing more". My interest here is twofold: how barren of referents can material vision become? And how and where can the viewing subject be kept close to the threshold where material vision turns into phenomenal vision - a kind of pure material vision - before phenomenality "occurs"; however, he comes from the text. How does this relate to painting, and can it relate at all?

Material collisions / alchemy: the materials I use such as tarpuulin (industrial production) or egg tempera (connotation: medieval religious painting) may ultimately cancel each other out, with their individual phenomenal character breaking down into non-relational materiality, subverting each other's connotations, where tarpuulin is just a (polyethylene) surface with no external referents.



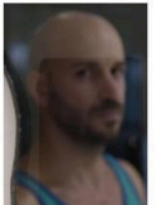
Jana Charl
USA

My creative practice involves exploring different media and techniques around testing the boundaries of what defines contemporary art, including the blurring of the traditional lines dividing craft, commercial art, and fine art. I am a passionate storyteller inspired by the new materials, experiences, and observations that I collect. In my mixed media works, I disrupt the canvas surface by cutting, weaving, sewing, and incorporating unexpected elements. By appropriating the inherent histories of found objects, I add additional layers of meaning and humor to my artwork. I represent words with graphic bars in order to focus on the visual experience; allow for individualized interpretations, and circumvent language barriers. Fascinated by the challenge to capture the human form in a universal way, I play the curves that define and distinguish women. I chose universal features over unique ones, employing minimalism to promote a sense of reliability, accessibility, and engagement. In the current times, many aspects of our lives are void of a human connection; incorporating bodies in my work is an intention for association, to personalize matters based by preconceptions. Feminist issues, perceptions of women's rights, identity, and gender relationships are key themes weaving my work together.



Miguel Azuaga
Germany

During one of his last trips to Spain in 2014, Miguel Azuaga found documents of his grandfather, participant of a migration wave of the Francoist dictatorship's last period in 1960. Not long afterwards he began a research of his own identity through old documents to somehow figure out his current status as an immigrant. Towards the conflict of a constant to-and-fro that fuses past and present, where its function is to agglutinate different temporal spaces. The words journey or quest are substitutes for another and perhaps more explicit term, migration, whose presence in this project is obvious in the references to borders and the use of original passport files and images, thus establishing the link between the character and the connection to a past journey at which we now look back on. History repeats itself, but so do stories, and here the two trade places to become a metaphor for the act of migration. Searching for our identity in others and drawing comparisons are two common reactions when we feel insecure and disoriented. It creates an objective point of reference, a standard, something fixed we can use to determine if we are headed in the right direction in this sea-land of absence of fixed parameters of a present-day society.



Uriel Ziv
Israel

We live in an era of screens, surrounded as constantly throughout our days, throughout our lives, by the private one, in the street, and in our own pockets. The personal screens we all own contain within them - in their digital memories, cloud storages, and social network databases - fractures of our multiple identities. Identities that are constantly constructed and reconstructed, copied, posted, transformed and transferred in the various online media platforms in which we engage with. As an artist I am fascinated by this connection between man and screen, a connection that is both physical as well as metaphysical. The physical aspects can be demonstrated by bodily engagements - the hand engages with the smartphone, the finger engages with the screen, our facial expression engage with the camera as we take a selfie. The metaphysical aspects are "black" switched off screens, the metamorphosis that undergoes the character between the moment of the photograph snapshot to the moment in which it is exhibited and mediated in social media; the dual identity and presence of a person both in a physical spatiotemporal realm as well as a representational virtual cyber realm. These aspects take a stronger hold in me, as I reflect my youth in an extremely orthodox Jewish household. A house hold with no computer, no television, and no expression of new technology but rejection and general fear. This blockade enforced on me by the educating figures in my early life has driven me towards a total disconnection with these forbidden screen.



Roy Harary
Israel

My artistic practice is rooted in the observation of the construction of my identity in relation to the constantly shifting cultural and political landscape of Israel, the country in which I was born and raised. For my generation of Israelis who grew up during the late 80's, as the country transitioned from socialism to capitalism, from Zionism to post-Zionism, the Zionist dream was challenged and criticized, and it previously embraced dominant narrative of nationhood and cultural pride was put to question. I experienced this transition through popular media: television, movies, magazines, etc. It impacted me deeply and led to my current critical perspective how ideological frameworks impact not only the society we live in but our very own formation as individuals. I am committed to explore at large relationships between media and ideology, to challenge dominant ideas and to better understand representation as a tool that articulates subjectivities, bodies, affects and desires. Working in video, photography, performance and installation, I use text and visual language from popular media such as YouTube, news broadcasts and TV as source materials for my work. Once translated into the fictionalized realm of my final work, the conventions of the source material gets disrupted in order to diverge from common expectations, exploring their own language to create cracks in its ideologically determined narrative. Recent projects have addressed the ideological frameworks of collective memories as expressed in ecological frameworks and in my more recent work dives into digital platforms as a site of a new generation, and its consequent formation.



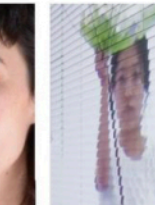
Sarah Sayeed
United Kingdom

My work takes a look at the Church of modern life: Hollywood. Currently talks are taking place regarding the shifting cultural and political landscape of Israel, the country in which I was born and raised. For my generation of Israelis who grew up during the late 80's, as the country transitioned from socialism to capitalism, from Zionism to post-Zionism, the Zionist dream was challenged and criticized, and it previously embraced dominant narrative of nationhood and cultural pride was put to question. I experienced this transition through popular media: television, movies, magazines, etc. It impacted me deeply and led to my current critical perspective how ideological frameworks impact not only the society we live in but our very own formation as individuals. I am committed to explore at large relationships between media and ideology, to challenge dominant ideas and to better understand representation as a tool that articulates subjectivities, bodies, affects and desires. Working in video, photography, performance and installation, I use text and visual language from popular media such as YouTube, news broadcasts and TV as source materials for my work. Once translated into the fictionalized realm of my final work, the conventions of the source material gets disrupted in order to diverge from common expectations, exploring their own language to create cracks in its ideologically determined narrative. Recent projects have addressed the ideological frameworks of collective memories as expressed in ecological frameworks and in my more recent work dives into digital platforms as a site of a new generation, and its consequent formation.



Renana Aldor
Israel

As a multidisciplinary artist and animator, I integrate between different mediums with a cinematic approach. I draw my inspiration from the moving image and its history. During the creative process, I attempt to maintain the initial moods and emotions which are involved with the archetypal cinematic experience. Yet the film will always reveal itself and its inner mechanism to the spectators. In my films I create non-narrative stories, half-fictional half-documentary based on real matrilineal characters. Specifically, women who are related to me, from my family, or women who are indirectly connected to my origins. This process begins with a still image of a woman portrait from a different space to excite the workers and to keep them going. The worker herself is a key theme in my work. Social pressures of the modern have achieved total exhilaration of the male species, and the female is punished for his degradation. The Pseudophile, the night, the child molester, the murderer, the burglar have their punishments, and they're taken out, but remove the markers from the map, and take a look at where they are placed. The reputation and behaviors of the woman rely on other structures they stand on, these must be factored. To relate to each other we rely on hyperreality, our currency is a promise, and an intangible, and our bodies in the process, this can be seen in the morbidly obese and the mother staring at her phone while feeding her child. We are in a time where not only is the real being replaced with the hyperreal, but the hyperreal has become a sign.



Gilsuk Ko
Germany

People most live in society, no matter if they want to or not. In this process of making contact with other persons the role and character of the subject changes. The main scope of my work is the relationship between people. Since my childhood I was always afraid of meeting someone new. In Korea when going into a new class at the start of a semester, I was struck with fear of making new friends. I also felt very chaotic about the different roles of people in society. In some relationships with people I had to become a leader, with other I had to follow and with other it was on par, which felt not very confident. Even though I am a human with his own distinctive attributes and character, in order to get along with different people, I had to take different roles and attributes. While having relationships with other, through other people's character, background and situations etc., my role had to change. If any of these criteria changed, my role had to change, even though I was with the same people. In my work the role and feeling in these relationships between me and other people is a very personal aspect and also interpretation. Thereby exploring the feminine presence in front of the camera and behind it.

In my work, it is important for me to maintain a hand gesture and craftsmanship aside from the digital aesthetics. After years of learning and developing drawing skills, today I'm more interested in sculptural aspects of creation, spaces and objects, set making and artificial environments. This transition from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional way of thinking is very much involved with my interest in living spaces and tangible memories. The physical space reveals an inner space of unconsciousness and sentiments. I'm interested in these aspects that everyone can identify with. These personal aspects are materialized through symbolic actions, material or people. These short and simple and daily life actions are repeated in a performance as a demonstration between people, through which lies a focus on the relationship with the other protagonists in the performance. A cinematic and retrospective is also a method to show my passive role in the relationship and also my fear and restraints. Through students I can gather in daily life, I can give my personal feelings but it is also still related in daily life and therefore it can probably happen. It is a question of relationships in life that continue to happen. I explore an experience and this and react this easily.



Achiel Jones
Belgium

I'm interested in using video and multimedia (installation, soundscapes) to reveal the deeper resonances of moments. My work focuses on overlaying video - and/or soundtracks to create visual tapestries exploring the unconscious connections we make during moments in our lives, influencing our present and future. I also focuses on the experience and perception of ordinary moments and their formation as a memory glimpsed in time. Moments, essential or constituent elements of a complex idea, so innocent and magical they will leave you wanting more. I tries to capture every moment in my life that seems influential and determined. A never ending research to those constituent elements and hopefully a never ending to capturing moments.

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Jana Charl

Lives and works in Los Angeles, California

My creative practice involves exploring different media and techniques around testing the boundaries of what defines contemporary art, including the blurring of the traditional lines dividing craft, commercial art, and fine art. I am a passionate storyteller inspired by the raw materials, experiences, and observations that I collect.

In my mixed media works, I disrupt the canvas surface by cutting, weaving, and incorporating unexpected elements. By appropriating the inherent histories of found objects, I add additional layers of meaning and humor to my artwork. I represent words with graphic bars in order to focus on the visual experience; allow for individualized interpretations; and circumvent language barriers.

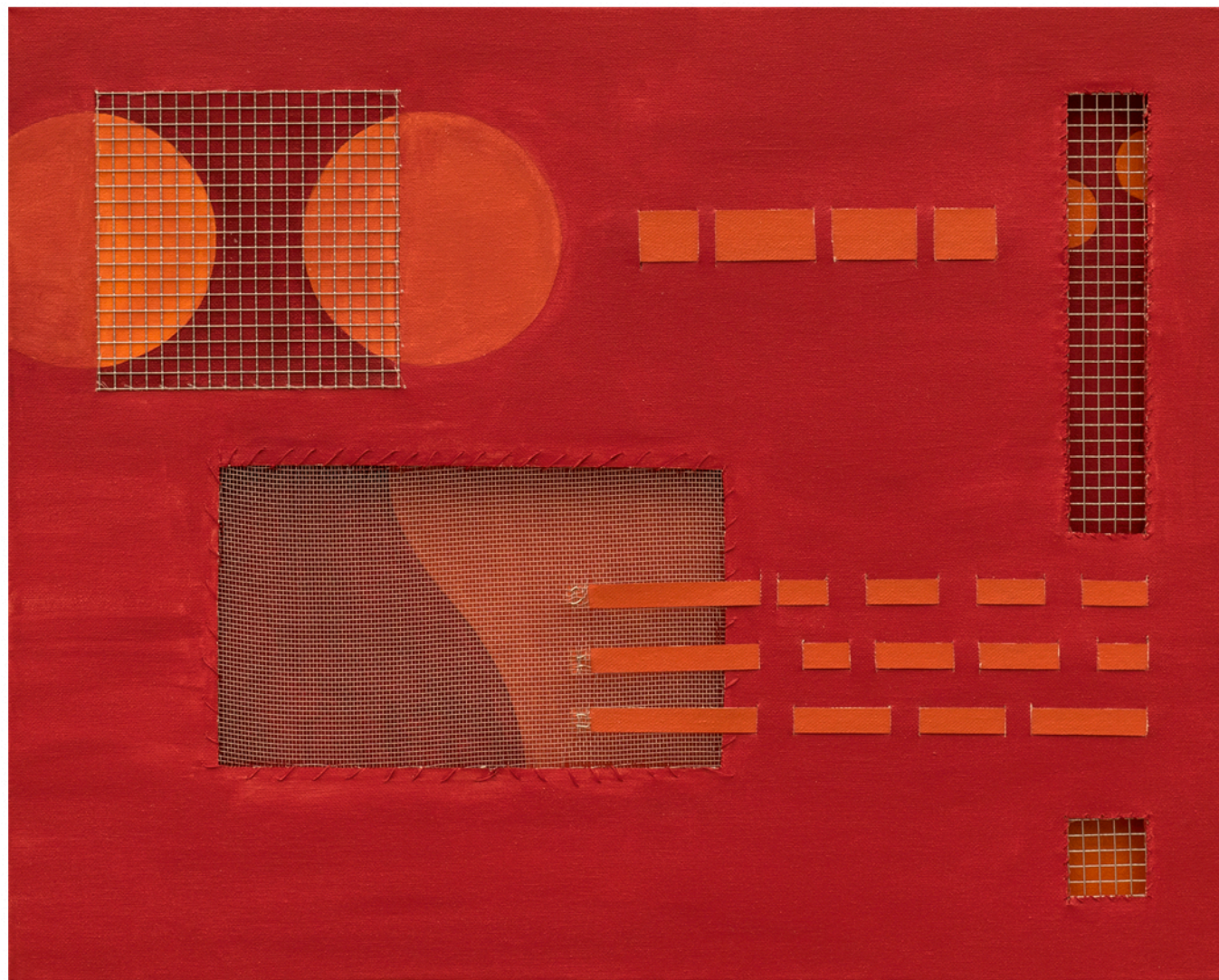
Fascinated by the challenge to capture the human form in a universal way, I stylize the curves that define and distinguish women. I choose universal features over unique ones, employing minimalism to promote a sense of relatability, accessibility, and engagement. In the current times, many aspects of our lives are void of a human connection; incorporating bodies in my work is an intention for association, to personalize matters which are analyzed abstractly.

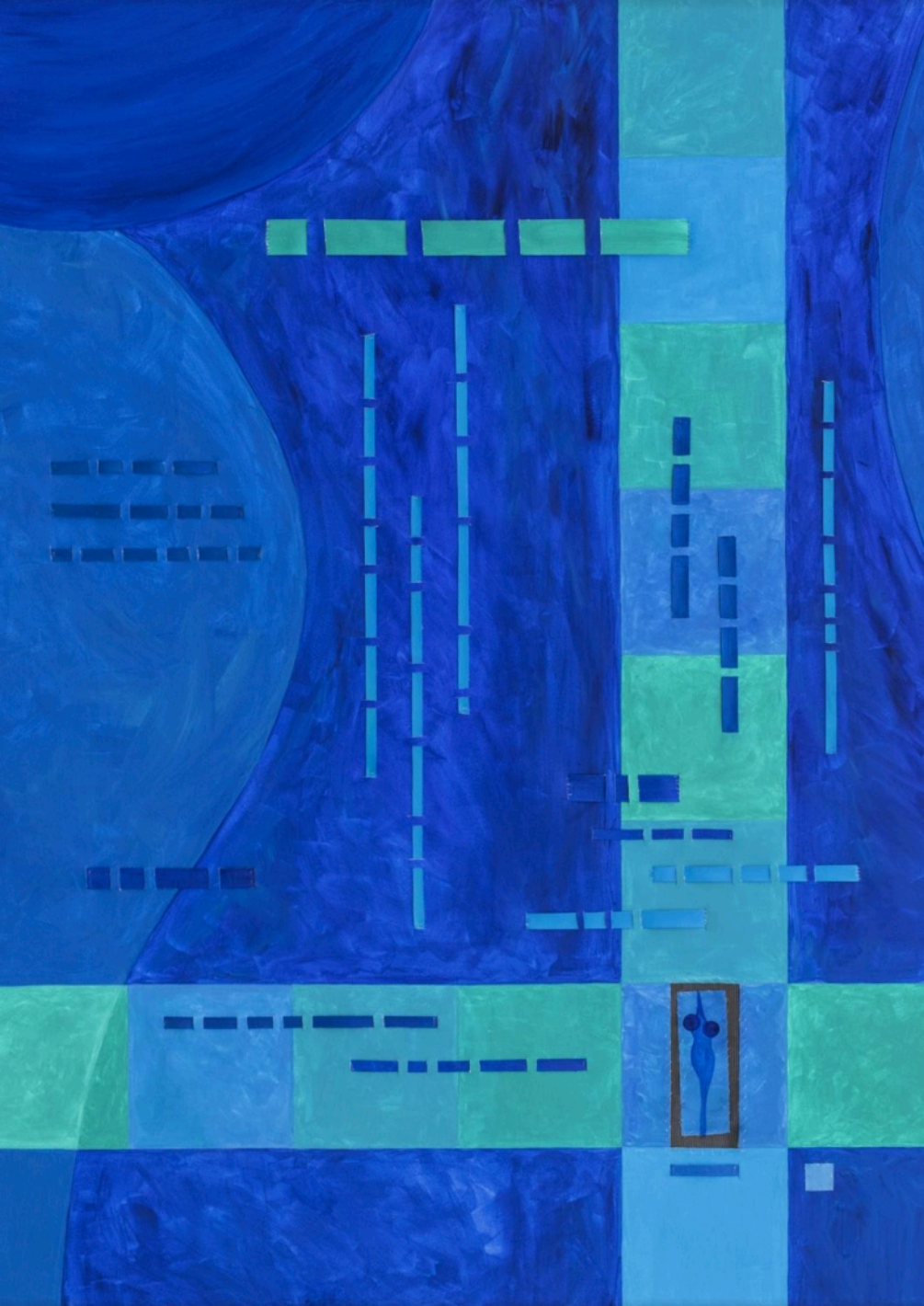
I address current issues and seek to evoke thought on perceptions biased by preconceptions. Feminist issues, perceptions of women's roles, identity, and gender relationships are key themes weaving my work together.

Jana Charl

Jana Charl

ART Habens





An interview with

Jana Charl

An interview by **Josh Ryder**, curator
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator
arthabens@mail.com

Hello Jana and welcome to ART Habens: before starting to elaborate about your artistic production would you like to tell us something about your background? You have an interdisciplinary academic background, including studying at the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies, University of California, San Diego. How does this experience influence the evolution of your identity as an artist? And in particular, how does living in the United States inform the way you relate yourself to art making and to the aesthetic problem in general?

My curiosity and desire to study and analyze human behavior has been an integral part of my artwork. I explored a broad liberal arts education, concentrating on interdisciplinary studies with a focus on art and psychology. Encouraged by my art mentor at the University of Redlands, California, I attended Waseda University, Tokyo, for one year. Nonverbal communication trumped verbal which created the perfect environment to focus on a largely visual experience. I was especially inspired by patterns and color combinations.

Although I grew up in an environment where art was always an important part of my life, my parents viewed it as a hobby and not as a profession. As a consequence, I struggled with allowing myself to pursue a career in art. Instead of studying for a Masters in Fine Art, I attended the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies at the University of California San Diego. During my second year of studies I took a leave of absence and did not return. After completely changing my environment by moving to Zurich, I felt freer to explore my identity as an artist. I worked at a top advertising agency as a graphic designer and art director. A copywriter introduced me to polymer clay and curated my first international group exhibition at Ars

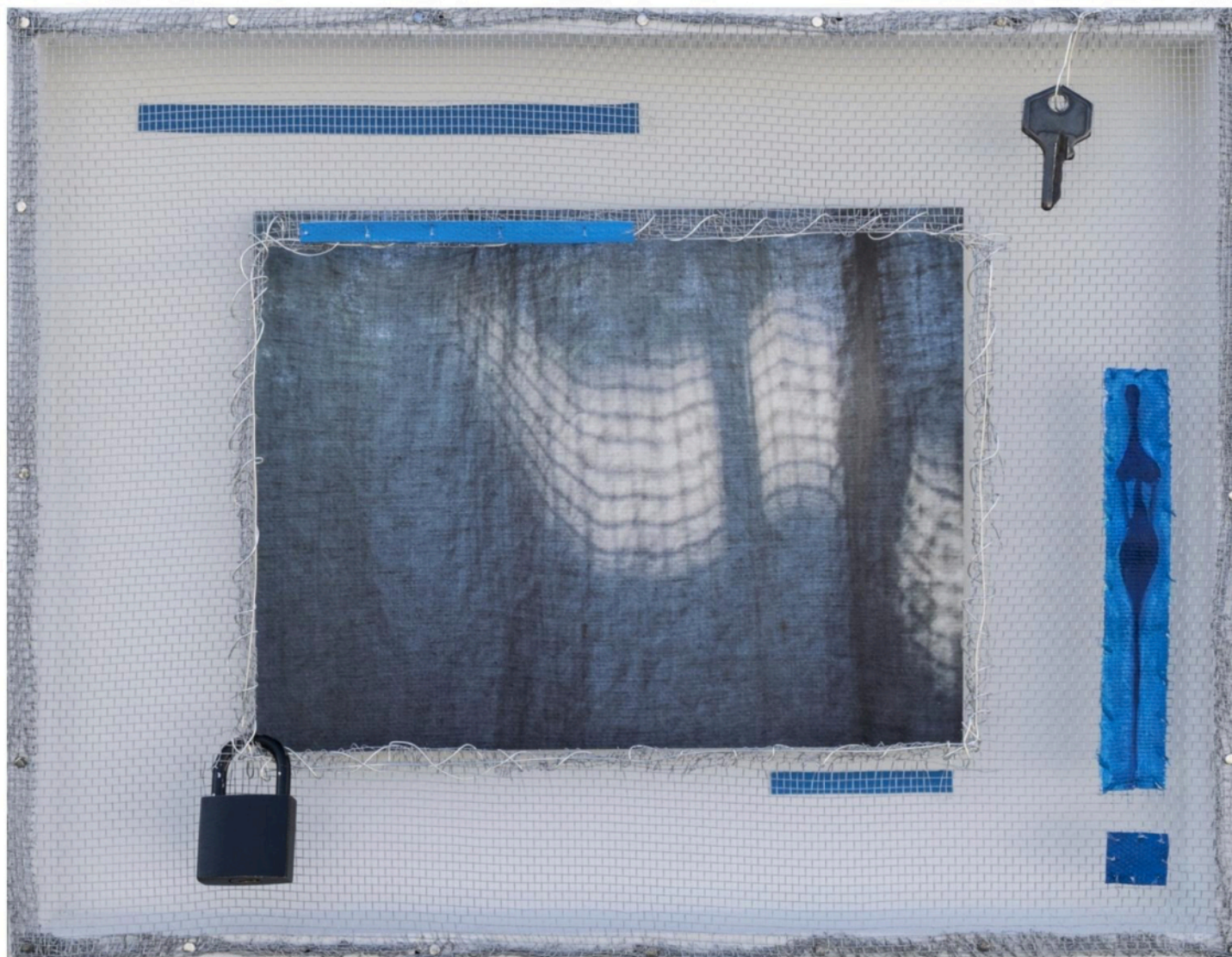


Jana Charl

Photo by Jessica Klein

Futura Galerie, where we created 1000 polymer clay sculptures.

Studying international relations and living abroad (Nuremberg, Germany; Tokyo, Japan; Zurich, Switzerland; and Pesaro, Italy) contributed to my international awareness. My aesthetics have a multi-cultural influence based on visually absorbing, both consciously and unconsciously, my surroundings. Daily encounters and observations in my current Los Angeles environment are translated into



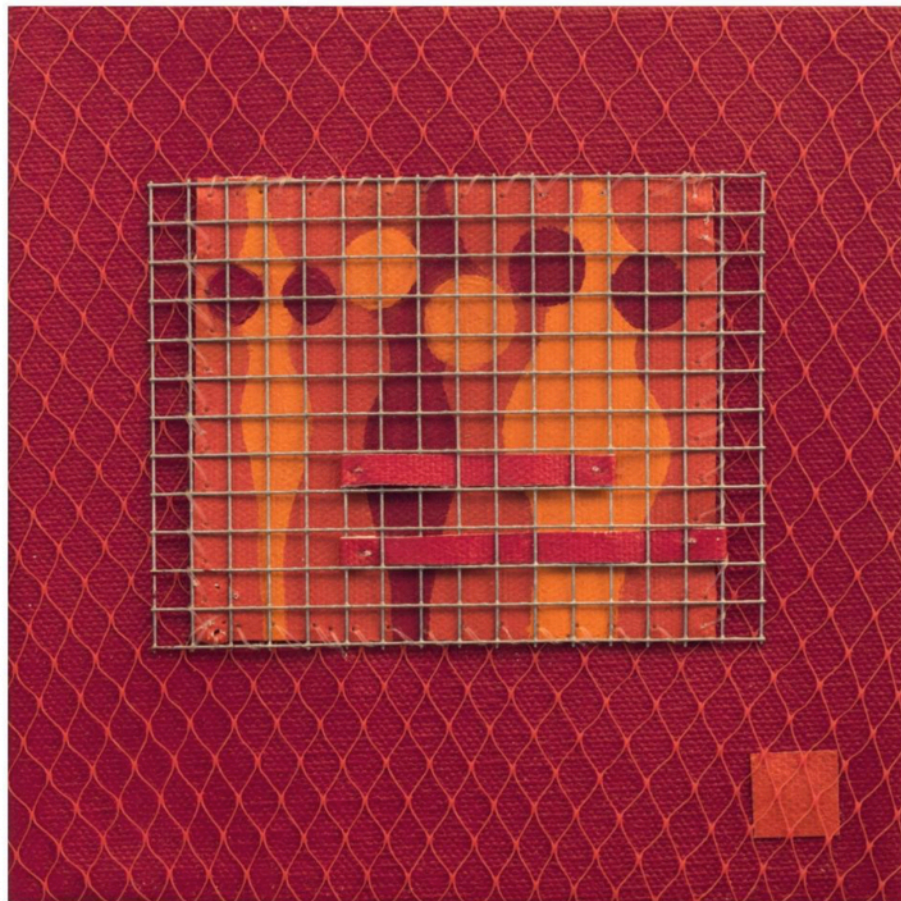
my works of art. In particular, living in a body-centric, image-conscious city has shaped my signature incorporation of stylized bodies.

My first public installation, Venus of Adams Square on view now (May 3rd - July 28th, 2017; the proposal can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/178079167>), is of an oversized Venus on a throne surrounded by floating flowers. I created the work from my own wardrobe and fabric I've collected, mainly from downtown Los Angeles's fabric district. The resources readily available in this city also shape the work I'm able to create.

As you have remarked in the introductory lines of your artist's statement, your creative practice involves exploring different media and techniques around testing the boundaries of what defines contemporary art, including the blurring of the traditional lines dividing craft, commercial art, and fine art. Would you consider that this multidisciplinary feature defines your practice? In particular, can you recognize a recurring idea in your artistic production?

Serving as a visual example of my statement is the mixed media painting Locked In. I built and painted the wood box; mounted a photo that I printed on canvas; painted graphic bars with acrylic on canvas and glued them onto the wood and sewed them onto the attached wire mesh to represent words (similar to a commercial art technique of using blind text as a placeholder for actual text). Then, I attached found objects; sewed edges with wire; and painted and sewed on my signature female figure. As a result, I combined the crafts of woodworking and sewing with fine art painting and photography, along with commercial art layout.

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 and reach varied audiences. I rebel against any restrictions on my creative practice. It is a struggle for me to draw boundaries between the various disciplines



and art practices; I would rather blur them. In the representative works selected by the Art Haber team, the stylized representation of the female form is my signature, recurring motif. How I produce the form and incorporate it into

my artwork varies depending on the materials and technique that I choose. The process of selecting and working with diverse elements is one of the challenges that motivates and inspires my work.

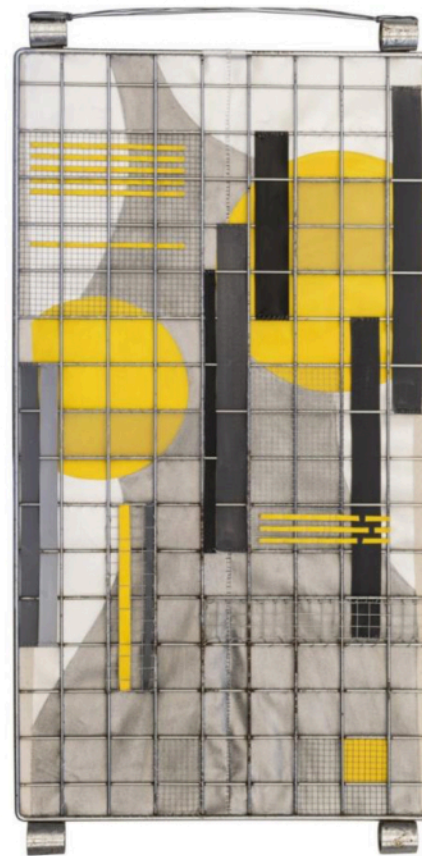
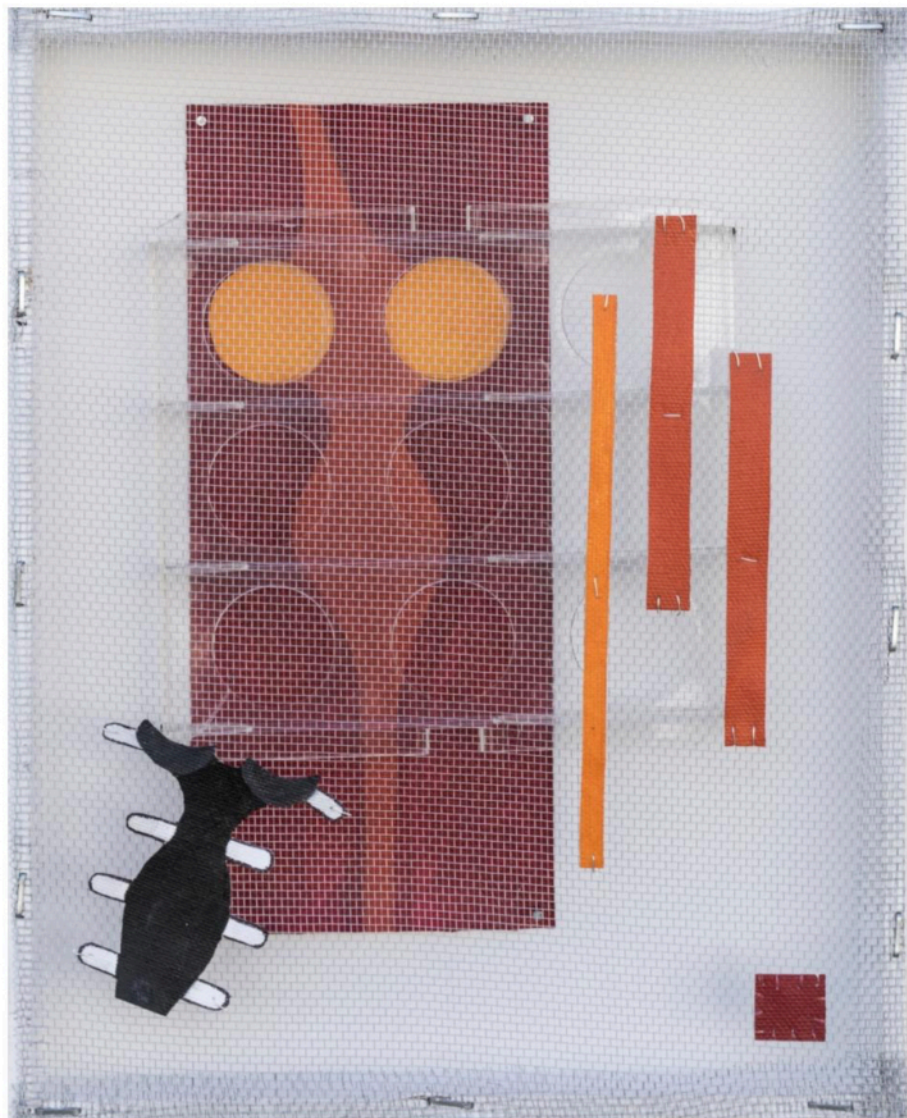


Your body of work inquires into the themes of feminist issues, perceptions of women's roles, identity, and gender relationships, to address the viewers with an unconventional visual experience that involves both emotive and intellectual participation of your audience.

How important is this aspect of your work to you? In particular, what effect do you expect to provoke in the spectators?

Conveying relevant issues, based on historical and contemporary significance, is at the heart





of my work. I specifically address feminist issues, perceptions of women's roles, identity, and gender relationships largely due to my encounters, observations, and consequent

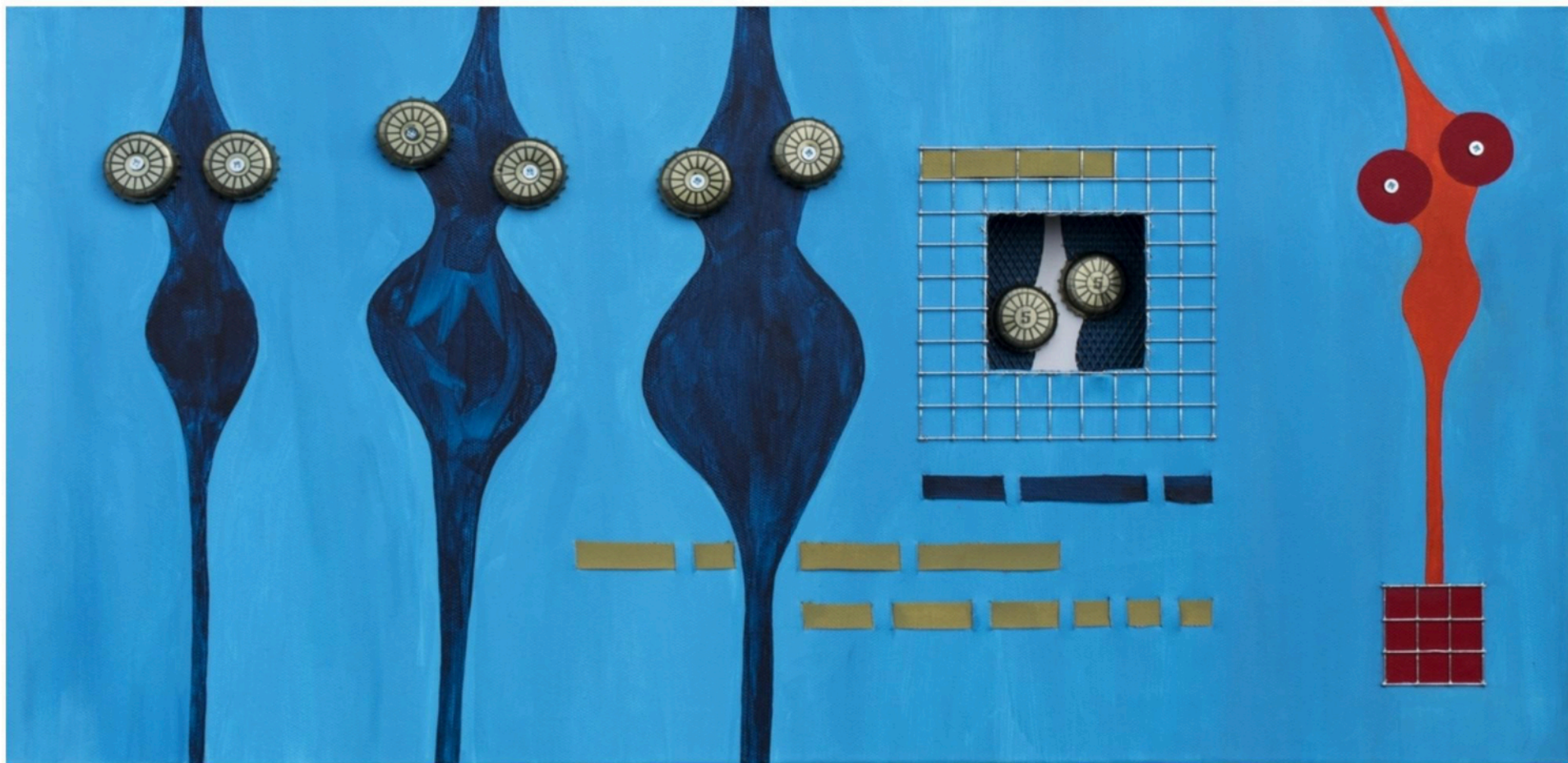
beliefs. Viewer participation is important to me, whether it is passive observation or an engaging dialog. Ideally, my work stimulates both emotional and intellectual responses. Unconscious and emotional associations based on one's unique experiences as well as collective ones; along with the conscious, intentional, intellectual layers of meaning and analysis.

My use of graphic bars to represent words and sentences came out of a desire to focus on a visual impression unencumbered by words and language barriers. The purpose has evolved into an intention for interactive storytelling, whereby the viewer can tell the story in her/his words. Although I create a title which is the "spirit" or theme, the details of the narration are formed by individual interpretations.

Recently I completed a three-month artist residency in Zurich, Switzerland. As part of the project, I set up my studio on one floor of a gallery and the public could anonymously view me from the sidewalk level window or step inside to observe and discuss my work. In addition, there was an artist talk open to the community. I was able to interact with spectators firsthand because I was available six days-a-week while creating mixed media paintings for an exhibition at the gallery. The opportunity revealed the engagement I wanted to provoke: curiosity demonstrated by discussions on both aesthetics and topics addressed. The exchange and involvement went even further with visitors collecting and giving me items to incorporate in my paintings.

Within the evolution of your artistic journey, have you found a specific affinity to a particular artistic movement? Moreover, do you have any figures in contemporary art scene that you look up to?

In general, I admire an eclectic mix of individual works of art, rather than a specific affinity to a movement. In Los Angeles there are overwhelmingly frequent and numerous



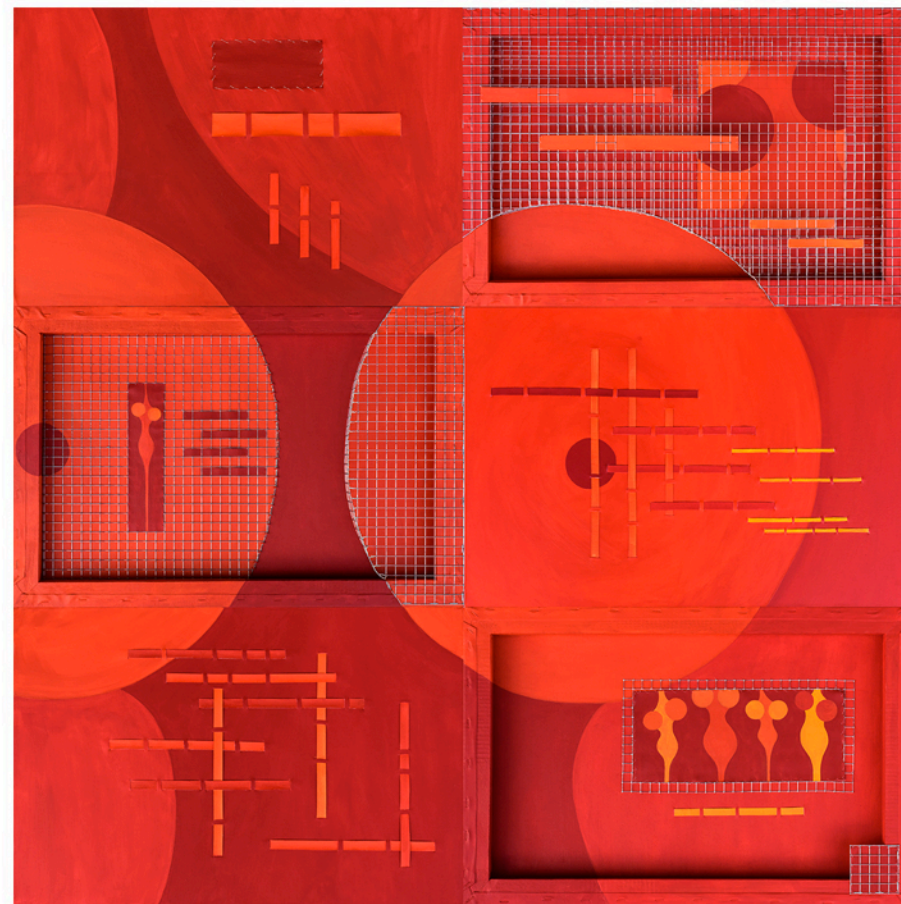
exhibitions along with diverse venues to view artwork. I tend to be a recluse focusing on my own production but can easily step out of my studio to experience others' approaches.

I am impressed by the contemporary art scene in the sense of the freedom to explore. However, my work is most influenced by historical figures and works. Both the Venus of

Willendorf figurine and Niki de Saint Phalle's Nanas have inspired my stylization of the female form and "Venus" theme. Beginning with my first exhibition of miniature venuses

of polymer clay in Zurich and continuing to today, as seen in my larger than life-sized Venus of clothing and textiles (installation Venus of Adams Square). In addition, Ombra





della Serra (Shadow of the Evening), the stylized long and thin Etruscan statuette, and Alberto Giacometti's elongated interpretations of the sexes have affected my depictions.

Would you tell us something about the importance of the relationship between technique and inspiration in your work? Moreover, are there any rituals that you



follow when conceiving and creating your artworks?

At any stage of the creative process from concept through completion, I am inspired by what various techniques can elicit. I especially find inspiration in the selection of materials with the technique as the means to give expression. Implicit in all of my work is that it is made by hand and distinguishable from machine manufactured or computer-generated items. Although all of my works are meticulously constructed, as an intention I do not refine them to the point of perceived perfection. In the case of my mixed media paintings featured, I purposely mix pigments instead of using colors directly from the manufacturer, and I do not thoroughly blend them. To add to the textural effect, I tend to layer the paint unevenly because I prefer a painterly look over a computer-generated solid flat color. Moreover, I do not use aids to create perfectly painted lines and demarcations. I work with my breath to steady my strokes and I'll paint and repaint until I'm satisfied. Squares are not perfectly square, circles are not precisely round. It is especially important to me, after years of working in commercial art, to distinguish my paintings from digitally created ones.

Similarly, I weld scrap metal that is rusty, has paint, grease and dirt remnants resulting in splatters and uneven welding beads. I hand-hold the plasma-cutter torch producing cutting lines that waver with by my breath and heartbeats. All for the purpose of maintaining a certain unpolished crudeness in the final sculptures. In order for my polymer clay sculptures to not be mistaken for plastic, I deliberately leave fingerprints and uneven areas. Experimenting with 3D printing, I prefer the output that is not perfectly smooth, similar to the early inkjet printers that produced pixelated images.

Randomness and improvisation seem to play a crucial role in your mixed media works: you disrupt the canvas surface by cutting, weaving, sewing, and incorporating unexpected elements. How would you define the

relationship between the medium and the ideas that you develop?

Both randomness and improvisation play a part when I'm experimenting with a medium. I would define the "randomness" in my work by the fact that I don't precisely cut, weave, and sew. Although I am free to depart from an original concept during the process, the result I seek to accomplish is typically planned, by sketching on paper or in my mind. The "improvisation" would be the evolution as the work is in progress or the reworking of a previously finished piece. My process of "disrupting" the canvas is for textural effects and cutting into the canvas is liberating. Selecting and working with a medium or mixed media is a significant part of the brainstorm and development of my ideas.

For example, in the proposal for Tables, Chandeliers and Selfies (<https://vimeo.com/177848439>) I was working with the concept of duration. I had photographed piles of scrap metal for future sculpture projects and one particular photograph of bale feeders for cattle stood out. From that image, I developed the entire project and a connection to the Faena Art Center. As an installation project, in order to fill the space, my ideas interplayed with a mix of media.

Dealing with the relationship with your audience, is it fundamental for you that viewers snatch the spirit of what you want them to see in your works? How important is philological interpretation to you?

Ultimately, the goal of my artwork is to elicit awareness and a dialog concerning the issues I address. All audiences are not receptive to my style of art and messages. I do not believe in altering my language to cater to a particular audience, especially if it dilutes the message I am trying to convey. For example, I believe my artwork is suitable for all ages and body image is healthy topic for discussion. However, there are parents who feel my artwork is inappropriate for children and will not bring them to my exhibitions (in the U.S.).

At the same time, I am very satisfied when my work is positively received by others. I do appreciate feedback and conversation because I do not want to create artwork in a vacuum. Whether I allow it to impact my artwork depends on how I internalize it. In a productive sense, it can enhance my development as an artist. Finally, I believe that the impact of an exhibition can be delayed as one's understanding evolves.

Thanks a lot for your time and for sharing your thoughts, Jana. Finally, what projects are you are working on right now? Would you share some of the future plans?

On May 3rd I installed my Venus of Adams Square which will be on display until July 28th, 2017, at a mini gas station as part of the Adams Square Mini Park located in Glendale, California (the project can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/217074726>).

Three large-scale (12 ft x 5 ft / 1.5 m x 3.66 m) prints on vinyl of my painting Sunrise will be displayed as part of a three-month installation in Watertown, Massachusetts, curated by the Mosesian Center for the Arts. The opening reception is on May 19th.

May 21st - 28th I will participate in an artist residency called "Paint for Georgia" in Mtskheta, Georgia, which includes two exhibitions. When I return to Los Angeles I will begin planning a landscape installation art project in Central Oregon. More information is and will be available on my website: www.janacharl.com.

As I challenge myself by exploring various means to creatively communicate relevant topics, I plan to seek out opportunities, including collaborations, to create artwork which will reach a broader global audience.

*An interview by Josh Ryder, curator
and Melissa C. Hilborn, curator
arthabens@mail.com*

