

sunshine's arty facts

by Gigi O. Kracht

Over the past 15 months, I have had the privilege of interviewing no fewer than 42 outstanding female artists from New York, Paris, Amsterdam, Miami and – by no means least – Zurich, my own home base. I have been truly astonished to encounter so many supremely talented women...

... women who diversified and dominated various art forms from the late 1960s and into the 1970s, making history by transcending the canons of textile crafts and occupying the realms of the fine arts.

Gender biases in the mainstream world of fine arts have, however, undoubtedly placed many and varied obstacles in the path of the gentler sex: restricting their access to premium workspace, hindering their travels, incorrectly attributing their works and – most hideously of all – failing to afford worldwide recognition to their uncannily sublime creative

sensibilities. Step forward to the present day and – surprise, surprise – the world remains as male-dominated as ever. Hence this year's digression from my usual 'Sunshine's Nook' column; and hence the decision to focus primarily on my newly bonded family of women artists. (A sequel to these fascinating dialogues will be published in the coming months.) My hope is to bring more sharply into focus a few talented females who are still seeking to establish a solid platform for their careers while, at the same time, profiling those who have already scaled the heights of their chosen profession.



PAT STEIR

Born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1940, Pat Steir developed an intense interest in art at a very tender age, tackling the graphic arts at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn when she was barely 15 and receiving her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1962. Her tutors, Richard Lindner and Phillip Guston, quickly sensed her unique approach to art and strongly urged her to develop her own style rather than merely adopt the usual techniques. Without a doubt, Pat Steir's graphic arts and illustration training significantly enhanced the development of her eclectic visual vocabulary and her command of apparently unrelated shapes and forms. Monumentality has always played a pivotal role in her paintings – perhaps never more so than when she capped her post-modern efforts by condensing the bulk of art history into a single work. With the beginning of the waterfall paintings, Steir set out to capitalize on her recent discoveries. These paintings are indeed, as she confided to me, «a little invention», a late modern contribution to the history of art itself. They are descended from abstract expressionism and make plain the argument that this particular line of inquiry has never been fully consummated. Most artists since Pollock have been influenced by him, but none of any stature have been able to do exactly what he did. His signature style was too difficult to replicate, too much his very own. While there has never been a «school of Pollock» as such – a group of artists creating drip paintings on the



«A waterfall is always
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and never beginning
and never ending.»

KIM UCHIYAMA - BIRTHING A SPARKLING AURA ALL ITS OWN
AND CREATING UNEXPECTED HARMONY AND BALANCE ➔
ANS MARKUS HAS BECOME KNOWN FOR HER BOLD PAINTINGS
OF BANDAGED WOMEN ↴

floor as he did – most of the best painting since his death has moved deeper into the new territory that he opened up for this medium. For her waterfall paintings, Steir went back to Pollock's model and transposed it into modernism. Bearing in mind the 18th-century notion of the sublime, her works cry out for a spiritual interpretation. This was an interest that began with – and inspired, rather than dictated – her 'wave' paintings. You get the impression of standing on the edge of an unfathomable abyss and witnessing some primordial act of creation. Steir lets gravity do the work for her as she climbs to the top of a 12-foot ladder on which I would never set foot! Her own role, her touch, is minimized. And this is her dictum. Her monumental canvases are erected upright and moistened with water. Each waterfall is created from a single loaded brush – just a single stroke, she tells me. After that comes the interplay of the water and the paint on the canvas as gravity takes over. Over a series of visits to her atelier, Steir composed her works in combinations of random brushstrokes, grid lines, color charts and color fields to create a display of the symbolism she consciously chooses. Drips of paint in the works often reference the actual process of painting. Her works never represent a single, fully developed meaning. Rather, the artist leaves viewers to draw their own inferences.

In one of our conversations, she shed more light on her waterfall paintings: «A waterfall is always a beginning and always an ending and never beginning and never ending.» Symbolically, therefore, it is a sign of birth and death. Every time Steir completes a stroke when crafting her works, it is like the biblical seventh day. She steps back to watch as the thing she has set in motion takes on its own form.

Pat, it has been a true privilege knowing you and learning from you. Please continue to create your 'drips' – and allow us to revel in them! See you again soon!

KIM UCHIYAMA

Gazing at Kim Uchiyama's narrow, variegated, horizontal oil motifs on diminutive 20 x 16 inch canvases and taking in her resplendent hues of effervescent magentas, Yves Klein blues, moss greens, tantalizing oranges, deep reds and golden yellows is enough to still anyone's longing for sublime art. While each of the colors stands alone in its own right, they all also coexist in perfect, pulsating harmony, energizing viewers rather than sapping their life force. Kim's method adds one layer of paint on top of another while lightly brushing off or stripping away what she considers to be excess. This then becomes part of a new layer, composing a structure that is less restrictive than, say, Mondrian. Although horizontal stripes constitute her main theme, each is crafted with a perceptibly feminine gesture of the hand, guided by her mood during the day or night. Irregularities are thus part and parcel of the visual story she tells. Titles such as *Excavation* (2010), *Index* (2009-2010) and *Terra* (2009-

2010) hint at Uchiyama's love of geology and of how color is inextricably intertwined with nature. Kim chooses to define abstraction within a certain set of parameters that reflect her approach. The viewer's attention is, of course, immediately drawn to her system of dividing strong colors on the canvas, producing a distinctive sharpness whose simplicity belies their modern scientific maturity.

On my first visit to her Desbrosses Street studio in New York, I simply thought there were too many lines. Far too many lines! Since then, I've come to realize that it is precisely these linear compositions that energize her palette, birthing a sparkling aura all its own and creating unexpected harmony and balance. At any given time, Uchiyama might be working concurrently on three to six canvases, playing with a minimum of forty tubes of colored paints. The latter were arranged so methodically that I began to wonder whether I was really in an artist's studio, or whether I hadn't perhaps stumbled into a laboratory! Kim revels in working slowly on one painting after another, or all at the same time, until a story is written that is far removed from where she first started. Kim Uchiyama studied painting and American literature at Drake University and the history of pre-Renaissance painting in Florence, Italy, before attending the New York Studio School in the 1970s. In 1976, she attended the Summer School at Yale University for Music and Art. In her capacity as a fellow of the New York Foundation for the Arts and the MacDowell Colony, Uchiyama has extensively exhibited her work in New York and throughout the United States. She also attributes her productivity to rich sensory stimulus during periods of summer residence in Puglia, Italy, where colors abound and cultures – from the Neolithic to the Ancient Greek – collide. Her paintings are owned by an assortment of private and corporate collections in the United States, Belgium and Italy.

One fine evening, I was treated to a Mediterranean culinary experience that Kim had concocted. Never before have I met anyone who can paint so flawlessly AND conjure up mouth-watering cuisine with such ease and finesse – which is the way she approaches her other works of art! I am positively convinced that, very quickly, Kim's signature stripes and color will grace more private homes and museums than she can cater to! Thank you, Kim!

ANS MARKUS

During a trip to the Dutch capital Amsterdam last November, I was fortunate to be able to meet Ans Markus (formerly Anje Geertje Markus). Ans was born in Halfweg on January 29, 1947, and began producing biographical portraits at the age of 11. She attended a school in Haarlem at 12 and, when she turned 17, moved to the Lourens Goster Lyceum in the southern Netherlands. It was during this period when she met her first husband. The hostility and physical harm he inflicted on her eventually punctured her self-esteem as a young woman. Although escapism beck-



RONA PONDICK HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SCULPTRESSES OF HER GENERATION ↓
GHADA AMER CONSCIOUSLY UPSETS THE BALANCE BETWEEN IDEOLOGICAL AND ESTHETIC CONCERNS →

oned at that time, she took it upon herself to stand tall and, together with her infant child, forever transcend this darkened spot in her life. It was not easy to shake off the darkness, however. So to alleviate her sadness, she painted – and is still painting today. Her subject? Portraits of her now 35 year-old daughter, Sigrid Markus. Sigrid is completely clothed. Most parts of her body and face are bound as if to signify imprisonment. And it is through painting that Ans Markus is able to ease the burden and recreate herself from this entanglement. Ans Markus has indeed become known for her bold paintings of bandaged women. In 2010, she won the coveted «Dutch Artist of the Year» award, which had never before been presented to a woman.

On clear evenings, even in a profusely lit city like Amsterdam, one inevitably falls under the spell of the magical, star-studded sky. The planets, the moon and the twinkling stars of the constellations have always fascinated Markus. To her, they are a flexible and richly symbolic language that accommodates so many psychological projections. The signs of the zodiac are twelve symbols of energy patterns in the human mind. Ans Markus is one of many artists for whom they are a source of inspiration. Drinking from this source, she has created twelve vivid paintings of the signs of the zodiac, once again utilizing the many faces of Sigrid to symbolize a unique richness of both attitude and aura.

Ans, it was wonderful bonding with you. I hope to see you again soon. Maybe in Zurich?



RONA PONDICK

Since rising to international prominence in the early 1990s, Brooklyn-born Rona Pondick has become one of the most important sculptresses of her generation. For the past decade, Pondick has combined ancient sculpture methods with the latest 3D computer technologies to produce a formidable group of hybrid sculptures that fuse human and animal or human and floral forms. Cast in stainless steel or bronze, the human elements of her works originate from casts of Pondick's own body. Rona sculpts the animal bodies by hand in an epoxy mold. For tree forms, she combines parts of real trunks and branches with hand-modeled elements. Her sculptures are neither illusionistic nor truly lifelike; rather, they seem to represent believable fictions. In the artist's own words: «These hybrids unite the emotional and the intellectual, the sublime and the grotesque.»

Born in 1952, Pondick studied for her graduate degree at Queens College before completing her Master of Fine Arts degree at Yale University School of Arts in 1977. Since then, she has consistently provoked public opinion with her ultra-eccentric sculptures, boldly exploring figures at a time when abstraction was the rule, using real and faux feces as materials at a time when purist materialism prevailed and – perhaps weirdest of all – saturating her works with such mind-bending, contradictory elegance! For Pondick, the essential thing is that «The work embodies a visceral connection, you feel it with your body!» Her attention to detail is as unmistakable as it is mind-blowing.

Rona Pondick's works have been exhibited internationally in Jerusalem, France, Salzburg and, needless to say, assorted galleries and museums in the USA.

I am honored to have met you, Rona; and I really love your «Crimson Queen» from 2003! More power, dear Rona!



GHADA AMER

Visiting Egyptian-born Ghada Amer in early 2011 at her Bronx studio in New York gave me an intriguing opportunity to see her approach to large-scale painting. Her technique mixes acrylic and gel media on canvas. Uncut, interlaced threads and embroidery are likewise used to great effect in the sophisticated eroticism her works portray. The decision to be an artist in Cairo grew and took root in her mind when she was still a child. Her reasoning? She could make a mess in her elementary art classes and no-one would ever shout at her! Growing up with a diplomat father, the demands of education took her to Paris, where she discovered that her sensory learning experience conflicted with more romantic, kitschy traces of her oriental origins. For a woman so keen to connect, both socially and esthetically, this came as something of a shock.

Ghada later completed her Master of Fine Arts at the EPIAR Villa Arson in Nice. The dissonance between the sophistication of Paris and her millennia-old Egyptian heritage stirred up deep emotions. Fortunately, on emigrating to the United States, she realized that abstract expressionism is not so complicated after all. At last she was free to exploit her wisdom to the fullest! Much of Ghada's work focuses on the traditional issues of gender and sexuality. One of my favorites is «Cinque femmes au travail» («Five Women at Work»), a polyptych that, despite its misleading title, actually portrays four working women: the domestic, the seamstress, the wife and the mother. Ghada herself, the artist, is the fifth woman.

The Egyptian's work questions the roles that are imposed on women and feminine activities. Her more recent pieces address the tumultuous tides of our present political climate. No longer do I simply look at her paintings: Instead, I see the underlying totality through a colored, tangible lens. Ghada Amer is recognized internationally as a multimedia artist who consciously upsets the balance between ideological and esthetic concerns. To my mind, she is an artist through and through. Perhaps

unwittingly, she has also unlocked the doors for emerging artists from the Islamic world. Her repertoire spans paintings, drawings, illustrations, garden designs, performances and installations. Ghada Amer is represented by Cheim & Read Gallery in New York.

Is there something unique you have not yet done, Ghada? I am sure you still have a trick or two up your sleeve!

JOANNA BORKOWSKA

Meeting Joanna Borkowska in Paris a year ago during the FIAC exhibition was a true bolt from the blue! Born 39 years ago in Koszalin, Poland, Joanna earned her doctorate in political science at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, where she later lectured on the history of political thought and international relations. She also published a book on the Cathars, a group of medieval dissidents, after conducting extensive research in Montpellier, Carcassonne, Paris and Oxford.

In 2007, Joanna withdrew from the world of academia to devote her creative capabilities to painting. Shortly afterward, she debuted with a solo exhibition at the National Museum in Szczecin, Poland, followed immediately by participation in the 2009 Florence Biennale. The following November, she took part in Sept '09, an international festival of art, music and culture staged at the Leonardo da Vinci National Museum of Science and Technology in Milan, Italy. Her work was further exhibited at the Center for Contemporary Art in Krakow's Solvay Park in April/May of 2010. Another important milestone was the Salon d'Art Contemporain at Art Monaco 2010.

When you come face to face with Joanna's definitive, solid, textured paintings, you can almost feel her 'oneness with nature' – the vein through which her energy and creativity flows. The unbiased viewer can-

JOANNA BORKOWSKA - YOU CAN ALMOST FEEL HER 'ONENESS WITH NATURE' →
EUGENIA A. BURGO HAS A KNACK OF BRINGING DEPTH TO ANYTHING SHE TOUCHES →→
SANDI SLONE - HER VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE IS AS SOLID AS IT IS DARING ↘

not dispute the harmony, sensitivity and clarity that together form the forceful character of her canvases. What she does with colors seems to open an artery to the artist's personal inner world. Joanna explains that the creative process is born of the universe, with all its solid and more ephemeral aspects, and that it is ultimately her responsibility to share this process in the most specific way possible. Her paintings thus evolve from a journey of discovery and exploration, a mirror reflecting both the artist herself and the dynamism of nature. One salient point is Joanna's profound interest in the «science of colors» and how color interacts with different frequencies of light. Her ambition is to identify the true value of color in the human mind and body, stripped of all cultural conditioning. Joanna's ongoing «8/8 audiovisual project» is a direct and natural outgrowth of this fascination. To date, this gentle, refined lady has put on impressive showings at every venue that has hosted her works. Right now, she is waiting for nature to give her a jolt that takes her out of the Krakow she knows and into the world – her world – of tomorrow. We wish you the best of luck, Joanna!

EUGENIA A. BURGO

How do you describe someone who is so close to you? This towering one-meter-eighty beauty lives just four minutes away from my home in Zollikon. Genie, as I fondly call her, not only produces bold, dramatic and richly colorful imagery, but also has a knack of bringing depth to anything she touches. Her works evidence an exceptional visual sensitivity that challenges the viewer's conscious perceptions.

Eugenia Burgo was born in Zurich, Switzerland, on February 22, 1965, to an American mother who taught chemistry in New York and an Italian father from Turin whose family owned the biggest paper company in Italy. According to Genie, her parents met playing table tennis on the Queen Elizabeth after World War II. They later married and lived in New York for 12 years. 1963 brought a move to Zurich, where the couple stayed for 30 years. Genie completed her bachelor of arts degree in art history at Wheaton College, Massachusetts, and additionally took SAC I painting and graphic design programs at the Art Institute in Florence, Italy.

The first time I set foot in her studio, I was immediately struck by her large-scale oil paintings and her manifest appetite for intense colors. The realism Genie gives to anemones and hydrangeas, rocks, glass, cranberries, golden star fruits and figs, all blown up to three to four square meters, creates a close and almost personal encounter with nature. The artist paints what she sees; and what she sees is reflected in the pulsating, vibrant energy that flows into her masterpieces – a mirror of the person she truly is. Dynamism is a constant in all her works. For Genie, to paint is to discover a way of seeing, and then of filtering and focusing on the subject. The familiar origins of her works and the sheer scale of

their presentation all draw the viewer into her own unique perspective. On further scrutiny, I realized that the intoxicating colors of her work are enhanced by the esthetic brilliance of the textures she portrays: the shimmering skin of the cranberries, the glossy petals of her hydrangeas, the luster of the anemones. Concealed beneath these surfaces, however, is an unmistakable undertone of romance and passion.

Eugenia Burgo has exhibited at assorted galleries in Zurich, Geneva, Dubai, Japan and the United States.

Genie, your brilliance shines out with every stroke of your brush. Your flowers and fruits continue to fascinate us all. 2012 is your year: carpe diem!

SANDI SLONE

New York-based, Boston-born Sandi Slone is a lady whose passionate affair with kinetic paint on canvas has its roots in the 1970s. Verbal attempts to describe her opulent, metaphysical paintings, enriched with sweeping, sumptuous textures in blazing colors, cannot even hope to do justice to their sheer grandeur. Slone's works evoke emotions of love and resistance. The swirls unfurled by large push brushes symbolize conditions in the world today. Having evolved into a more mature and visceral format over the years, her works appear to be returning to the basic premise from which she began in the 1970s. Sandi Slone has been known to stage live performances with her hues, building abstract topographies on the floor and using her body as a giant broom to smudge and blend the paints, resulting in a sort of body portraiture in which her own body is but an abstract element. How cool can you get?

After studying art history and painting at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1973 and Wellesley College in Massachusetts, where she graduated magna cum laude a year later, her first major solo exhibition was at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston in 1977. This was followed by no fewer than five solo shows at the Aquavella Galleries in New York. Since then, she has presented 40 solo exhibitions and taken part in 65 group shows in the USA and Canada, Germany, England, Northern Ireland and China.

In 2010, Slone exhibited works at the Henry DeFord Gallery in New York, at the Galerie Forum in Berlin and at the Doors Art Fair in Seoul, Korea. In 2011, further solo shows were held at the Elizabeth Leach Gallery in Portland, Oregon, the Allegra LaViola Gallery in New York and the Cooley Gallery at Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

Today, Slone's view of the universe is as solid as it is daring, boldly highlighting the various relationships between humanity and its environ-



BEVERLY FISHMAN DESPITE THE PALPABLE PAIN IN HER WORKS,
FISHMAN'S PAINTING IS UNASHAMEDLY HEDONISTIC →
LYDIA DONA - A KEEN SENSE OF DRAMATIC GLAMOUR ↘

ment. Seen from this angle, her work is as factual now as it ever was in the 1970s. Slone has received numerous fellowships, including one from the Ford Foundation. She is also a co-founder and active board member of both the Art Omi International Artists Residence and the Fields Sculpture Park in New York State. Her résumé features stints as a visiting professor at Harvard and the School of Visual Arts in New York, and as a professor at the Painting and Graduate School Faculty of Boston's School of Museum of Fine Arts. Despite all these signal achievements, Sandi Slone has remained singularly humble and down-to-earth.

The voice of her works rumbles loudly as her paintings ripple and crease. She frequently adorns her large canvases with elements of fine glass, volcanic rock and sand. A kind of Jackson Pollock gone 3D!

It is a true pleasure to know you, Sandi!

BEVERLY FISHMAN

In an era of technological advancement, nuclear fusion and commercialism, the art produced by Beverly Fishman occupies a very distinct place. Beverly was quick to realize that, if as a woman she wanted to go far, she would have to rethink her approach to making and conceiving of art. Thus it was that this artist's unique mix of media works ultimately transcended the inherited structures of painting and sculpture.

Born on May 31, 1955, in Pennsylvania, her parents discovered her immense affinity for the arts when she was still very young. To encourage her, they bought Beverly her first set of paints at the age of four. Let us now fast-forward to 1977, when she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from the Philadelphia College of Art, followed by a Master of Fine Arts from Yale University three years later. It was during her freshman year, however, that she had her first exhibition at the Whitney Museum. Attracted to the human subject from the onset of her studies, Fishman saw the body as an inspirational source of animated, abstract forms. Rather than paint a figure, Fishman preferred to invoke its presence through sensual combinations of shapes, colors and textures, even trying to replicate skin surfaces in her paintings. Teaching likewise became part of her routine at the College of New Rochelle in New York, the Maryland Institute College of Art and Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, where she served as artist in residence for a number of years before becoming Head of Painting in 1992. It was in 1999 that Fishman first opened her mind to the vulnerabilities of infection and treatment, whence it was but a small step to depicting the medium of the cure itself: pills – health-changing, mood-altering little pills! Family members had been ill, so pills were available in abundance. The subsequent candy colored wall sculptures were given fun titles such as Yum Yum and Pain Free. Even pharmaceutical logos became talismanic

symbols in Fishman's body of paintings. Evolving in the direction of greater conceptual complexity, her works later resurfaced with ECG and EEG patterns, as well as neuron-spiked readouts and graphs. Beverly Fishman has not only thoroughly explored the imagery of the human form. She has also shown how complexities can be altered or bettered. Fishman has created graphs and drawings on silk screens together with aluminum and polished stainless steel. Composed of cells, wavebands, heartbeats, nucleic acids, wavelengths and pills, her paintings force us to reflect on ourselves and our vulnerability in the face of death. Yet despite the palpable pain in her works, Fishman's painting is unashamedly hedonistic. What the world treats as a panacea, she treats as a whole bundle of fun.

Beverly Fishman's works have featured in the collections of major museums and cultural institutions in London, Paris, Berlin, Istanbul, New York, Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles – as well as at UBS Financial Services here in Zurich. She has received a long list of honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship Award in 2005, a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award in 2003 and a National Endowment Award for the Arts Fellowship Grant, to name but a few.

Bev, I remember you mentioning that you are very interested in knowing the physical reaction in your viewers. By now, you must be bursting with information. So I am curious to know what you are going to do with it, and what your work will next focus on. Do keep us posted. And thanks for coming to meet with me! I truly enjoyed both the expertise and eloquence you demonstrated in your chosen field.

LYDIA DONA

A native of Bucharest, Romania, where she was born on April 7, 1955, Lydia Dona is the quintessential survivor. Her family escaped the Holocaust, fleeing to Tel Aviv, where she studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts in Jerusalem, majoring in humanism and the social philosophy concepts of Joseph Beuys. When she was barely 21 years of age, her family moved to Duesseldorf in northwestern Germany and Dona devoted her attention to the works of Gerhard Richter. In 1978, she moved to New York, attending the School of Visual Arts; and six years later, she earned her Master of Fine Arts at Hunter College. One awful personal experience a few years back was seeing the World Trade Center collapse before her very eyes – a tragedy that, undoubtedly, has deeply affected her work. Every now and then she still dreams of piles of debris and can almost smell the smoke and the fumes again. Through it all, however, Lydia Dona has maintained her candor, forthrightness, hope, sincerity, humor and, above all, her keen sense of dramatic glamour. Of all the artists I've met, she is one of the few whose make-up is always perfect. Her meticulously symmetrical blond hairstyle never has a hair out of place!



Lydia Dona's first exhibition – in Duesseldorf, Germany, in 1982 – was aptly entitled «Accrochage». Since then, she has had staged both group and solo exhibitions in Amsterdam, Paris, Spain, Costa Rica, Zurich and various states in the US. As I pondered the extremely outsized canvases at Dona's studio on Warren Street, just a stone's throw from Ground Zero, I felt the impact she is having on her environment and her materials. Acrylics overlapped with a penciled grid, with oil-painted images from a car manual thrown in for good measure. How she loves immersing herself in diagrammatic machine parts all tangled up on top of each other! You can also clearly see the soles of the gummy shoes she sometimes inflicts on her work, as well as the imprints of her hands in hues of varying density. On more than one occasion, she has added Jackson Pollock-style drips to her more formal colors. In one case, I counted as many as eleven colors that she had used for automotive diagrams. She confessed to me that she has always liked Revlon products such as nail polish and make-up, and that she uses them as her basic prisms.

Dona has exhibited in Latin America in recent years. And maybe a little Mesoamerican imagery has found its way into her creations – although a sober, rational view more readily evokes the fact that she studied alongside Keith Haring at the School of Visual Art in New York. Her machine part drawings might even be interpreted as surrogates of Haring's figures! Dona was also influenced by the graffiti explosion of the early 1980s, as was my own son, who took a likening to it in the mid 1990s. Believe it or not, I too have become a lover of street art!

Lydia, you have found your haven of tranquility. No more bad dreams, no more fears. And I am certain that your works will reach horizons beyond even your wildest imaginings.



off the hassles of daily life. In most cases, these artworks echo local architectural history and complement the design of the surrounding station. In 2010, Caldwell created eight 13-by-4-foot wood varnished paper mural installations in Brooklyn, New York, juxtaposing a snowy mountain scene and a sunbathing paradise within the space of a few meters. She seemed to be inviting the viewer to interact with her installation by signing the back of this monumental postcard. That would be typical of an artist who has a million and one ideas that will pop out of her mind and into the real world sooner or later. Let's wait and see what artistic dimension Luisa enters next.

Keep me posted, Luisa, and I will keep bringing you Swiss candy wrappers - with chocolates in them, of course!

CHRYSANNE STATHACOS

I'll be honest: I did not really know what to think of Wish Machines till I met this tiny, warm, gentle multimedia artist of Greek origin who lives partly in Toronto, Canada, and partly in Little Italy, New York. Chrysanne Stathacos creates installations that invite - indeed, almost summon - the public to express a wish or simply to meditate.

Stathacos was born on July 18, 1951, in Buffalo, New York. As a child, her love of nature inspired her to think up wishes. She was also fascinated by vending machines. Remember the machines that used to eject soft drinks or bars of chocolate or cigarettes at the push of a button? These contraptions were a seminal influence in birthing her «Wish Machine» public space project. Stathacos' main tools are real, working vending machines of varying sizes that she rents. She then surrounds them on

LUISA CALDWELL

Of half-Italian and half-American extraction, Luisa Caldwell has her roots in Veneto, Italy, but was born in West Virginia on December 23, 1961. This lady is one fine artist, a super single mom to her 11 year-old son Caleb, and a great friend, all in one!

In 1985, Caldwell took up Italian studies at Miami University in Urbino. She also earned a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in art history, at the University of Iowa, before completing her Master of Fine Arts sculpture program in 1986-1987 at the same university.

Caldwell uses fruit wrappers and stickers enhanced with acrylic paints to develop flower frameworks on paper or wood panels. Sometimes she creates collages on whatever shopping bags or beer products are at hand. Reflecting on Luisa's creations, I recently realized that certain elements - energetic, moving surfaces, the use of unique materials, bright colors and biomorphic shapes - have remained constant throughout her work. These aspects led her to be commissioned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority agency Arts for Transit as one of several artists to create and install permanent public art in different US subway stations. Since the Bronx Zoo is her turf, animals and flowers in mosaic and ceramic forms can be seen all over the station. At the time of writing, the pieces shown here had just arrived from Europe, where actual production took place. To me, welcoming and displaying art in this way is a stroke of genius on the part of the MTA, if only to take travelers' minds



← **LUISA CALDWELL** - ENERGETIC, MOVING SURFACES, UNIQUE MATERIALS, BRIGHT COLORS AND BIOMORPHIC SHAPES
 ↙ **CHRYSANNE STATHACOS'** INSTALLATIONS INVITE THE PUBLIC TO EXPRESS A WISH OR SIMPLY TO MEDITATE
CLAIRE LIEBERMAN LEAVES IT TO THE VIEWER TO INTERPRET HER STYLISH CREATIONS →



all sides with wishes, effectively dovetailing an artistic discipline and a spiritual practice. Only in 1997 was Stathacos commissioned by Creative Time (now headed by Anne Pasternak) to create a Wish Machine for the Grand Central Station in New York City. Through the Wish Machine website, Stathacos collected hundreds of anonymous written wishes from around the world. Some even came from refugee children calling for peace and love. These wishes were then attached to the Wish Machines and have since been compiled into a publication, «1000+ Wishes». Frankly, I don't know of anyone else who has used a vending machine as part of an artwork.

A graduate of York University in Toronto, Stathacos has received awards from Art Matters, the Canada Council, the Japan Foundation and the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation. Her public art projects have graced the likes of museums, subway stations, sculpture gardens and railway stations in Germany, Geneva, Switzerland, Canada, India and New York. At the time of writing, she is also creating a project in Washington, D.C. As Chrysanne herself says: «The act of wishing can start a powerful moment of change.» At the very moment when you vocalize a wish, your imagination pushes possibility to the front of your consciousness. Love, peace, health, wealth, sleep, money, lust, happiness, marriage, divorce... What is it that you wish for? Share it with us, or contact Chrysanne directly at: chrysanne@gmail.com

Chrysanne Stathacos has been exhibiting her work internationally for some 20 years. What's next on the agenda, Chrysanne?

CLAIRE LIEBERMAN

Born on October 5, 1954, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this tiny (5 feet 2 inch) but agile lady manifestly stands tall on the high ground of modernism. Her clear vision is expressed in sculptures made of marble, alabaster, glass, cast rubber and resin, but also in materials with a significantly shorter shelf life: ice and molded jelly, for example. Lieberman's strength lies in her ability to reveal the very essence of the materials she uses, often working serially. Fuzzy stuffed toys that recall fond childhood fantasies intermingle with other media. Dipping the soft paw of a teddy bear in beeswax, for instance, evokes a completely different connotation, a confrontational duality between warm reality and cold, hard effect. Lieberman likes to pit one material against another.

In her 'Poppies' installation (see pictures), Lieberman covered the floor with Margarita flowers consisting of black marble centers and petals cast from fluorescent red man-made jelly. During the four-week exhibition, the jelly flowers disintegrated, while the black marble retained its substance, underscoring the contrast between soft and solid, ephemeral and permanent. Often, the artist consciously juxtaposes beauty and disruption - and leaves it to the viewer to interpret her stylish creations.

Claire Lieberman completed her undergraduate studies at Tufts University. Subsequently, she earned a Master's degree in the Fine Arts from New York's Pratt Institute, graduating with distinction and also winning the Pratt Circle for Outstanding Achievement in 1996. She was also



awarded a five-year fellowship by the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Massachusetts. When I interviewed her in New York City at her studio on 15th Street, Claire Lieberman was teaching sculpture at the School of Art at the Illinois State University.

More power to you, Claire - and good luck with your residencies!

BETTY TOMPKINS

One man's meat, as they say, is another man's poison. Eroticism in art too is clearly pleasurable to some but decidedly risqué for others. So there I stood, ever so slightly dumbfounded, when I first stumbled across Betty Tompkins' amatory visuals at her studio on Prince Street in Manhattan, just a few yards from the Apple Store! Lewd or pornographic they are not: They are simply an artist's cry for ideal beauty. Eroticism has its own justification because it states that pleasure is an expression of the individual's sovereignty and no one else's.

Now bespectacled and adorned with curly auburn locks, Betty was born on June 20, 1945, in Washington D.C. to parents who, on Edgar J. Hoover's watch, were members of the Progressive Party in Philadelphia. As kids, Betty and her sister enjoyed the privilege of being chauffeur-

driven to school. Yet this daily routine was so embarrassing to the girls that they preferred to be let out a block away. Back then, both girls were shy, timid and had no time for sensationalism. As a New York-based photorealistic painter in 1973, however, Tompkins endeavored to send two paintings - succinctly called «Fuck Paintings» - across the Atlantic for an exhibition in a Paris gallery. Sure enough, the paintings never reached their destination and were subsequently left rolled up under Tompkins' pool table. Their story doesn't end there, though. In 2002, they were rediscovered by a New York dealer and adapted for a show. A year later they were displayed - next to Steve Parrino's «equally wayward» abstractions - at the Lyon Biennale. At last, Betty Tompkins' work began attracting exceptional attention. The very good fortune of being included at the Biennale was tantamount to a major apology on behalf of the French authorities.

Tompkins' spray paintings clearly broadened the repertoire of first-generation feminist-identified imagery. More significantly, their appearance made manifest an acknowledged precursor to contemporary involvement with explicit sexual and transgressive imagery. The first painting in the series - there are only eight early Fuck Paintings - was acquired for the permanent collection of the Centre Pompidou/CNAC in Paris. In 2006, the same story played out again: Her paintings were held up at Japanese customs after being designated as 'pornography'. For 'Handsome Young Doctor', Tompkins painted two new canvases in which a

← **BETTY TOMPKINS** - FIRST-GENERATION
FEMINIST-IDENTIFIED IMAGERY

TLISZA JAURIQUE - SEEKING AND RECREATING
THE IMAGERY OF HER COLORFUL HERITAGE ↓

genital piercing evokes the rings of Saturn, while a precarious threesome resembles the docking starships in Stanley Kubrick's «2001: A Space Odyssey» (1968). In the period that followed, Tompkins expanded her techniques to include the use of air brushes, impacting her canvases with a chromatic undertone that contrasts sharply with their controversial subject matter. I personally watched Betty at work on one painting. My, oh my, that air brush gadget sure gets heavier and heavier as time goes on!

Tompkins' works have been exhibited in locations as varied as Brussels, the FIAC in Paris, Art Basel Miami and several galleries in New York. The artist's straightforwardness and staunch refusal to moralize is exhilarating. This, coupled with what Mitchell Albus once aptly called a «ferociously deadpan humor», makes the artist's images truly iconic. Stick to your guns, Betty!



In 2000, Tlizza Jaurique met and married native American artist Marcus Zillioux. Together, the couple have collaborated on a number of exhibitions. Jaurique once confessed that «a typical bedtime is at 8:00 a.m.». She learned this habit from her grandmother, who used to stay up reading – a passion Tlizza herself shares – till four in the morning. During the daytime, Jaurique says she «feels like a Picasso – fractured, with one eye higher than the other».

For Tlizza Jaurique, it is of the utmost importance to continue to seek and recreate the imagery of her colorful heritage – and to pass it on to generations to come. I salute you, Tlizza!

TLISZA JAURIQUE

Learning to pronounce her name was quite a tongue twister. But learning about the artist and her origins proved to be an even greater challenge!

Tlizza Jaurique was born in Phoenix, Arizona on December 27, 1972, of Mexican, Yaqui and Basque extraction. Jaurique is a painter, sculptor, muralist and print-maker who also works with video, film, design, performance and production. To date, she is the only artist I have met who has simultaneously exhibited her sculptures at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. Quite an achievement for such a young artist!

Since she completed her bachelor's degree in philosophy with an extended thesis on ontology at Vassar College, Jaurique's paintings and sculptures have reflected expressions that transcend history and cultural differences. Understandably: «Mija», as she is fondly called by her mother, lived extensively in Thailand, India, Bali, Hong Kong, Nepal, Central America and Mexico before putting roots down in Arizona together with her mother and grandmother. Her master's degree from Arizona State University majored in art education; her doctoral studies focused on curriculum and instruction. Jaurique speaks German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and, of course, English.

In 1993, Jaurique scaled back her teaching activities to devote more time to her murals, sculptures and paintings. Her first show in Phoenix was successfully followed by many others. She has lectured in art, philosophy and world and native religions, and continues to serve as a consultant for the J.P. Getty Education Institute, the Nelson Fine Arts Museum, the Bead Museum and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University.



BATYA KUNCMAN

Born in Israel on March 10 (you don't need to know the year: she has decided never to get any older!), Batya, which means 'daughter of God' in Hebrew, lives in Queens, New York. Kuncman attended Forest Hills High School and completed her Bachelor of Arts at Queens College, majoring in mass media with a strong multidisciplinary focus on painting and graphic design.

Kuncman creates paintings that appear to be frozen in time. The fantasies she projects into her work relate stories that evoke surrealistic visions of the recent past. Her characters exude a rubensesque vitality all their own. Her paintings seem to play tricks with my vision too, alternating between the push and pull of warnings and whims, revulsion and fascination. As Batya once confided to me: «Since I paint many parts spontaneously, sometimes it is difficult for me to explain. My understanding is just one way of perceiving, and I hope this does not narrow the scope for other ways. The words are often a combination of trying to relate inner vision and other reality, seeking to 'see' what the painting process suggests, and through it to understand identity in relation to the human condition.» Her visions transcend the present: As such, they are truly timeless. Kuncman's interest gravitates toward the paradox of illusionistic space. Often, her paintings are humorous, conjuring up associations with the theater of the absurd. At other times, the intent of her work is to break out of a dark spot. Don't we all wish to be transported to another sphere at some point or other?

Clearly, Kuncman's paintings «reflect all my inner emotional feelings of the moment, the day, the week, almost like a private diary, a personal vocabulary of events in my mind which in the end is a very important key to my paintings». Her works reverberate with colored perspectives derived from events that cross her path, dreams that emerge from the depths, hints of fleeting desires. Her skillful productions are sometimes tinged with sorrow. They appeal to us to use our imagination and immerse ourselves in the realm of fantasy. More importantly, they also invite us to peel away all the beguiling facades and address the deeper issues at hand.

Good luck, my dear Batya, your path is taking shape.



TINA TURNER, REGULA CURTI AND DECHEN SHAK-DAGSAY



have released their second prayer album, «Children Beyond». Its predecessor, «Beyond», has long since been cast in platinum. On the follow-up album, the three professional singers – ably accompanied by 30 children aged seven to twelve from various religions and cultures and all living in the canton of Zurich, Switzerland – seek to promote tolerance and peace. Religions are not about prejudices and beliefs: They are about spirituality. «Children's Beyond» duly bridges the gap between all religions! The album is danceable too, with beautiful rhythms. The opening track, «When you sing, you do the right thing – Sing!», begins with Tina's voice and rhythmic sounds. Songs by Regula and Dechen follow. Released in 2009, «Beyond» offered an interpretation of Buddhist and Christian prayers and mantras. This second album is a unified masterpiece for soul and spirit alike, affirming all world religions with the salient message that «We are one!»

So when is your third one due out, my beautiful friends? I heard that this second album has zoomed up the charts. Bravissimo!