

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

'Enchanted Garden'

by

Ana D' Castro

22nd September, 2021



Ana D' Castro, Nature series: 'Butterflies dancing with the wind', Oil on canvas, 400 x 200 cm

Dubai, UAE – On Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to announce artist Ana D' Castro's solo show 'Enchanted Garden', opening on 22nd September 2021.

Ana's works are an embodiment of how color speaks the language of the soul, expressing deep emotions and connections through beautiful waltz of colorful fragments dancing through the canvas. Each of her projects creates a kinetic immersion into a sensorial world of colors, wherein visitors become a part of the artwork itself. Her work is analogous to a tridimensional fusion of art, architecture and the dimension of time, which is added by audiences' trajectory in space around the artwork.

From the moment of inception, the relationship between display of ART and specific architectural setting interests Ana: "When planning an exhibition, the architectural site context plays a major role in my work. My aim is to achieve a complete synergy between elements, as if paintings become the environment and the architecture itself. There is an intrinsic study that explores all the basic relations between architecture and the presentation of the artworks."

Ana's architectural drawings exemplify her space studies of proportions, scale and allocation of each element through layout plans, elevations, tridimensional models and maquettes of the project. In her words, "The obsessive planification of each individual element and its correlation with the juxtaposed ones, enables me to create an enlarged physical pictorial space; a narrative between the canvas, the observer and the space. Whereas by defining multipolar relations within the gallery space, each painting constantly interacts with the impression created by the whole, encouraging the viewer to reflect further on the relationship between all elements. Similar to reading a story tale one can return to its favorite chapter after completing the entire journey. "

This show comprises of a series of paintings made by an assemblage of materials added onto the canvas, creating heavy texture of layers, which Ana progressively manipulates in the confined areas. Color is added with an intended proportion and gradient tonalities which complement each other, creating depth and volume in the piece. The foundation setup idea behind this exhibition by Ana is to create a modular system forming the base of all canvases, with the prime module being 2m x 2m. This module is then multiplied into triptych, diptych or subdivided into smaller modules of 1m X 1m and 0.5m x 0.5m, just like a structural metric grid which is fundamental to any architectural foundation.

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'Enchanted Garden' is composed by a series of abstract paintings that aim to represent the artist's journey through past, present and future. The oeuvre is subdivided into 3 main categories of paintings: serie A – *Nostalgia*, serie B – *Momentum* and serie C – *Symbiosis*.

Nostalgia relates to a specific memory of the artist's childhood that is reproduced into a pictorial format, reproducing the exact emotional attachment and its visual translation of a past episode, framing the experience per se.

Momentum translates itself into a recent episode of a quotidian routine, that is captured by photographs and further abstracted into the canvas. It represents the In(site) moment of a contextualized episode, elevating its profound understanding (insight) into a graphic form of physical representation.

Symbiosis is a complex translation of a present emotion that is associated with a past memory, further translated by a process of transformation into an imaginary dream painting. Reality is transformed at a symbolic level aiming to resolve the inner conflict between future liberation and longing for a mémoire, acting it out in the area of form and matter.

In these serial abstract series, the actual physical space is augmented by space for feelings and a feeling for space, introducing the inevitable seductive power of imagination. The artwork series comprises one of the main signature techniques of the artist, the impasto, subdividing it into 3 main categories represented into the series: 1 – uniform reliefs 2 – soft petals 3 – imperfect violent patches. The different series stand as an example of how the serial and cycle work affirm the processual in art. There is a constant evolution of the technique, and by exploring it, manipulating and revisiting the action in itself, we can understand the variation of the conceptual idea.

Ana's process involves painting several pieces at the same time, and by doing so it adds an element of infectious dialogue between all the artworks; as if during the process of creation they contagiously impact each other. In Ana's words, "On a subconscious level I'm constantly being fed by the evidence itself, therefore there's a constant obsession of mitigating the action of matter and form and elevating it to a pure and perfect residualized outreach. Throughout the creative process there's a continuous practice of realization and elimination of ideas, fundamentals and paradigms, reinventing the theory per se and persistently searching for knowledge and perfection. The progression and mutation of the processual interplay embrace a journey of destructive creation."

The serial in art consists not in identical replication, but in the interplay between repetition and difference, which allows art to free itself from static representation and embrace continuous process. (Gilles Deleuze)

Ana's works evoke a constant study of color and the juxtaposition of different pigments. She says, "Through my practice my aim is to manipulate color and the subtle variations of the same gradient, in order to create volume, depth and perspective within the canvas. While composing the movement of the piece I carefully study how color will add or subtract light and shadow into the ensemble. Color plays a major role in my artworks, and I am constantly looking for the exact tone, the role it plays by allocating it in a specific place and how instantly this act either dilutes or enhances the volumetric composition."

The artworks also study how light impacts the environment and how colors change during different times of the day. The first layer of faded horizon is where the colors blur into each other, after that another layer of oil paint patches gives a rich, heavy texture and tridimensional effect to the paintings. Elements such as 'petals' flow throughout the canvas, as if they were flying harmoniously with the wind. The main paintings are explosions of color and emotion, purified into a series of monochromatic canvases which represent division of the prime module.

Like mosaic pieces, smaller modules relate to the main painting as "birth" of color from their genesis; which can be playfully arranged onto the wall, either juxtaposed or staggered within each other. The sculptural dimension in Ana's paintings makes for a unique and magnificent visual experience. The central piece of the show is composed of several canvases horizontally placed on the floor and elevated at different heights on mirrored pedestals, creating an optical effect of canvases levitating above the ground. This sculptural formation centralizes the concentric flow of people's movement within the exhibition space. Similar to a cloudy mystical sky, this oeuvre represents the subliminal ascendancy to paradise ... seating in a cloud and contemplating the enchanted garden from paradise.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Ana D' Castro is a Portuguese visual artist and architect. Born in 1984 in Portugal, since an early age, Ana lived and worked in different parts of the world including Brazil, Singapore, France, Switzerland and U.A.E. With a master's degree in Architecture, her works are strongly influenced by a mathematical base set in the foundation of proportion, scale, volume and color. From paintings to art installations, Ana's work is often abstract and relies on the principle of deconstructing an element to its bare essence. Nurtured and educated to appreciate nature from an early age, it is her biggest inspiration. She intensely absorbs everyday moments like the sunrises, sunsets, visualizes the manipulation of colors, textures and translates it into her artworks.

Ana believes that conceptual inception of her work lies in the core principle of sensorial experiences and therefore everything she conceptualizes aims to create a rich and engaging experience for the end user. Throughout Ana's works there is an obsessive search for the use of color and its direct association with environment psychology. Her work also explores how movement and rhythm are introduced in a space through geometry, and site-specific design installations that create multiple uses for an ordinary room.

She defines her practice as "ARTchitecture, representing the symbiosis between Art and Architecture, blurring the boundaries between the two and exploring higher levels of complexity by doing so. Ana feels that her intensive obsession with dimensions, proportions, balance and scale draws her into a compulsive alignment; the confinement and rigidity of thought, which ultimately allows her to be more flexible and free. Her process involves an abstract concept of equilibrium and balance between individual pieces of a composition; once the balance and order between proportions, alignment and location of each artwork is achieved, she begins her journey of colors!



Ana D' Castro, with 'Butterflies dancing with the wind'

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Since its establishment over three decades ago in New York, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting a creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. It has garnered a reputation for identifying and cultivating the careers of artists leaving a lasting impact on contemporary art and culture. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.

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