



**BE
STILL
'COMPATI'
IVA TROJ**

“I have been exploring the theme of compassion for as long as I can remember. What fascinates me is how subtle one must be to truly touch people’s hearts. You cannot reach understanding by screaming and shouting. True revelation happens when you either flip someone’s perception of something they have always taken for granted, or force their attention upon something they have previously disregarded.

I believe that in order to feel the compassion that an artist is trying to convey, you must allow the work of art to penetrate your own private veil of conventional beliefs. This can only happen if the attempt is made in subtle or mysterious ways. It cannot be in-your-face obvious.”

[from a Flock Magazine interview 2021]

My Greek grandmother used to say: “If everyone carried their lives in a see-through plastic bag, nobody would want to swap”. In her own way, she explained exactly what makes compassion so tricky, you have to understand pain in order to explore it as an artist. And that is rarely easy to do because we are all wrapped up in our own forms and shades of suffering. It is like wearing a pair of glasses that stay on until someone either takes them off or dismantles them completely. Once the glasses are off, they stay off forever and you start seeing things you cannot unsee.

I have found my own subtle ways of exploring compassion and dismantling metaphorical glasses. One is to flip the narrative on people. Like my artwork “Red Painting” [oil on canvas] below... I did over 40 drawings observing the dynamics of epic large format battle scenes and at the end of that exercise I ended up with a narrative about love and compassion. How did I do that? I’m not calculated enough as an artist to be able to give you a straight answer but I do believe replacing representational narratives about gender and toying with the general understanding





of what it means to be a hero had something to do with the final result being quite effective in making people think and feel.

Another path I've been exploring for quite some time has to do with using additional figures of people, animals or birds to externalise the pain of one central figure. I painted the image above [transparent oil technique] for the book cover of my own debut novel which was published Dec last year. Without the figures of the woman in the kimono and the foxes "guarding" the nude slowly sinking into the ground the image would convey nothing but hopelessness. In a way, they are like scaffolding holding her slightly above ground. In that sense, this painting is a testament to the essential role of compassion. We are lost without it.

Yet another path to making sense of altruism in my art has been the age-old play on conventional truths about strength and power. One such example is my painting 'Night In Armour'. If you look at the face of the main figure and disregard everything around her, you would see nothing but fragility. She is like ancient porcelain, fragile to the touch and sensitive to light. Sun rays would injure her if she was not protected by metal, forest, animals and childhood memories. The sword she holds in her hand is forever useless.



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Also, figurative is the way I speak and painting classical motifs with a deliberate disruption of conventional truths about beauty serves as a profound conduit for conveying compassion. By challenging established norms of aesthetic appeal, an artist can compel viewers to engage with the artwork on a deeper level, transcending surface judgments. This disruption fosters empathy as it mirrors the human experience, which is itself a tapestry of imperfections and vulnerabilities. In a lot of ways these imperfections are my most useful tools. In contemplating these reimagined portrayals, viewers are prompted to confront their own biases and preconceptions, fostering a sense of shared humanity and understanding. This act of dismantling traditional beauty ideals opens a space for empathy to flourish, as the artist's brushstrokes become a medium for connecting with the universality of human struggles and the beauty that can be found in embracing our differences.

ARTIST STATEMENT

As a child, I was taught to question one-dimensional narratives, this instinct evolved from mere survival into a transformative foundation for my artistic identity. Much like my fellow creators, my works delve into personal experiences; yet, I'm driven to transcend the confines of the self, a compulsion ignited during my experiences traversing Cold War borders. Enduring the cultural scarcity of my Eastern European upbringing kindled an insatiable hunger for unadulterated creativity, infusing my work with

an ever-restless spirit. Consequently, the subjects I explore extend beyond the realm of the personal, though my unique vantage point injects them with a distinct perspective. The art perpetually evolves, shedding old skins and defying its own conventions.

Every artist reaches a juncture where the allure of the tried and true beckons. I steadfastly combat this allure by channeling my explorations into series that encapsulate various paths, ensuring the motifs and themes remain under scrutiny without succumbing to a single visual style.

While rooted in tradition, my body of work employs traditional elements not to uphold an archaic sensibility, but as an intrinsic part of my artistic language. My origins in a communist nation, where hymns to machinery superseded humanity and nature fell victim to progress, contrast vividly with summers spent beside my grandmother, amidst hanging gardens and timeless narratives. These dichotomous realities have irreversibly merged in my psyche.

Inspired by the techniques of Old Masters, both from Western and Eastern Europe, particularly the Russian tradition, my style finds its roots. A childhood fascination with art books spanning the Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, and Modernism instilled in me a perplexity: the portrayal of passive, powerless women with vacant gazes. This, in turn, ignited a fervent ambition to master painting, with the intent of reshaping classical motifs' narratives—a goal I've fervently pursued, constantly rekindling my sense of awe.

Drawing from the Flemish methodology of layering delicate coats of paint beneath varnish, my technique mirrors a process that emphasizes the allure of beautiful imperfections and the perpetual cycle of renewal. These themes flow seamlessly through my artworks, becoming intrinsic threads woven into each canvas.

ABOUT ME



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“Award-winning contemporary artist Iva Troj creates fine art pieces which seamlessly merge Renaissance aesthetics and techniques with postmodern praxis. Her intensely detailed images achieve astonishing tricks of light and shade, as practiced by the great masters while incorporating dreamlike scenes which challenge cultural norms. Exhausted by a society in which women often feel vulnerable, threatened, or powerless, Troj recasts the fairer sex as powerful creatures, freed from the oppressive male gaze and placed within edenic settings where they can revel in their own beauty and potential. Blending abstraction with figuration, the natural world with the urban landscape, dream with reality, Troj’s breathtakingly beautiful artworks achieve something truly unique, both in terms of aesthetics and concept.”

The WallStreet Journal Art 2017

Iva is a part Egyptian, part Greek, part Macedonian Swedish artist based in the UK who grew up in the outskirts of the Romani slums of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. At the age of only 13, Iva was accepted as a student at a local art college where she studied monumental arts for over 5 years. After that, she studied printmaking at CCAC in California, Design Management in London, and illustration, animation and design in Sweden. She has 2 bachelor degrees from 4 Swedish universities, a masters degree and a PhD in Art History.

Iva mentors young women / LGBTQ+ adults while running a successful art practice and a talent agency.

In 2022, 2020 and 2016, Troj was named Contemporary Art Excellence Artist of the Year and, in 2013, was the winner of the Towry Best of East England Award. She has exhibited both nationally and internationally and her work is in gallery, museum, and private collections around the world, including the UK, France, Ireland, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Germany, China, South Korea, United States and Japan.

Iva’s art is closely associated with the use of transparent oil technique - a painting technique mostly known as the Flemish method of layering thin veneers of paint between layers of varnish. Iva Troj’s paintings are often created using this technique although she has invented her own unique variations.

AWARDS

3 times Cannes Lions Nominee 2021, 2022

Silver Gerety Award 2021 [for Halo Infinite Masterpiece]

Art Excellence Award 2020 Haegeumgang Museum

CAF Artist Of The Year 2019

Contemporary Art Excellence Artist of The Year 2016

2016 Palm Award Winner

2013 Towry Best of England Award Winner



UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

'VANGUARD' EXHIBIT at OUTRÈ GALLERY
Melbourne, Australia 22 Sept 2023

NEW YORK CITY CENTRAL
New York Collectors Event – Nov 2023

CURRENT & RECENT EXHIBITIONS

RESURRECTION - GRYPT GALLERY
London 19-26 Aug 2023

THE VOICE ARTS ASSOCIATION, New York, USA
Dec 2022 – Jan 2023

ZEBRA ONE GALLERY in London, UK
Feb 2023 [Women Empowering Women Project]

ZEBRA ONE GALLERY in London, UK Dec 2022

THE LOUVRE, Paris, France, 1-4 September 2022

DYNAMITE GALLERY, Brixton, UK – Sept 2022

THE TRINITY BUOY WHARF Drawing Prize 2021
Exhibition & Tour

DYNAMITE GALLERY BRIXTON in London UK,
March 2022

HALO MASTERPIECE SAATCHI GALLERY
LONDON 8-17 Dec 2022

HALO MASTERPIECE LOUVRE MUSEUM
Paris, France - Dec 2022

SHIBUYA ART EXPO at CONTEMPORARY ART
STATION TOKYO, Japan May 2021

'FALL' EXHIBIT GAME STUDIO
London, UK 2020

'VANGUARD' EXHIBIT at OUTRÈ GALLERY Mel-
bourne, Australia 2020

DAE GALLERY Long Beach California
LA, CA, USA, Sept 2019

MODERN EDEN GALLERY
San Francisco, CA, USA
Representational Modern: Beautiful Bizarre Magazine
Art Prize Exhibition, Jan 2019

DAE GALLERY Long Beach California
Dakuato LA, CA, USA, Feb 019

FLUX London
FLUX Exhibition at The National Army Museum,
March 2019

TOKYO International Art Fair
TIAF 18 | TOKYO, Japan, May 2018

THE ARTBOX New York 1.0
Armory Artweeks in New York, USA. March 2018

FLUX London
FLUX Exhibition at The Chelsea College of Art, Lon-
don, April 2018

MODERN MASTERS
Modern Masters Exhibit at Art Republic Brighton,
UK, July 2018

COREY HELFORD GALLERY, LA, USA.
THE NEW ROMANTICS July 2018

COREY HELFORD GALLERY, LA, USA. May-June
2017.

IVA TROJ 4 FRIENDSHIP –
Friendship Vegan Apparel / Permanent Exhibit in
Shoreditch, London, UK

THE CHIMERA GALLERY, Mullingar, Ireland,
2018-2019

COREY HELFORD GALLERY, CA, LA, USA
Beneath The Waves Group Exhibit, Jan-Feb 2017

RANDOM ART GALLERY
Contemporary Beast Exhibit, Brighton, UK, 2016

FED THE LIONS – DYNAMITE GALLERY
Solo Show at DYNAMITE GALLERY, Brighton, UK,
April 2016.

MAYFAIR with Roberta Moore Contemporary in
London, UK, May 2015

BICHARD-TROJ Collaboration
Exhibition with John Paul Bichard at
ROYAL CASTLE, Stockholm, Sweden, Sept-Dec 2015



*Second Halo Tribute created in 2022 / detail [currently on loan to ZebraOne Gallery London] P
Oil on Canvas / Transparent Oil Technique on linen/cotton canvas*



MILK SERIES I
Acrylic & Gold Leaf on Canvas
On Display at MixArt Gallery
in Brussels, Belgium



LEAVE THAT WAR WITH ME II / Oil on Canvas

[Below] FIELDS / Oil on Canvas / on display at CRYPT





DETHRONED / Acrylic on Canvas

[Below] | TURNED THEM ALL INTO BIRDS II / Oil on Canvas





MANKIND II / Pencil on Paper

[Right] 1. SISTER / Pencil on Paper & 2. SIBLING / Pencil on Paper



CONCEPT ART & DESIGN for Xbox UK / Halo Infinite Masterpiece

“To mark the launch of Halo Infinite, the latest installment in the iconic video game franchise, an original epic, large-scale oil painting is on view in Gallery 4. Created by Iva Troj, the Brighton-based 2016 Palm Award Winner and 2019 CAF Artist Of The Year, the 6m x 3m canvas depicts in minute detail a scene inspired by Halo Infinite.

The work was created in Troj's Brighton studio using oil on canvas, with details and techniques that Troj is known for in her original works, which typically blend Renaissance and postmodern styles giving a dreamlike feel. Titled the 'Master Piece', playing on Halo's lead character's name, the piece elevates a decades-old cultural icon from pop culture to high culture, blending Renaissance art with cutting edge entertainment and reminding fans and new audiences alike that videogames are, indeed, works of art.”

On Saatchi Gallery's website: www.saatchigallery.com/exhibition/halo_infinite_master_piece
Global Campaign: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOy-bX31NSdA

