

INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST AND OCADU PROFESSOR: ANDA KUBIS

Interview by Maggie Broda, President of OCAD University's Alumni and a member of the Board of Governors.

MAGGIE BRODA: Thank you for taking the time to talk about your art and your work at OCAD University. Your paintings are fresh and luminous and the colour captures the viewer. Have you always created abstracts?

ANDA KUBIS: I approach all of my work as an abstract painter philosophically influenced by modernism yet that does not mean that I don't paint representationally. Ultimately, all painting is abstraction since it is a two dimensional representation of three dimensional space and/or objects. I am intuitive and approach every piece (no matter what medium) improvisationally.

MB: Your painting technique has evolved but not your unmistakable style. What in your work has changed and what elements are consistent?

AK: In the last few years my work has shifted technologically. I continue to make large-scale oil paintings yet recently embraced digital tools for the production of my work. My oil paintings have always maintained a relationship to technologically produced imagery in that they can look like out of focus photography or digitally manipulated pictures. Learning to make images in the computer seemed like a natural progression in my practice. I never expected that it could be so rewarding from an experimental perspective. My way of working in the studio right now is very fluid between the digital and the actual application of paint on a



Though
Digital painting
48"x48"
2015

conventional surface. What I may not be able to attain in an oil painting I might achieve in a digital piece. There is an element of randomness, lightness, and surprise that must always be maintained while I'm working. Most consistently I wrestle with colour, light, and form in both processes - they inform each other.

MB: You are involved in many levels of art, such as teaching and creating. What is your most effective source of inspiration?

AK: I am a very aesthetically motivated person as I'm always searching for beauty and am particularly interested in colour, texture and patterning. I am unabashed in my desire for beauty yet it can be an odd and evasive pursuit. I look for inspiration most in interior design, furniture design and architecture.

MB: You have gained significant recognition for your painting in Canada, the U.S. and throughout Europe, Sweden in particular. I sense the optimism expressed in your work. There seems to be a personal story in each series, which is uncommon in abstract art. Can you describe the themes that you pursue, for example in the series titled: WAITING?

AK: I'm glad that you recognized the personal history embedded in each series. I'm open to many influences from a vast variety of sources as well as my personal life. When I was working on the Waiting series, it was during the time that smart phones became really ubiquitous. I became aware of people in public places 'waiting' in line and on the subways on their smart-phones. They were escaping the mundane reality of waiting for things to happen by escaping into their mobile technologies. I was struck by the contradiction between living in what is considered a fast paced, information-saturated world while we still need to wait in lines to pay for purchases at stores or line up at government offices, etc. I'm impatient for change - all of that waiting is such a waste of time yet there is also a beauty in waiting too. Waiting can be great when you can't go anywhere so you disappear into a day-dream. By depicting highly detailed representational images of people floating in colourful abstraction I was trying to

capture my perceived reality of waiting in the contemporary world of technology.

MB: You are an alumnus of OCAD University as well as the Associate Dean of Innovation and Outreach. What are some of the challenges and some rewards you encounter at OCA-DU?

AK: In my role as Associate Dean of Outreach and Innovation it is my job to create partnerships for new opportunities and grow student support. What I love about my job is that it allows me to engage my problem solving skills. Implementation is hard yet when a new initiative is up and running it's a really satisfying experience.

MB: Would you please describe your view of the future opportunities for young people who follow a path in visual art?

AK: The reason that I am pursuing my current path of research is a direct response to being in the sandwich generation. Experience with my parents struggling with quality of life in old age while raising a child has caused me to think about what it means to be an artist and an educator now. Honestly, I feel creative activity and appreciation of the arts is integral to human flourishing. If there is anything to learn from digital disruption - it is that we no longer need to be like machines. We need to think deeply about well-being and quality of life for all. Interdisciplinary thinking - where art, design and creativity are just as important as science, economics, engineering and law - is the only way that we will rise to meet global challenges.