

ARTIST STATEMENT

In "Grace Land," my latest solo exhibition at Wall Space Gallery, I invite viewers to delve into a land where reality and imagination intertwine amidst the flickering glow of vintage movie aesthetics. Through this series of paintings, I explore the captivating experience of being fully immersed in the spectacle of film. Not unlike 3D technology and its separation of fields of vision, I aim to explore the duality of perception—the interplay between illusion and reality, nostalgia and modernity.

At first glance, these paintings capture ordinary moments: a woman on a journey, a protagonist with "hero energy" or individuals seated in rows engrossed in a cinematic encounter. Yet, beneath the surface lies a deeper exploration of perception, escapism, and the allure of the silver screen. Through this body of work, I aim to explore the relationship between past and present, reality and illusion, while celebrating the enduring magic of art inspired by film. Not pinpointing a specific cinematic era, I sample excerpts from my favourites and allow them to absorb into my ideas, influencing what comes out on the paper and the canvas. Each work is a tribute to these constant 'Kelly Grace' themes and a reminder of the timeless appeal of storytelling through art.

The use of 3D glasses adds depth to the cinematic experience, my paintings aim to add layers of meaning to the viewer's perception, inviting them to look beyond the surface and into the deeper emotions and narratives at play. When you step into "Grace Land", you'll see parts of my process from the graphite value sketch to the colour study to the final work on panel. This collection explores that timeless allure of classic films and the shared experience of watching them, focusing on the audience as much as the on-screen spectacle. At the heart of "Grace Land" lies a fascination with the act of spectatorship itself. Some canvases capture the audience or individual in a moment of cinematic immersion as other works show the main character in a narrative excerpt from a larger story.

As this theme of the hero's journey is forever being explored in my work, I remain hopeful that visiting "Grace Land" will take each viewer on a journey and offer a fleeting escape from life, not unlike the film viewing experience itself.

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BIOGRAPHY

Kelly Grace is an established artist living and working in Toronto, ON. She was born in Toronto in the 70s, and raised in the rural area of Stouffville, Ontario. Growing up, Kelly was surrounded by creative influences. She pursued arts training at Sheridan College in Oakville where she studied Interpretive Illustration for three years and developed her style of acrylic painting.

As an artist, Kelly Grace's main goal is to make an impression. She uses painting as her way of interpreting and sharing with the world the beauty that she always sees on a daily basis. If she can convey this beauty accurately to the viewer then she has succeeded. If Kelly's work resonates and stays with a person after they have seen it then she has done her job. As her work is about memories and nostalgia, Kelly hopes that it embodies this timeless feeling of escape and preservation.

Kelly Grace's works are found in residential and corporate collections nationally.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT - Grace Land

"The alternative cinema provides a space for a cinema to be born which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film...Hence it is the birth of the long love affair/despair between image and self-image which has found such intensity of expression in film and such joyous recognition in the cinema audience."

- Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*

Wall Space Gallery is pleased to present Kelly Grace's latest solo exhibition, *Grace Land*. Throughout this body of work, Grace focuses on the powerful act of spectatorship and the spaces of imagination and escapism that open up to us in a darkened theatre. *Grace Land* celebrates the immersive act of viewing and the complex dynamics of seeing and being seen

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through painted, cinematic worlds infused with vintage culture. Building up layer upon layer of paint, she works back into and removes layers until her figures exist in teal-blue atmospheres that feel weathered with time. Grace's painted scenes present as old photographs or video stills enveloped in mysterious narratives of adventure — moments temporarily disconnected from their context that invite her viewers to step into the shoes of her female protagonists.

In this exhibition in particular, Grace uplifts strong female figures; lead investigators, chief inspectors, or your everyday woman facing the unknown with a baseball bat at-hand. Her titles offer narrative spurs, as in *Receptionist by Day*, suggestive of a double-life, in which a seemingly unsuspecting red-headed woman sits at a typewriter casting a sharp glance at an event beyond our gaze. Drawing roughly from the eras of the 50s to the 90s, Grace retroactively casts her female characters in roles of power, who in their own era would have fallen prey to the typecasting of women into diminutive roles.

Film theorist Laura Mulvey, in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", compares the screen to a mirror, and the act of associating our persona with those of the actors on screen to the moment of self-recognition in the 'mirror stage' of human development theorized by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. For Lacan, the mirror stage is the first instance where children see themselves as a whole individual – a person that can see and be seen. Grace artfully acknowledges the ways in which the painted image and the cinematic screen play with the psychological and power dynamics of viewing; allowing us to see ourselves mirrored, and expand our sense of self to another.

Grace also turns her 'lens' onto the audience as subject, as in *Double Feature*, where a theatre audience sits transfixed in the glow of the screen unbeknownst to our gaze. In doing so, Grace points to our cultural fascination with the capability of film and television to suspend our sense of reality and transport us to a completely 'other' time and place. Her 3D works, some illuminated as lightboxes, nod to the film industry's adoption of 3D cinema in the 1950s to intensify the immersive experience and bring a joyful moment of wonder to audiences. This glance into the past reflects back our contemporary advancements and fascination with virtual reality and its potential effects on the future of immersive storytelling.

Grace's passion for entertainment media and retro aesthetics combine into purposefully

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open-ended revisionist narratives, sowing the seeds for imagination to create interlacing stories between her paintings. *Grace Land* brings strong female figures to the forefront, actively counteracting the traditional roles historically attributed to women in film. Though her works feel like aged polaroids, they maintain crisply contemporary undertones giving Grace the space to envision narratives beyond the sociocultural structures of her beloved eras past.

Tiffany April
Curator

CV

EDUCATION

1996-1999 Interpretive Illustration, Sheridan College
1990-1995 Arts York Program, Unionville High School

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2024 *Grace Land*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
2021 Galerie Roberston Arès, Montreal, QC
2020 *Silver Lining*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
2017 *Between Light and Shadow*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
2013 *Magic Hour*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
2011 *Carnival Roots*, Marten Arts, Bayfield, ON
2008 *Through the Looking Glass*, Zilberschmuck Gallery, Toronto, ON

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Apr 2020 *Always On My Mind*, Lustre Contemporary, Toronto, ON
Feb 2020 *Art Palm Springs Art Fair*, Lustre Contemporary, Toronto, ON
Feb 2020 *LA Art Show*, Lustre Contemporary, Toronto, ON
Sept 2019 *Affordable Art Fair NYC*, Lustre Contemporary, Toronto, ON

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Aug 2019 *The Great Big Wall of Smalls*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
 Sept 2018 *Affordable Art Fair NYC*, Lustre Contemporary, based in Toronto, ON
 Sept 2018 *X: Tenth Anniversary Group Show*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
 Aug 2018 *Five and Under*, Arcadia Contemporary, Pasadena, CA
 May 2018 *Affordable Art Fair Hampstead*, Lustre Contemporary, Toronto, ON
 Feb 2015 *#Makeithappen*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
 Sept 2013 *Water and Glow*, Latitude44 Gallery, Toronto, ON
 Aug 2012 *Family Tree*, Labour of Love, Toronto, ON
 Aug 2011 *Hollywoodland*, The Corus Building, Toronto, ON
 Nov 2009 *The Girlie Show*, The Beverly Owens Project, Toronto, ON
 Aug 2009 *The Vanity Portrait*, The Beverly Owens Project, Toronto, ON
 Apr 2009 *Group Exhibition*, The Department, Toronto, ON
 Sept 2008 *One Less a Jury*, Pari Nadimi, Gallery, Toronto, ON
 Jun 2007 *A Look at Young Painters*, Loch Gallery, Toronto, ON
 Sept 2006 *Group Exhibition*, Ingram Gallery, Toronto, ON
 Apr 2005 *Convergence*, Earl's Court Gallery, Hamilton, ON

SELECT JURIED SHOWS EXHIBITIONS

Jul 2004-10, 2013-15 *Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition*, Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto, ON
 Jun 2009-2015 *Riverdale Art Walk*, Jimmie Simpson Park, Toronto, ON
 Sep 2007-2009 *Queen West Art Crawl*, Trinity Bellwoods, Toronto, ON
 Sep 2010-12 *Cabbagetown Arts Festival*, Riverdale Farms, Toronto, Sept 2010-2012
 Mar 2008-2011 *The Artist Project*, Toronto, ON
 Feb 2012-2015 *The Artist Project*, Toronto, ON

MEDIA APPEARANCES

2013 *Candice Tells All*, HGTV
 2010 *Star Portraits*, David Suzuki episode, Bravo Network

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