

SUMMERY MAGZINE

ISSUE IV

INTERVIEWS



INSIDE THE L.A. ART SCENE

WITH
SARAH AWAD

Architect Frank Lloyd Wright once said *"Tip the world over on its side and everything loose will land in Los Angeles"*. You don't have to spend long in the City of Angels to see that Wright was right.

It is a vibrant and thriving city which, its locals and an ever growing number of national migrants and a diverse immigrant community proudly call home; a promising number of whom work, engage and support the arts in their daily life. The city's film industry has the attention of the world but finally after decades of living in New York's shadow, the Los Angeles art scene has been getting the recognition it deserves. In recent years it has gone from strength to strength with an encouraging number of the country's most exciting artists choosing to live and work on the West Coast. One of the artists proud to call Los Angeles home, is Sarah Awad.

"I think we have a great community here. For artists, Los Angeles is a fantastic city in which to find an affordable space to work that still has rich cultural offerings." gushes Awad, "Consequently, artists from all over are moving here, which means we have great potential for interesting and productive dialogue. The marketplace here is still much smaller than New York and it is harder for artists to find room to break in, but I love that it's small enough that the hierarchies disappear. Once you are involved in the community, you can be friends with artists of all sizes, so to speak."

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We sat down with Sarah to find out a little more about her and her work ...



What led to you becoming an artist?

I'm one of those crazy people that knew what they wanted to do since they were a kid. I always wanted to be a painter, but because no one in my family was involved in the arts, I didn't really know what that lifestyle looked like or if it was sustainable. So I went to art school and graduate school and gave myself a ten year deadline to figure out if I was good enough, whatever that meant. I'm approaching that deadline and I'm happy to keep doing what I'm doing.

How would you describe your work to someone who isn't familiar with it?

Recently, I have been making large paintings of nudes, which are based on drawings, sculptures, and paintings of other artists like Kirchner, Maillol, Beckmann, and Diebenkorn. By using these figures as a framework for making a painting, I've found that I have the right amount of distance from my subject and I can interpret form, color and space in new ways. The paintings are highly fictional and sometimes devious in terms of color, and because they are set in abstract landscapes, the figure is embedded in the space of the painting, often pushing against the edges, or tumbling out of the frame.

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What are you trying to convey in your work and where do you draw inspiration?

I just really love painting. I am always working toward making something through a process of discovery that hopefully also produces an experience of discovery for the viewer. It's that sense of otherness, of mystery and of clarity, when form and subject come together in a way that produces something more than a flat picture.

I guess I don't really believe in inspiration as a source or starting point for an artist. Most painters I know make great work because they work every day regardless of how inspired they are. Right now I'm interested in the form of the nude, tomorrow I am interested in the uncanny architectural space, the next day I may be interested in nothing. Regardless, I continue to paint.

Which artists do you personally admire?

Picasso, Matisse, Bacon, and Guston, artists who pushed the medium forward into completely new territory and had very rigorous aims. They all were constantly reinterpreting other artists work as well as their own. Matisse, for example, would make a painting that today would be considered provisional, but then he would return to it and destroy it over and over until he had thoroughly explored the question. I love that they were never satisfied with their answers.