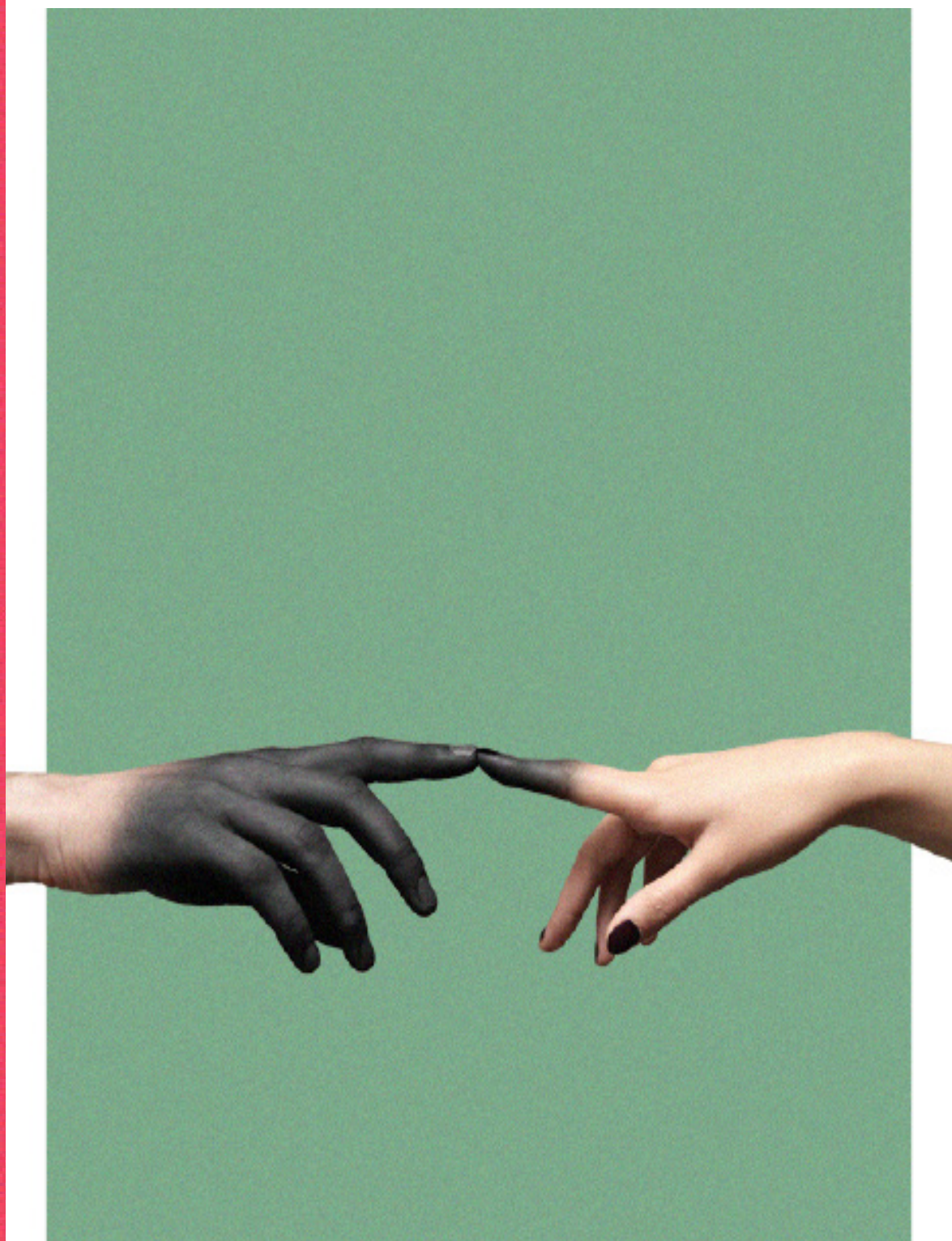


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Stunning \$30m Van Gogh watercolour resurfaces at Christie's New York following complex behind-the-scenes deal

The auction house—which estimates the painting at \$30m—helped broker a deal between the seller and the descendants of two Jewish families who had it in the Nazi era

Vincent van Gogh's vibrant watercolour of wheatstacks in a Provençal farmyard is to be auctioned at Christie's, New York on 11 November. The painting, which was last exhibited in 1905, has never been reproduced in colour. It is estimated to fetch \$20m-\$30m.

Wheatstacks (Meules de Blé) has come up for sale after complex negotiations, facilitated by Christie's, involving three parties. These are the descendants of two Jewish families who owned the Van Gogh in the 1933-45 Nazi era and the current seller, the heirs of Edwin Cox (1921-2020), a Texan oilman. The Cox family is also selling two other Van Goghs, which together should bring in more than \$70m. All three date from 1888-90, the artist's most sought-after period in France.

The watercolour of wheatstacks was painted at the beginning of June 1888, when Van Gogh was working in Arles and was at the height of his powers. It represents a study which led a few days later to an oil painting of the same subject, now at the Kröller-Müller Museum.



Young Man with a Cornflower is a curious portrait of a tousled hair youngster with a reddened face and a cornflower in their mouth. Although the brushwork is typical of Van Gogh's late work, it is by no means a conventional portrait—and hence the relatively modest \$5m-\$7m estimate.

Despite the fact that Young Man with a Cornflower was done in the same month as the record-breaking Portrait of Dr Gachet, they are certainly not in the same league. Portrait of Dr Gachet sold for \$82.5m in 1990, still the highest price fetched for a Van Gogh. It has since disappeared into a mysterious private collection.

Interestingly, Young Man with a Cornflower was exhibited in the groundbreaking Manet and the Post-Impressionists exhibition in London in 1910. It was presumably then well regarded by the curator, Roger Fry, and the lender, Jo Bongor.



Van Gogh's Young Man with a Cornflower (Jeune Homme au Bleuet) (June 1890)



A week or so later Vincent sent the watercolour to his brother Theo. In 1905 his widow Jo Bongor lent it to the major Van Gogh retrospective held in Amsterdam. Two years later she sold the work to the Parisian artist and collector Gustave Fayet.

In 1913 Wheatstacks was bought by Max Meirowsky (1866-1949), a Berlin-based industrialist. He had a fine collection of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, including Van Gogh's Portrait of Camille Roulin (1888) (now in the Museo de Arte, São Paulo).

After the Nazis seized power Meirowsky faced persecution as a Jew and in 1938 he fled to Amsterdam. He then entrusted Wheatstacks to Paul Graupe, a German Jewish art dealer then working in Paris.

Soon afterwards the watercolour was bought by Paris-based Alexandrine de Rothschild (1884-1965), a member of the wealthy Jewish family of bankers. She too was an admirer of Van Gogh, owning House with Sunflowers (1887) (now in another private collection). De Rothschild fled to Switzerland at the outbreak of the Second World War.

Wheatstacks remained in Paris after the German occupation of the city in June 1940. In 1941 the watercolour was seized and held at the Jeu de Paume, where looted art was assembled. A few weeks later it was sent to Austria (then annexed into Germany), to Schloss Kogl in St Georgen im Attergau.

Although the terms remain confidential, presumably the sale proceeds will be split in an agreed proportion and/or with fixed sums. With the Christie's estimate of \$20-\$30m, it is very likely to reach a record price for a Van Gogh work on paper.

Until now the highest price for a Van Gogh watercolour was the £8.8m paid at Sotheby's in 1997 for The Harvest. This was also painted in June 1888, within a day or two of Wheatstacks.

Along with Wheatstacks, Cox's two other Van Goghs will be coming up at Christie's. Wooden Cabins among the Olive Trees and Cypresses (Cabanes de bois parmi les oliviers et cyprès) is a quintessential Provençal landscape, painted in October 1889 just outside the asylum where the artist was then living. Although no estimate has been announced, Christie's believes this fine picture should fetch around \$40m.

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After the war De Rothschild tried to recover Wheatstacks but failed. The watercolour's immediate post-war history is unclear, but in 1978 it was with the New York branch of the Wildenstein gallery, owned by a Parisian-based Jewish family. Wildenstein sold the Van Gogh to Cox the following year.

Cox hung the watercolour in the drawing room of his Dallas mansion. At this point his ownership of the Van Gogh remained a secret known only to his family and close friends.

After Cox's death last year the sale of his fabulous art collection was arranged with Christie's and the question of the status of Wheatstacks became urgent, since it would have been impossible to sell it if there were Nazi-era claims.

Meirowsky's heir, acting through the Berlin lawyers Von Trott zu Solz Lammek, claimed that the Van Gogh had been subject to a "forced sale" in 1938. The heirs of De Rothschild argued that the watercolour had been looted by the Nazi occupiers three years later. The parties subsequently agreed to a settlement.

The Christie's catalogue entry states: "The present work is being offered for sale pursuant to a settlement agreement between the current owner, the heir of Max Meirowsky and heirs of Alexandrine de Rothschild. The settlement agreement resolves the dispute over ownership of the work and title will pass to the successful bidder."

Has Impressionism still got it? This months auctions should tell us

This autumn sees an excess of riches come onto the auction block, thanks to two of the classic “D”s which trigger sales: Death and Divorce (the third, Debt, is certainly not the case here).

On 11 November Christie’s opens the ball with the storied collection of 34 Impressionist works from the estate of the Texan oil tycoon Edwin L. Cox. Estimated at between \$167.6m and \$267.6m, the 23 lots include Gustave Caillebotte’s *Jeune homme à sa fenêtre* (1876), targeting over \$50m. This price is making some art dealers blanch because it would quite simply double the existing record for Caillebotte, if indeed it goes that high. Also in the sale is a \$40m+ Vincent Van Gogh, *Cabanès de bois parme les oliviers et cyprès* (1889) and a beautiful classic Monet, *Le Bassin d’Argenteuil* (1874, est. \$15m-\$25m).

The firm has guaranteed the group near the level of the high estimate, according to rumour, and has been busy laying off the risk by seeking third party guarantors, apparently with considerable success. Interest is so strong that potential backers are apparently being offered “paired” guarantees—they can guarantee a sure-fire winner, as long as they also back one of the less stellar works.

Then look out for major fireworks four evenings later at Sotheby’s New York, when the first half of the famed Macklowe Collection goes under the hammer. It is coupled with a massive guarantee, reported to be between \$650m and \$700m for the 65 works—the other half will be auctioned in May next year. The works were sent for sale by court order after the divorcing couple failed to agree on anything, including the value of the group.

The sale features multiple 20th-century masterpieces: for instance, Giacometti’s *Le Nez* (1947), cast around 1965, the last remaining example of the sculpture in private hands (est. \$70m-\$90m). Or Rothko’s imposing pink, yellow and orange *No 7* (1951), which stands a full eight feet tall (same estimate). Or Warhol’s *Nine Marilyns* (1962), the star’s familiar features repeated in silvery greys (est. \$40m-\$60m). The group of 35 works is estimated at \$400m with 18 lots already bearing an irrevocable bid symbol—and possibly more to come on the night.

But can the market absorb so many top-notch works in one great gulp? Recent auctions in London and Hong Kong have shown a frenzied appetite, particularly in Asia, for the up-and-coming, and speculative, stars of contemporary art. Artists such as Ewa Juszkiewicz, Flora Yukhnovich, Jadé Fadojutimi, Loie Hollowell, Joel Mesler and Shara Hughes as well as the “stunt” Banksy were bid to sometimes ten times estimate, often by a new generation of young Asian buyers.

Is the Macklowe and Cox material of interest to these new buyers, and does it matter? My sense is that it doesn’t, because the US has a deep pool of mega-collectors with pockets to match. I predict determined bidding for Macklowe works from the US, and from elsewhere as well.

As for classic Impressionism, the Cox sales will reveal whether this category still has its mojo. Again, I believe that it will also do well because of the quality of the art on offer. And don’t forget that while Banksy and KAWS might wow young buyers, Monet and Van Gogh are still names to conjure with in Asia as well as in the West.

Has Impressionism still got it?
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Illustration by Paul Blenkhorn

The Buyer of Banksy's \$25.4 Million Shredded Work Is a New-to-Collecting Crypto Entrepreneur

NEED-TO-READ

Holland Cotter on the New Museum Triennial – The current art world penchant for figurative painting is all but absent from the New Museum Triennial, which is dominated by smaller, scrappier works that have no predominant style but which were all somewhat clearly made in lockdown. Works are “dense in detail” and “precious-feeling in a positive way,” writes the critic. (New York Times)

Tiffany's Unveils Basquiat-Themed Advent Calendar – Tiffany & Co.'s “About Love” campaign featuring Beyoncé, Jay-Z, and a robin's egg blue Basquiat set the Twittersphere abuzz when it launched in August. Now, the brand is doubling down on its connection to the 1980s art star, releasing a Basquiat-themed advent calendar ahead of the holidays. The four-foot wooden cabinet has 24 doors, behind each of which is a gift. The limited edition costs around \$150,000. (ARTnews)

Document Banksy Purchaser Paid in Cryptocurrency – It seems that the undisclosed Asian purchaser who bid a report \$25.4 million for Banksy's shredded Love in Bin paid that sum in cryptocurrency. The client has a background in crypto (although they're “not significantly” fascinated with NFTs) and feels a kinship with Banksy's anti-establishment sensibility. It's a testimony to the brand new breed of collector shaking up the market; per the Canvas, this purchaser has solely been dabbling in artwork for 2 years, and has by no means purchased from a gallery.

Artist Jaider Esbell Dies at 41 – The Macushi artist was discovered lifeless in his condo in São Paulo on November 2 at age 41. Esbell's work is on view as a part of the thirty fourth version of the Bienal de São Paulo; he additionally organized the present exhibition of up to date Indigenous artwork on the São Paulo Museum of Fashionable Artwork. His works on the biennial draw on his Macushi heritage, depicting imagery of the Tree of Life and keinaimi, malevolent spirits.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

The Vancouver Artwork Gallery Receives \$100 Million Reward – The Vancouver Artwork Gallery in Canada has acquired \$100 million from the Audain Basis, run by collector Michael Audain, to assist the development of a brand new constructing for the museum in downtown Vancouver. It's the largest single money present to an artwork gallery in Canadian historical past. (Van Art Gallery)

Jenna Burlingham Gallery Strikes to a Nineteenth-Century Townhouse – A historic former rope service provider's house and workshop is now the setting for Jenna Burlingham Gallery in Kinsclere, U.Ok. Works by artists Keith Vaughan, Prunella Clough, and John Piper are on view within the home interiors. (Press launch)

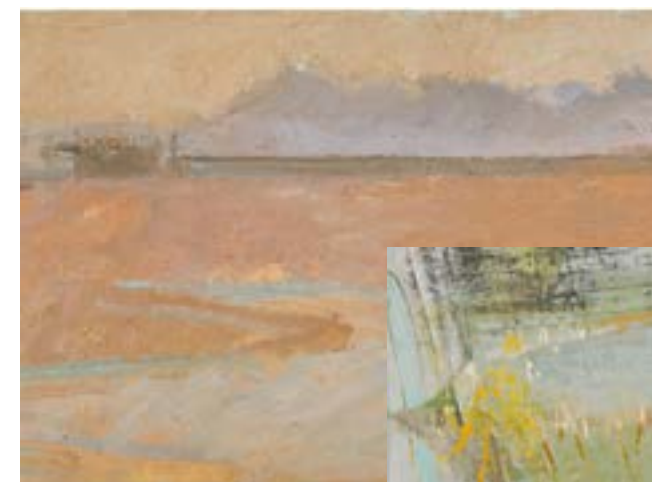
Liz Sterling and Jonathan Boos Group Up – Liz Sterling, Sotheby's former director of personal gross sales and chairman of American artwork, is teaming up with supplier Jonathan Boos to launch a joint gallery area on Madison Avenue in New York. The 2 will keep their impartial art-advisory companies. (Artfix Daily)

Penn Will get \$4.5 Million Photographic Archive – Investor and philanthropist Invoice Miller donated an archive of uncommon photographic plates by Edward S. Curtis to the College of Pennsylvania Libraries. The photographs are the product of Curtis's three-decade lengthy stint photographing Native American tribes throughout the U.S. within the first half of the twentieth century.

Larry Bell Announces His Largest Work to Date – It's looking like a busy 2022 for Larry Bell. Ahead of a major solo exhibition of his work at Dia:Beacon in February, the octogenarian artist has revealed he is developing his largest ever outdoor commission, at North Carolina Sate University. Reds and Whites (2021)—a 40 by 40-foot installation of sliced and reconfigured cubes—will be unveiled in spring 2023. Anthony Meier Fine Arts is presenting a solo booth of Bell's work at the ADAA Art Show this week.



Rendering of Larry Bell: Reds and Whites (2021). Courtesy the artist and North Carolina State College.





Louis Wain, Kaleidoscope Cats VI (undated). Courtesy Bethlem Museum of the Mind.



Louis Wain, Carol Singing Cats (ca. 1930). Courtesy Bethlem Museum of the Mind.

See the Psychedelic Cat Art of Louis Wain the Eccentric Artist Played by Benedict Cumberbatch in the Hit New Film

A forthcoming film starring Benedict Cumberbatch, **The Electrical Life of Louis Wain**, is reviving the reputation of a popular illustrator known for depictions of cats that captivated Victorian England—and the psychiatric hospital in southeast England where he spent his later days has mounted an exhibition of his work to coincide with the film's release.

The eccentric artist's feline fascinations are on view in "**Animal Therapy: The Cats of Louis Wain**" at Bethlem Museum of the Mind, which is housed within Bethlem Royal Hospital, the world's oldest psychiatric hospital, in southeast England. The institution was a pioneer in recognizing the potential of animal therapy for its patients' well-being.

Wain's drawings were immensely popular a century ago, appearing in newspapers and children's books as well as on greeting cards. When his mental health declined in old age, he was admitted to Springfield Hospital; so loyal was his following that when the public learned about his situation, he was moved to the "more salubrious" surroundings of Bethlem (as the hospital describes them), where he continued to draw and paint. The exhibition draws works from the museum's holdings, as well as loans from a private collector.

"Animals have always been known for their affinity to man," said Kate McCormack, the hospital's senior dramatherapist, in the press release (which, uncharacteristic of announcements of museum shows, pronounces it "a gleeful new exhibition"). "At the Bethlem Royal Hospital, the Pets as Therapy program has helped forge relationships between service-users and dogs, notably a Siberian husky named Tess. From offering unconditional affection to aiding in confronting fears and phobias, pets can be a big part of a person's recovery and journey to improved mental health. Animals can offer a very pure and unconditional relationship without demands or expectations."

The film treatment of the artist's life, **The Electrical Life of Louis Wain**, directed by Will Sharpe, co-starring Claire Foy as Wain's wife, Emily Richardson, and with voiceover by Olivia Colman, opens on New Year's Day. The New York Times dubs the film "the cat's meow," describing Cumberbatch as "irresistible" and the script as "garrulous [and] lightly funny," concluding that the film draws "a deeply human self-portrait."



Idol Worship: The Brooklyn Museum's Important New Warhol Show Casts the Pop Artist in a Spiritual Light

Andy Warhol famously instructed an interviewer to “just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There’s nothing behind it.” But it’s been a long time since the pioneering Pop artist has been seen simply as an empty cipher. In the years since his death in 1987 Warhol has been reborn many times. The ever-multiplying Andys include social critic Andy, queer Andy, proto-postmodern Andy, reality TV Andy, and commercial Andy.

“Andy Warhol: Revelation,” currently on view at the Brooklyn Museum, homes in on Catholic Andy. Originally organized for the Warhol Museum by its chief curator José Carlos Diaz and overseen in its Brooklyn incarnation Carmen Hermo, the exhibition draws a line from Warhol’s religious upbringing as a Byzantine Catholic (he later took up Roman Catholicism) through the twists and turns of his career to his last major undertaking, a set of over 100 paintings based on Leonardo’s Last Supper.

This is touted as the first exhibition to explore this aspect of Warhol’s work. However, it is not exactly a newtake—the catalogue references both art historian John Richardson’s paean to Warhol’s “secret piety” in his 1987 eulogy and Jane Daggett Dillenberger’s 1998 tome *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol*.

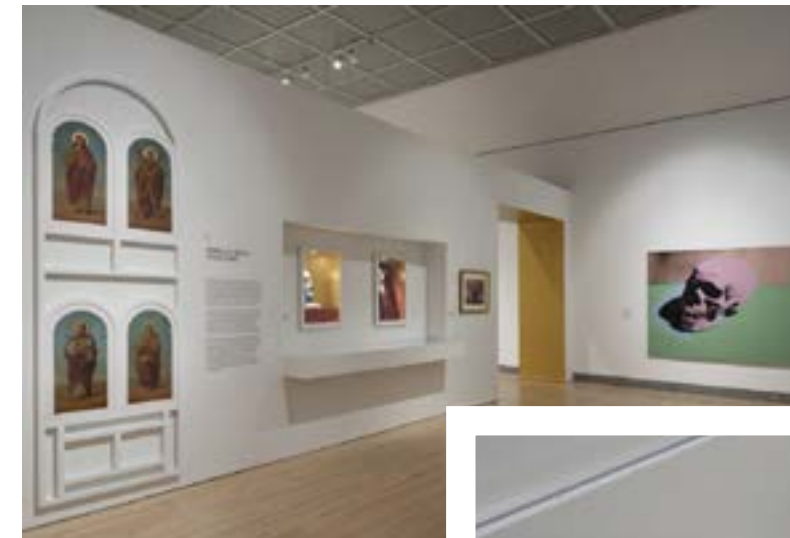
I will modestly add here the chapter I devoted to Warhol’s Catholicism in my 2004 book *Postmodern Heretics: The Catholic Imagination in Contemporary Art*. Another precursor is Arthur Danto, whose ideas about the transfiguration of the commonplace hover without attribution in labels that discuss Warhol’s sculptures of Heinz Ketchup and Delmonte Peaches boxes.

But if the idea of a Warhol immersed in spiritual concerns has been around for some time, newly unearthed materials from the archives of the Warhol Museum have deepened the case. Discoveries include an unfinished film that would have been funded by the Catholic Church, a never completed series of images of nursing mothers, a set of drawings of angels by Warhol’s mother Julia Warhola, as well as religious objects, letters, and clippings that give context to the snippets of text and found images that appear in Warhol’s paintings.

In addition, the show leans heavily on recent scholarship by Warhol Museum curator Jessica Beck that places Warhol’s late Last Supper paintings in the context of his terrified response to the concurrent AIDS Epidemic. These materials, combined with revelations first made by Richardson of Warhol’s regular church attendance, his financial support of a nephew’s studies for the priesthood, and his participation in a soup kitchen provide a picture of Warhol much at odds with more familiar representations of the artist as an indifferent societal mirror or cultural sieve.

The show opens with a wealth of materials that underscore the degree to which religion saturated Warhol’s childhood. On display are holy cards, religious statuettes, and crucifixes from his home, several religious paintings borrowed from his childhood church, and even a painting by a very young Warhol in which his childhood living room is presided over by a prominent cross.

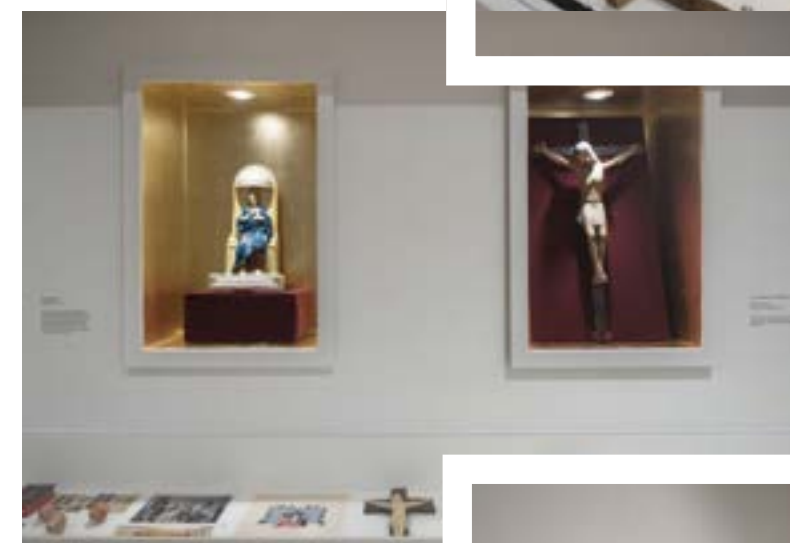
The show then builds its case with thematic sections that consider other aspects of Warhol’s debt to Catholicism. One set of works and ephemera consider his rather problematic relationship with women. These include his obsession with Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy, whose portraits have long been seen as counterparts to the Byzantine icons of his childhood; his friendship with Candy Darling, Warhol superstar and transgender icon; and his near assassination by Valerie Solanas.



Installation view for “Andy Warhol: Revelation,” at the Brooklyn Museum, November 19, 2021-June 19, 2022. (Photo: Jonathan Dorado, Brooklyn Museum. Artworks by Andy Warhol © 2021 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. /Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

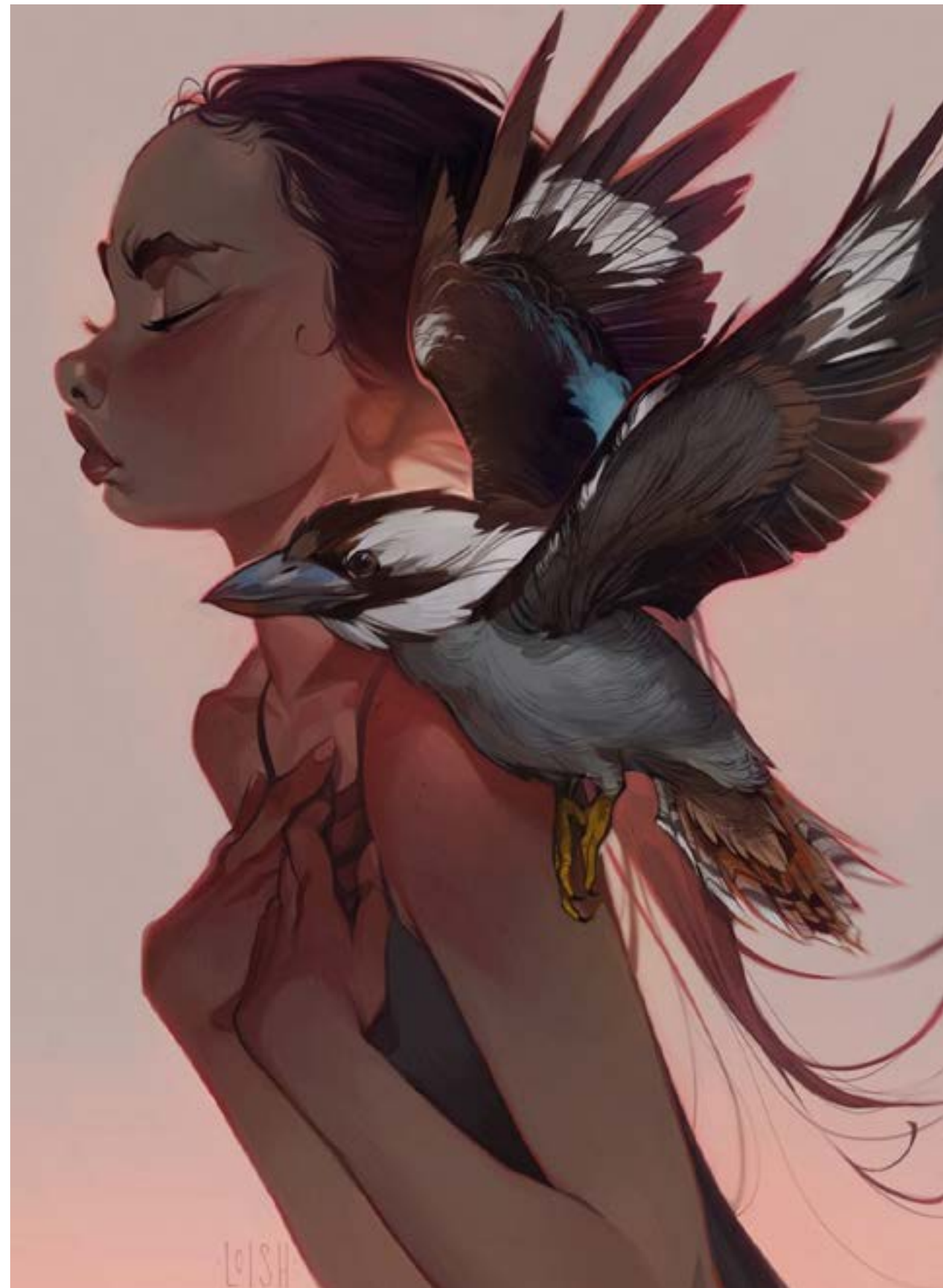


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Installation view for “Andy Warhol: Revelation,” at the Brooklyn Museum, November 19, 2021-June 19, 2022. (Photo: Jonathan Dorado, Brooklyn Museum. Artworks by Andy Warhol © 2021 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. /Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.





Digital Art And Process: An Interview With Loish

Dutch-born artist Loish is a force to be reckoned with. Her website recently hit one million Facebook likes – no mean feat in the age of ubiquitous digital technology. Earlier this year she also published an art book that was bankrolled by a wildly successful Kickstarter campaign. Clearly, she is doing something right. We caught up with her to discuss the process behind her digital artwork.

Can you elaborate on how modern technology allowed you to develop as an artist?

As a kid I would draw with Microsoft Paint and whatever else was available. I started using a tablet and a simple version of Photoshop when I was 15 – this was really important to my development, as these digital tools gave me a lot of room to experiment. As a result, I developed a really intuitive workflow, drawing what ‘felt right’ to me – which is a lot easier when you can play around with colors and completely change your drawing at different points in the process. This really helped me find my ‘voice’ as a character designer and digital painter.

You really found a following through DeviantArt and other similar platforms. What originally drew you to these websites?

When it comes to my own artwork, I am definitely more interested in characters than story. I don’t feel comfortable writing stories or creating complex worlds – that just isn’t my strength. However, I do love reading and watching stories by other people. I find that I create my best work when I am working in a team, doing character designs for a larger project and working with someone who has a narrative vision. I definitely want to do more work in graphic novels and animation, but as an artist who helps bring stories to life rather than creating them myself – that just isn’t for me!

Do you ever try to convey a message through your work?

My artwork is a lot about creating a sense of peace and visual harmony. I do embrace the fact that I mostly draw women and try to make designs that are inclusive and relatable, which is an important message, but this isn’t my main motivation – more a desired side effect!

Can you tell us more about your process?

My process for digital paintings is really intuitive – I keep it very rough and messy and go into details when the drawing starts to ‘feel’ right. If a drawing isn’t working for me, I will change the entire colour scheme and composition. After that, it’s just a question of tweaking the details. For animation, I start with a super rough storyboard consisting of tiny, quickly drawn thumbnails, just to get everything flowing. I gradually develop the storyboard and add more levels of detail until it reflects how I think the animation should look – but since storyboards are subject to a lot of change, I wait until the story is finalized before taking this step.

Would it be fair to say that you are more interested in characters than narratives?

When it comes to my own artwork, I am definitely more interested in characters than story. I don’t feel comfortable writing stories or creating complex worlds – that just isn’t my strength. However, I do love reading and watching stories by other people. I find that I create my best work when I am working in a team, doing character designs for a larger project and working with someone who has a narrative vision. I definitely want to do more work in graphic novels and animation, but as an artist who helps bring stories to life rather than creating them myself – that just isn’t for me!

