

Interview: Icelandic Abstract Painter Katrin Fridriks Makes Canvases Come Alive at Lazarides Rathbone

BY LEIGH SILVER 3 DAYS AGO

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Image via Lazarides Rathbone

Can you explain your process? How do you create such intricate works? How long does it take you?

My process is similar to "Pollock playing golf"—throwing speed spirals with mixed styles, some super fast, some very slow, constructing layers in space. I've been developing those techniques for years. For example, the black and white "macro" started as a pure accident, and

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it's probably the most magic technique I've ever developed. I keep improving and constantly looking for new ways to bend, throw, and cast paint. You may have to throw a little rat into my studio to find out more!

Your work is explosive and very dynamic. Are these qualities you strive for when painting? Even though your works are abstract, they seem to be alive, like alien creatures.

The figures appear, disappear, and re-appear differently in my paintings, often seen as aliens, little creatures that are staring at you if you wish to see them. They are mostly spontaneous and not created on purpose. I don't impose people to see what I see, and sometimes people show me the things that I haven't seen yet, which is really nice. Creating abstract and conceptual works gives me the opportunity for continuous process of finding new images within a piece, unlike figurative paintings. The act of throwing controlled paint itself takes a certain amount of energy, so this is where the explosive energy gets captured in my paintings.



How do you think your work pulls from your Icelandic background? What is it about this environment that appears in your work?

Iceland is a very extreme, raw, and energetic place on Earth. The nature there is highly wild, and it consists of impulsive, unpredictable elements, such as hot and cold energies colliding, water coming from the ground through geysers, volcanoes erupting into lava next to glaciers, like a cosmic walk on the moon. These extremes are definitely inside of me, even though I wasn't raised there. They come out spontaneously, without my

intention, and with time I had to learn how to control and construct or find balance within the surface of a canvas. This specific environment can be recognized in my works both when observed from a satellite, i.e. macro level, or from up close on the ground, through its structure, flows and lines.

How do you balance your native Icelandic influences and other sources of inspiration, like Japanese calligraphy?

I was very fortunate to be raised and live in different countries, such as Luxembourg, Germany, France, and the USA, which definitely taught me to be open to other cultures. At one point, my stepfather guided me to learn Japanese, which later led to studying calligraphy. I always wanted to become an architect, which gave me the strong sense of construction. With calligraphy featuring the "graphical elements," architecture organizing "depth and space," and finally my Icelandic roots as "the organic," these are the elements that have influenced and inspire my work.

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As an artist, I believe you can have an impact on how to see things, spread information, and ask important questions.



In the past, you have explored social, political, and environmental issues through your works. Does your show at Lazarides also explore these themes?

Definitely. The idea of this show is to comment on modern day tracking and monitoring technology, as well as the use of drones, which are hiding behind the explanation of saving lives by not sending humans into unknown areas. I suspect that the actual subject here is to classify society and changing of the

human identification. This idea is not given clearly to the exhibition's visitors but only hinted at through my works if they want to see it. The reflective paper floor installation gives the sensation of flying, feeling loose between the sky and earth, while the *Fly Zone* installation mixes organic, architectural, and geometrical elements through a navigation screen.

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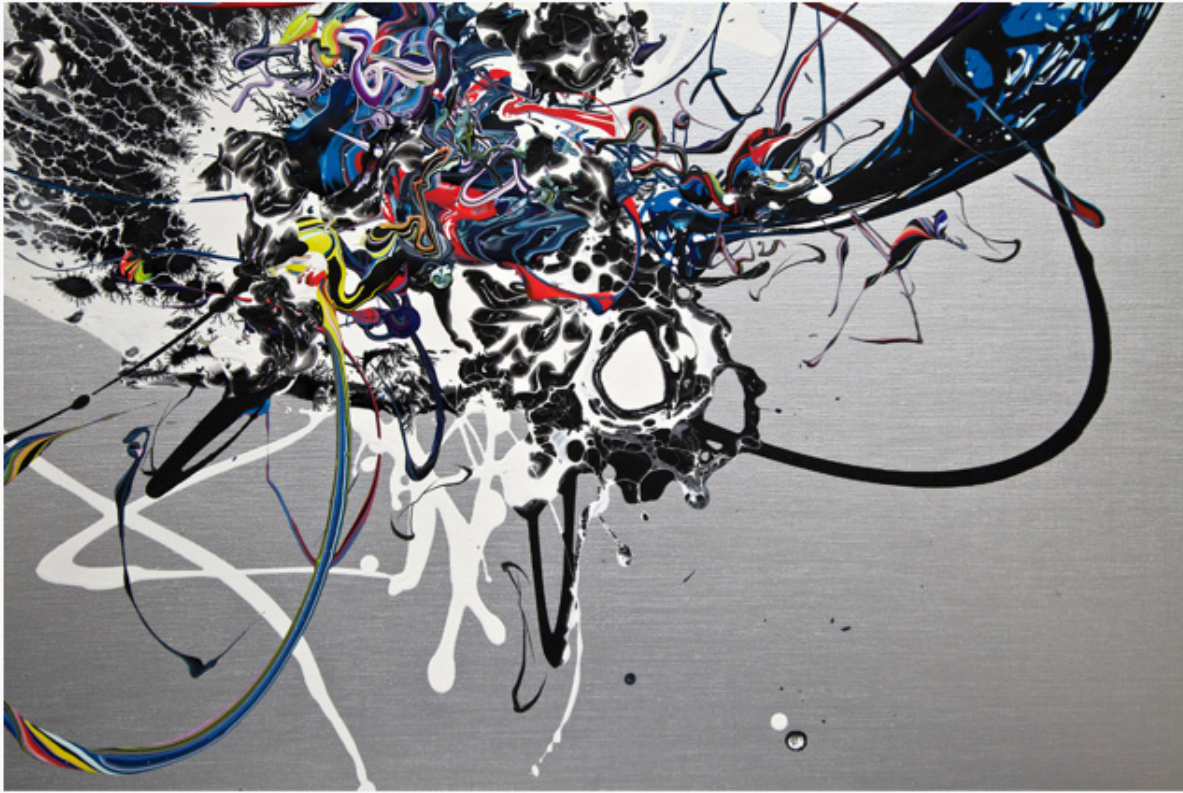
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What does the show's title "Flying Awareness" mean to you?

The show's title has a double meaning; "awareness" is a play on words that includes "A WAR," which is questioning the purpose of the new technologies and military actions in the identification of society. As an artist, I believe you can have an impact on how to see things, spread information, and ask important questions. At the moment, we have a global war situation on an informational level, which is causing social media information to clash against mass media canals. Numerous political and territorial conflicts worldwide are shifting our society and encouraging further production of tracking and monitoring military equipment. Are we aware of it?!

Do you see your work as having connections to street art?

I started using some forms of tagging in my very early works, writing and scratching in paint. I do relate to the construction part. Just like how street artists create works in the urban environment, I use my canvases to create 3D installations, a form of urbanization such as "Molecular spaces." I especially admire JR, who has the capacity to create massive architectural constructions within participating society. I love Banksy for his sharpness and genius political humor and Invader for his square simplicity.



"Flying Awareness" runs until July 24, 2014 at Lazarides Rathbone gallery in London.