

## GIFTCARD

ARTISTS, STUDIO VISITS

# In the Studio: Iva Kafri, Tel Aviv

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The colorful paintings and installation works of Israeli artist Iva Kafri are unapologetically enigmatic. Fusing together mixed media including spray paint, plexiglas and wallpaper, she compels viewers to piece together the components of the puzzles she builds. The results of her creative process may look like a window opening onto a joyful world, but the creator behind it is carefully striving to maintain her balance on a taut tightrope.

JB: Iva, when did it start for you that you were painting?

IK: I was a child who always painted, I come from a family of artists. It was really what I liked doing the most for as long as I can remember. At the same time I actually really loved cinematography, and had this fantasy about being a filmmaker. But after taking a video making course in my first year of school, I was unable to connect to the process of sitting in front of a computer and editing. Suddenly I realized that I had never fully valued the immediacy of the painting process, the fact that the process is in itself meaningful, not only the final result. Eventually I understood the meaning of what I had been doing my entire life; the language of painting was like an additional mother tongue I possessed, and until then had taken for granted.



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IK: I think that I make scenic situations, and my aspiration is for there to be as little distance as possible between myself and the things I make as I make them. These situations merge into and with my consciousness, my subconscious, chance elements, and with time itself. They are like a little encapsulation of me; an expression of a very complicated situation that belongs entirely to me.

JB: Are there artists whose work you carry with you to this day?

IK: There are discoveries I remember making as a child that are part of my core as an artist, like the works of Gauguin, Matisse, Rauschenberg. These are the very first artists who moved me because they had a way of communicating through color and a certain kind of sensuality and freedom that I value.

JB: You tend to create paintings that are very large in scale. Is that the method that you naturally gravitate toward?

IK: I experience painting as a very physical process, and working with a small canvas makes me feel tied up and restricted. I also respond to the spaces I work in and try to play with them, be it a museum or a gallery where I'm presenting my work, or on the walls of my studio. For me, the act of creating is essentially the act of opening myself up to the world.



JB: Are the ideas of contact and physicality essential to your practice?

IK: Certainly, they are essential. Painting is first of all a physical act. I also really adore dance, it's one of the artistic mediums that I connect with the most. For me, dance is about creating a presence. And that is the kind of physical presence that I hope to manage to bring into my paintings. It is almost a desperate act sometimes; it's like I'm leaving traces on the canvas that speak for me. They are saying: 'Someone was here once.'

JB: When observing your work, imbued as it is with rich colors, it conveys an almost child-like sense of brimming over with happiness.

IK: Well, I'm not surprised you experience it this way. Freedom and passion are elements that draw me to the making of art, which is what you probably recognize as happiness. But I don't agree that rich colors are necessarily happy. Different colors and their combinations contain a very ample variety of feelings. There is a certain abyss or a struggle that I always have to overcome as part of my creative process. ^

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Joy Bernard is a writer, journalist and art critic. Bernard previously directed the news desk at Israel's leading English-language daily, Haaretz. Today she writes about visual arts, politics and welfare issues in the Middle East for a variety of publications.



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