



Apr 22, 2016 3:37PM

Meet The Artist: Ariana Papademetropoulos
Witchcraft meets milk and cookies.

US-based artist Ariana Papademetropoulos is inspired by things as diverse as the Manson murders, pulp novels and 3D postcards. Using a complicated process that starts out with collage and ends up with painting, Ariana's large-scale works are colourful, unsettling meditations on the erotic and the banal.

With an exhibition called 'Wonderland Avenue' — featuring her first installation — currently on display at Los Angeles' MAMA gallery, we caught up with Ariana to find out more about her très interesting practice.

Rafael Martinez: Is this your first time working on an installation? What made you create this room?

Ariana Papademetropoulos: It is my first time working on an installation in a gallery setting, yet I've always been interested in interior design and the experiential impact it has on a viewer. When I was eleven, I made my room at my mother's house in Pasadena shabby chic, while my father's house in Venice was super psychedelic with rainbow 70s wallpaper, AstroTurf, and blow-up furniture. Unknowingly I created these rooms to reflect the personality I wanted to have in those environments, Pasadena verses Venice. This concept is something I am continually curious about.

For the installation in 'Wonderland Avenue', I chose to create the room as an extension of the paintings. The paintings are portals, and this room allows you to actually enter the painting. It's based on idealised 70s home and garden magazines. Although perfectly matching, the room is unnerving, even frightening to some. It's a mix of witchcraft and milk and cookies. I guess it resembles all my interest in one place. Is eroticism part of your subject?

I consider all my paintings to be erotic in concept, even the ones that don't contain nudes. For me, eroticism

Is eroticism part of your subject?

I consider all my paintings to be erotic in concept, even the ones that don't contain nudes. For me, eroticism is the aesthetic of desire, and desire comes from mystery. In my opinion, a woman looks more provocative when she is wearing lingerie as it suggests sex but doesn't give it away, as opposed to a fully nude woman. I think of the layers in my paintings as lingerie, as they don't give away too much, and keep you guessing what's on the other side.

I read that one of your first connections with the art was looking at the colours of cakes in the supermarket at age four, is that still relevant to you? Do you still use that as inspiration?

I wouldn't say I use that as inspiration, it was more of a moment in a suburban setting where I found something that I was moved by. In a way it still relates to my practice because I am drawn to images and objects that weren't meant to be seen as art yet hold meaning and inspiration for me. For instance, the 70s lenticular postcards that I reference in my work have no intention of being art-related objects. Once I paint them in their in-between state combining both images, the duality of femininity and objectification is revealed. If I didn't highlight what I found in these postcards to be strategic and strange, they would just remain as kitsch.

Can you tell us about the creative process while you work?

I'm a collector of sorts so the first part is gathering books and paraphilia I'm going to create images with. I basically make collages, photograph them, and then use it as reference to paint from.

How do you come up with the names for your paintings?

Many come from pulp and sci-fi novels such as *All Flesh Is Grass* and *Rumors of Spring*. "Angel of Disobedience" was the name Kenneth Anger gave to Bobby Beausoleil before the Manson murders and I found it appropriate for the subject of the hippy being dominated in the painting. 'Nude, Pensive' was the title on the back of the lenticular postcard that I referenced for the painting which I found poetic and beautiful. 'Hello, Gloria' just came to me out of nowhere. So really they all evolve from different places.

Have you been benefited from having social media?

Yes and no. I hated social media for a long time. When I was in high school, whenever I got too stoned I'd throw my cell phone out the window because it freaked me out. I don't have Facebook, but I'm sure Instagram has led to more people seeing my work and hence some shows that I wouldn't have been in otherwise. I prefer to keep social media personal, as I don't enjoy posting pictures of my work. A two-inch screen can't do a seven-foot painting justice, and I can't help to slightly judge the work based on how many likes it gets. Silly. Because we live in a world with Instagram, I feel a little compelled to use it especially as an artist. But if I had a choice for social media not to have ever existed at all, I'd take it! It can be fun sometimes but it's just all pretty weird.

Do you relate your work to technology?

If anything it's the deep denial that technology doesn't exist. I work pretty primitively compared to most people and I can't figure out Photoshop for the life of me. At the same time, even if I'm not technologically advanced, the world is, and that must have an impact on me, and the work.

How do you think your work has changed over the past five years?

I've always been interested in similar subject matters, but my approach to them has shifted. Five years ago, I think my work was more overtly mystical or dark, and now I prefer the uncanniness to creep up on you. It's more interesting for me to create an image that's pink, girly, and frightening for no apparent reason, than a painting of a black and white painting of a dead man that is obviously ominous.

Who are your biggest influences in art, music and literature?

For artists, Kenneth Anger, Mike Kelley, Robert Smithson, Yayoi Kusama, Niki de Saint Phalle, and James Turrell, but the list goes on and on. Right now I've been listening a lot of Martin Denny, Kim Jung Mi, John Maus, Air, Link Wray, The Zeros, Gary Numan, and I just love all that Turkish psychedelic music. I guess I'm all over the place in terms genres I like with art and music. For literature, I have to admit I'm pretty bad, rarely do I read. But I do listen to podcasts every day while I paint and I consider that reading in a sense. I'm obsessed with the podcasts You Must Remember This, Criminal, 99% Invisible, Freakanomics and Radiolab. I strongly recommend podcasts if you paint, it makes you feel like you have company when you're alone days on end!



