

# ISSUE

ARIANA PAPADEMETROPOULOS

Interview by Ariel Pink

Portraits by Nate Walton

“HAPPINESS IS THE MEANING OF LIFE RIGHT?  
SO, TO ME, THAT MEANS OWNING A BEAUTIFUL, TINY MONKEY.”  
— ARIANA PAPADEMETROPOULOS

Los Angeles-born and raised artist Ariana Papademetropoulos paints from found, vintage images which she manipulates and renders large, ornate and vibrant. In her newest body of work, *Wonderland Ave*, Papademetropoulos evokes the duality of fantasy and reality: her paintings give the illusion of a rupture in the surface of one image as a portal to another behind it. *Wonderland Ave* takes its title from a bohemian Laurel Canyon address and also references the unsolved 1981 *Wonderland* murders featuring a pornstar suspect and Hollywood locale, as well as the classic Lewis Carroll novel that leads Alice down the rabbit hole. By blurring nature and artifice, tradition and modernity, Papademetropoulos creates her own skewed version of reality, evoking realms of fantasy, myth and historical allusion as ominous as they are sensual. Papademetropoulos' work has shown throughout the US and abroad, and she recently designed the sets for Ariel Pink's latest tour. She and Pink go to the McDonald's drive-thru and talk about everything but *Wonderland Ave*, opening March 12 at MAMA Gallery, Los Angeles.

Ariel Pink: Three large fries, one #1 and three chocolate chip cookies.

McDonald's Employee: 15 dollars, 88 cents.

Ariana Papademetropoulos: Wow, 15 dollars at McDonald's. That's a lot of money.

AP: Why are you so far from the window? You're a mile away.

AP: I don't do drive-thru. I don't know what this process is all about!

AP: It's just too low class for you to follow the rules. What have you been up to anyway?

AP: I've just been barricaded in my studio. That's it. Just in my little world.

AP: Where's your studio?

AP: Downtown [LA] above those DJ and light show equipment places. What have you been doing?

AP: I'm in retirement. I'm going to a residency soon in Marfa (Texas) at the Donald Judd thing. Have you been out there?

AP: I went once when I was 15. I saw The Dandy Warhols play in a barn with chickens and goats everywhere. Donald Judd's house is amazing from what I remember. Everything is exactly how he left it. You might get a little bored out there, but actually there are aliens that you should go see! They are called the Marfa lights.

“I RELATE MORE TO MYTHICAL  
DWARFS THAN ANIMALS.”  
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AP: What are they?

AP: They are an unexplained phenomenon that even the Native Americans saw, so they have been around awhile. You go out to a specific lookout point and can see them. Blue, green, purple, pink lights that are dancing in beautiful uniform. They meet up, split apart, come back together and then disappear. It's like watching synchronized swimming or a Busby Berkeley film. I have some Texan friends who live out there, and they said the Marfa lights have chased them down in their cars—they've seen them in the rearview mirror.

AP: Yeah, I've seen flying saucers in Texas. It'll be alright as long as there is Chinese food out there. I already made sure of it. I wrote in the contract that there needs to be a Chinese restaurant within walking distance of the studio.

Truth or dare?

AP: Dare

AP: I dare you to answer question number two.

AP: What's question number two?

AP: Is the riddle in the meaning, or is the meaning in the riddle?

AP: I'm afraid if I answer wrong something terrible will happen to me, like in those sadistic Japanese game shows.

AP: Which type of which animal are you?

AP: I've tried to answer this before, and I realized I relate more to mythical dwarfs than animals. A troll or a goblin is more like it. A weird little person.

AP: What is your favorite scientific discovery?

AP: I like that scientists genetically modified goats to produce spider web material in their milk. Goats with spider-silk milk. Also, how they've given the bioluminescent gene in some jellyfish to other animals. So now we have glow-in-the-dark kittens and sheep.

AP: What is the meaning of life?

AP: Just one divine mistake after another, but also maybe to own a tarsier monkey. Happiness is the meaning of life right? So, to me, that means owning that beautiful, tiny monkey. They are suicidal though.

AP: If you were a genie, which genie would you be?

AP: The one on Pee-wee's Playhouse because he disturbed me. There's an episode where Pee-wee gets one wish, but he can't think of anything and accidentally says to himself, "I wish I knew what to wish for." The genie grants him that—Pee-wee knows what to wish for, but that was the end. That gave me a lot of anxiety as a child. I'd be that genie so I could hang out with Pee-wee and reverse that terrible day.

AP: What's your favorite Schwarzenegger moment?

AP: All of them. He's superhuman, and I think sometimes people forget that. I can't believe he is on planet earth.

AP: Now for some incorrect or correct questions, or best of all, "I don't know." Do you consider yourself an artist?

AP: Correct.

AP: Do you consider yourself a bad artist?

AP: Incorrect.

AP: Who is better: Jackson Pollock or Picasso?

AP: I think I like Picasso.

AP: Wrong! "I don't know" is the best answer for that one. I'm trying to get you to say, "I don't know," can't you see? Repeat after me: I don't know.

AP: I don't know.