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From a New York Painter, a New Reason to Head West

Hope Gangloff won't let her face be photographed. Unlike some of her contemporaries, who cruise the fair and gala circuit to keep their names bold-faced in the art world, the 42-year-old American painter prefers to stroll the streets of New York solo. When it comes to discussing her practice with the media, she's even more reserved. In order to secure an interview, I assure her longtime gallerist Susan Inglett that I'd keep things light; after some going back and forth, Hope agreed—maybe because I name-dropped a mutual friend, an artist she attended school with.



The day we meet at Inglett's gallery is a typically misty example of New York in April. The space is humming with visitors there to see Gangloff's latest exhibition of new paintings before it closes on April 22. "People who don't normally buy portraits are buying her work, from museums to serious collectors," Inglett says of Gangloff's ever broadening appeal. "At the end of the day, everybody relates to it on some level." Rather than meet me among the work and the onlookers, Gangloff motions for me to meet her outside the gallery. We walk to her chosen location, The Half King, a local pub picked both for its proximity to the gallery and because Gangloff says she's "a sucker for sweet potato fries."

When we shake off the rain and get seated, the conversation comes easily. "I'm actually very social, just not in the grand scheme of things," Gangloff says. Born in Amityville, New York, Gangloff started painting at a young age. "My mom took me to a class, like a mother and daughter thing," she says. "And I began painting in my parents' barn." She attended Cooper Union, and currently lives in the East Village with her husband and fellow painter Benjamin Degen. Her studio is in Queens.

"When you're an artist, you have to be cool with being uncomfortable, pretty much all the time," Gangloff says. "Your eyes and ears are processing so much information every day. I don't want to get philosophical, but humans, by nature, are uncomfortable." She continues, "The only thing I can control is my studio. It's a small thing, but it's what I can control." Spacious and sun-drenched and just cluttered enough, when she walks into her studio, "everything is singing to me," she says. "All the surfaces look gorgeous, so I want to touch them all. In the studio, I'm in the zone and I have what feels right, the right tools, and the right people."

By “right people” she means her subjects, because she almost exclusively paints those she trusts and loves. (Her last show at Susan Inglett, for example, featured paintings of her husband Ben and the artist Blaze Lamper.) “I kind of pick the same people over and over again, because then it feels like another hangout. It’s always a five-star day for me, whether it’s a good or bad drawing day. I’m just so grateful to have somebody come over and sit for me.”

To describe her process, Gangloff references *Eiger Dreams*, a Jon Krakauer book about rock climbers. “An outsider who doesn’t look at a lot of art might not understand why I paint similar things over and over again. I might seem like a psycho to them,” she says. “But there are always micro movements. I’m always working through problems. Rock climbers look for little changes in rocks to help them climb and keep going. When I look at a painting, I’m also looking for the move that’s going to set off something else. The whole painting is like a problem I’m trying to solve.”

In the simplest terms, Gangloff’s work—large-scale, color-saturated, and deeply personal depictions of the everyday: a woman in the bath, a man napping on a lawn, a woman leafing through a vinyl collection—is where portraiture, still life, and color theory converge. She prefers to paint on a large scale—so large, in fact, that she built wooden risers for her studio. “When I feel sacked out and wanna get jacked up, I put on some music and dance around. That’s why I paint so big. It all happens together, when I’m physically and mentally moving.” (She even purchased a trampoline, for when she really falls into a rut.)



Of her wonderfully vibrant palette, Gangloff explains, “I take pleasure in seeing what colors do to each other.” A painting from her last show depicts her husband Degen reclined in his underwear on their bedroom’s window sill on a summer night. The bedroom and its objects are awash in blues, greens, and browns. Degen’s skin and hair pick up on a similar palette, along with flecks of red and pink. But it’s a black anti-Trump tee shirt, draped over the radiator, that stands out. “All my compositions are a vehicle for color theory. None of these are an accident,” says Gangloff. “The color in the bedroom was really weird, and these tones are what

darkness felt like at my apartment at night.” At any given moment in her studio, “there’s hundreds of cups everywhere, and they’re all mixed. Sometimes I know who everybody is, what they can do, and how they play with other colors. But if I go away for a few days, I can forget. I’m not always on it.”

What’s most interesting is that Gangloff will be painting live in the museum’s atrium over the course of three days—offering an unprecedented opportunity to see the elusive painter at work. For those of us not near northern California in the months ahead, well, for a glimpse at her private world we’ll just have to look at her paintings.

“Hope Gangloff Curates Portraiture” is open to the public through September 24 at 328 Lomita Drive in Stanford, California.