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Hope Gangloff Colors the Everyday

BY SCOTT INDRISEK | MAY 04, 2015



"These pieces make up a giant coloring book with endlessly occurring color tests," said Hope Gangloff of the canvases in her studio, all larger-than-life portraits of friends and family members. "Every time I work on a set of paintings I'm playing with color vibrations. These are kind of all over the place, but leaning toward purple and green." In one corner there's a painting of Gangloff's father, wearing a T-shirt that reads "CLAM POWER," casually perusing the newspaper while two chickens perch on his arms. As with many of Gangloff's paintings, the true delight is in the small details: The hypnotic black-and-white patterning of chicken feather; a tangle of green bush behind the porch railing; a series of brushstrokes building up a wispy beard. Another portrait - the largest by far - depicts Tim Traynor, drummer for Workout, who brought a full kit into the studio so that Gangloff could paint from life while he played. (Photographer Don Stahl visited Gangloff's studio in the weeks leading up to her most recent show at Susan Inglett Gallery in New York, on view through June 6 - many of the images he shot are included in the slideshow here.)

For some of these works, Gangloff also engaged directly with her subjects to stage specific tableaux. Olga Alexandrovskaya Shoturma, a model and nurse who is married to one of the artist's friends, suggested a scenario that cheekily played with her Russian heritage: "She's been out dancing, she gets home and kicks off her heels, she's hungry - there's a samovar, she has a late-night fish sandwich." Another friend, Yuri Masnyj, sketched an idea for how he'd like to be presented within an environment of various grids. Gangloff painted a backdrop that would hang behind him and on the floor, a sort of hand-rendered, slightly wonky matrix. ("Painted backdrops really make the models enthusiastic," said the artist, who also created faux drum-sets and paintings-within-paintings to hang on the wall for other works. "It doesn't take long to make props: Win/win.") Animals play a significant role in several of the paintings - dogs and cats, in addition to the aforementioned chickens. While most of the portraits depict interior spaces, one ventures outdoors, depicting its subject playing the bagpipes at Hunter Mountain in New York. The artist's familiarity with and affection for her subjects is palpable in these works, which are suffused with a certain otherworldly romanticism: "Painting, for me, is a social interaction, and a collaboration."