

Furman, Anna. "In the Studio With an Artist Who Paints in a 'Color Trance,'" *T Magazine*, 8 May 2018.

## In the Studio With an Artist Who Paints in a 'Color Trance'

By Anna Furman  
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The artist Hope Gangloff who occupies a studio in a warehouse in Queens, paints portraits of people she knows. On a wall of the space hang candy-colored paintings of her father, husband and close friends. "I try and conjure a color trance and just for it," she says. Credit Don Stahl

Last spring, the artist Hope Gangloff arrived in the austere marble atrium of Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center — and set up a makeshift art studio. There, for eight hours a day, 10 days straight, she knelt on a stool, and painted a live model, the writer Tammy Fortin, as she worked on her typewriter. The scene attracted a steady stream of college students and school children, who gathered to witness the spectacle.

It was a live-painting project that required the mental and physical fortitude of a performance artist — coupled with the ability to simply tune people out. Gangloff cited her natural rapport with Fortin, and nonstop Bodega Boys songs blaring through headphones, as the reasons she was able to focus. "I just tried to conjure a color trance," she said.

"Color trance" is a good way of describing Gangloff's work: In her portraits, contrasting neon hues — blue and orange, purple and yellow — intersect to disorienting effect. Sitters and their pets shape-shift into their environments: A subject's lime-green leg hair camouflages into a patch of grass, or knobby chair legs mirror another subject's twisted limbs. "The most uncommon color combinations do the strangest things," Gangloff says. But her new work will be more muted by comparison. In preparation for an upcoming show at Halsey McKay gallery in East Hampton, she is currently at work revising several paintings with color profiles that she calls "whack" for their uniformity and lack of contrasting hues.

Gangloff works alone on the second floor of a drafty warehouse building in Astoria, Queens, eight blocks away from a studio occupied by her husband, the painter Benjamin Degen. Random gathered objects, including a mesmerizing, Russ & Daughters babka loaf, a protest sign with the text "No Trump, no KKK, no Fascist USA," prismatic paper lanterns, and cryptic messages hand-scrawled onto poster board (for example, "You're being paranoid about the wrong things") dot the high-ceilinged space — and crowd the perimeters of many of her portraits.

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The artist designs fierce political posters, which she disseminates online and occasionally at protests. One poster, pictured above, reads: "Don't worry, if you don't vote, the government will run itself. As a matter of fact, they're banking on it." Credit Don Stahl

On the day that I visit her studio, Gangloff, 44, is dressed in navy blue coveralls spangled with paint, a braided leather choker and lace-up work boots. Sheets of paper cover the windows, so that she can dance freely without fear of being watched, she says. I notice a sign behind one of two easels that reads: "Please by all means don't say more than you need to," like a note to her future self about giving interviews to journalists.

Gangloff supplements her painting practice by making fierce political posters — depicting Trump hiding in a "luxury bomb shelter," the director of a libertarian advocacy group choking on the Earth, and nefarious lobbyists pumping a sickly stream of money into the Capitol building. She puts them on her website and encourages people to download them to bring to protests or hang in their homes. In her studio, there are posters calling for Trump's immediate impeachment and decrying the corruption of power in Washington D.C. interspersed with preparatory sketches of models, cheery found photos and colorful to-do lists.

In the tradition of painters such as David Hockney and Alice Neel, Gangloff does not make paintings on commission, she insists, instead only painting people that she knows intimately. "It's the way I check in with friends," she explains. "It'll be five hours and we'll talk about every movie we've ever seen and the news — if it's not too heinous." When I visit the studio, she is at work on two paintings: a portrait of two magicians and an abstract oceanic scene steeped in violet. In a style akin to Neel's, Gangloff takes a playful approach to scale, often rendering a subject's head out of proportion to his or her body.

Though she poses for Degen, Gangloff squirms with discomfort at the thought of painting a self-portrait. "I'm more comfortable in the position of fawning over and admiring other human beings," she tells me. "I don't need a light on me, because I'm not comfortable in the light." She even refuses to be photographed in any way that reveals her face. "When people take my picture, my eyes register fear because I don't like having my picture taken," she explains. "I don't want a weird look on my face to define me. And I'm a painter, so who cares what my gender is or what I look like?"

*"Hope Gangloff and Jennie Jieun Lee" will be on view June 30 to July 31 at Halsey McKay Gallery, 79 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, halseymckay.com.*