

Vault™

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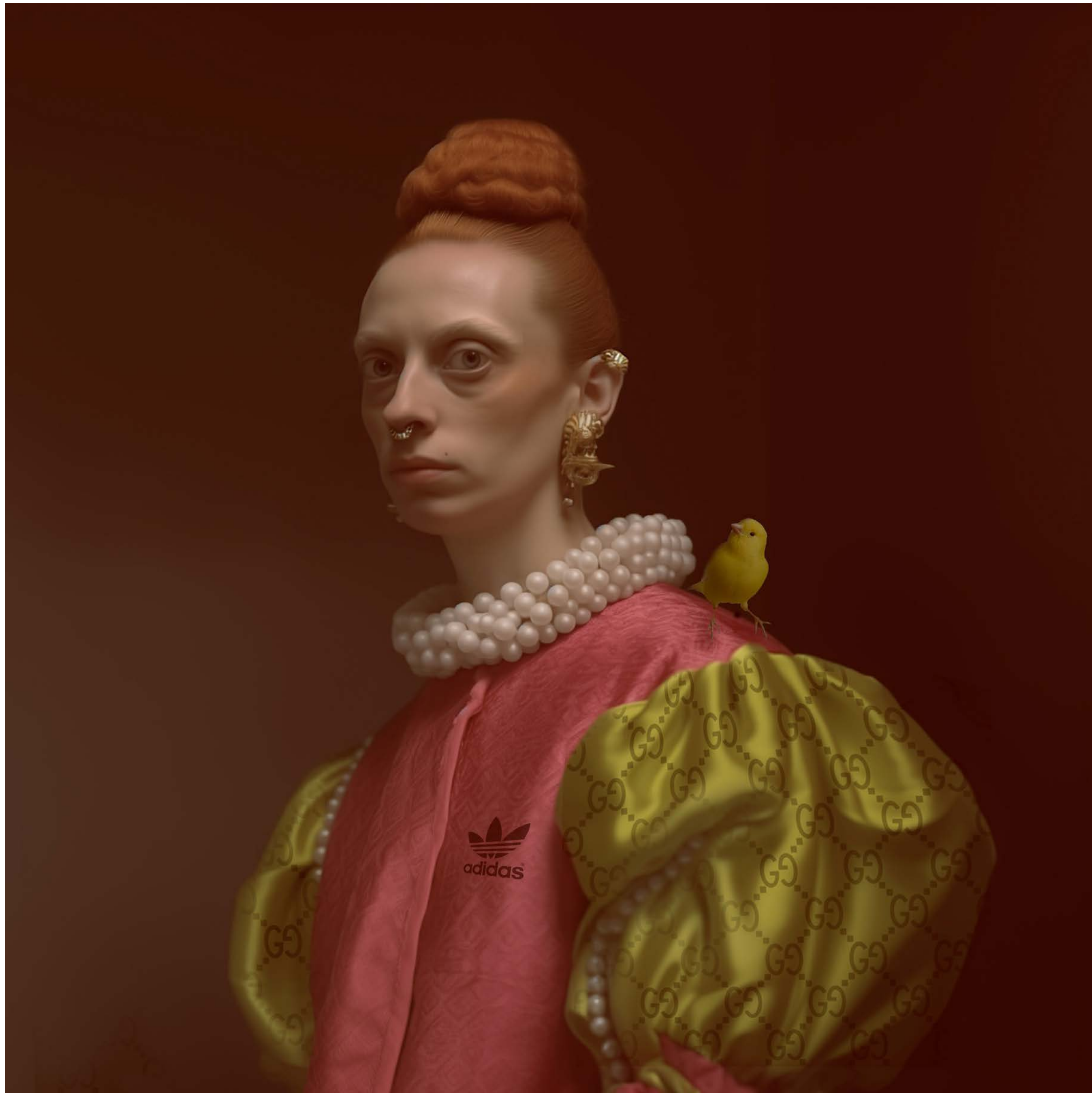


LISA KING

IN PLAIN SIGHT

Lisa King is a figurative painter working on an epic scale. Multi-disciplinary and known for her large murals, King is a painter of allegory, with the hidden meaning in her works rendered in realism as spectacular public art.

FEATURE by GRACE SANDLES





“Public art, to me, is a dynamic conversation woven into the urban landscape or an environment often seen as mundane. It also holds a profound significance that I feel transcends the boundaries of traditional gallery spaces, giving the environment an opportunity to infuse colour, narrative and emotion into its fabric.”



Can you tell us a bit about your creative process? Is commission work prevalent in public art, shaping your artistic reality? Describe the journey from a commission to a fully realised piece.

In my creative approach, I favour constructing concepts organically from the ground up, akin to the Spanish notion of *duende* – a creation rooted in the earth rather than the intellect. This raw and instinctive process draws from a lifetime of exploration, encompassing art history, traditional methods and various influences, learned or otherwise.

While my work predominantly involves commissions, they don't necessarily restrict me to rigid guidelines. Commissioned pieces, for me, aren't about adhering to a strict brief. I view stifling creativity with preconceived notions as the opposite of true artistic expression. Fortunately, clients often approach me with trust in my ability to creatively enhance a space or idea.

How does the diverse array of influences – from pop surrealism and Ron English to Brett Whiteley, Japanese painting, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Alonso Sánchez Coello, Plato's *Symposium*, Dutch and Flemish Masters, and still life painting – shape your painting approach? How do you manage to synthesise these disparate inspirations in your creative process?

I am an avid absorber and observer of the world, profoundly shaped by both its positive and negative aspects. When I encounter an influence, it becomes an irresistible fascination that engulfs me, be it on an aesthetic or philosophical level. Interestingly, my influences often find me rather than the other way around. It may sound peculiar, but I stumbled upon M. F. K. Fisher quite accidentally, as if her book beckoned from the library shelf. These moments lead me into a deep exploration of their work, immersing myself in fascination. I carry a fragment of them in my metaphorical back

LISA KING
The social status of a vegetable, 2024
present medium: digital diffusion (Markov chain) with iterations and paint in post-production (Wacom)
future medium: acrylic and oil on French linen
120 x 120 cm

Opposite, top to bottom
LISA KING
M. F. K. Fisher, 2024
present medium: digital diffusion (Markov chain) with iterations and paint in post-production (Wacom and custom brush set)
future medium: acrylic and oil on French linen
120 x 120 cm

LISA KING
M. F. K. Fisher - A throne fit for a queen (work in progress), 2024
acrylic and oil on canvas
240 x 170 cm

Page 84-85
LISA KING
Jane, 2024
present medium: digital diffusion (Markov chain) with iterations and paint in post-production (Wacom and custom brush set)
future medium: acrylic and oil on French linen
120 x 120 cm

All images courtesy the artist © Lisa King



Portrait of Lisa King
in Benalla
Photo: Nicole Reed
Art Direction: Eddie Zammit
© Nicole Reed

and after a passionate engagement the moment fades but the memory persists.

As a self-taught artist who bypassed a formal fine art education, how did experiences like studying graphic design and running a gallery contribute to your evolution as a multi-disciplinary artist, breaking traditional barriers?

My educational journey reveals a consistent struggle with traditional environments, starting from preschool through to Year 12, despite excelling in specific subjects. The overstimulated atmosphere posed challenges, leading me to forge my unique educational path. Despite these difficulties, I managed to tap into my potential without succumbing to the monotony of conventional methods.

While you have a traditional gallery exhibition history, you are most well-known for your public art and your large-scale mural works. What does public art mean to you? What's the allure of working off the canvas, presenting outside the gallery?

Public art, to me, is a dynamic conversation woven into the urban landscape or an environment often seen as mundane. It also holds a profound significance that I feel transcends the boundaries of traditional gallery spaces, giving the environment an opportunity to infuse colour, narrative and emotion into its fabric.

There is a unique energy that comes with working at heights in the public realm. The physicality, the challenges and the sheer size of the canvas allow me to immerse myself in the creative process and focus on my flow state, and the Pavlovian conditioning I practice on every wall.

Your unconventional journey from graffiti to street art and now public art is notable. Many artists find these paths more accessible than a formal painting education. Were other fine artists who began in graffiti influential in your choice of this alternative route?

Absolutely. My artistic journey has been a fascinating evolution from graffiti through street art to my current focus on public art. The untraditional route I took allowed me to embrace a more accessible entry point into fine art, bypassing the formal constraints of a traditional painting education. My early influences were Etam Cru (Poland) and ARYZ (Spain).

How do the growing efforts to address gender bias in the art industry, as seen in initiatives like *Know My Name*, translate to graffiti culture? What challenges did you face entering the art industry, and how has your experience evolved as a figurative muralist over the years?

As a feminist who also greatly admires men, I acknowledge the historical challenges women face in expressing themselves through the arts. I've certainly experienced inequalities within graffiti

culture and high-risk work sites. While obtaining a 50-metre-high elevated work platform card, I encountered discriminatory behaviour from a trainer clinging to outdated gender beliefs. Despite his hostility, I took action, enlisting a formidable female lawyer. The subsequent legal battle marked a turning point, challenging gender norms and securing my right to operate machinery. This experience underscores the ongoing struggle for equality in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Can you share how your early experiences in graffiti and street art influenced your current style as a realist figurative painter, and your approach to being a fine artist?

One of my early experiences was art assisting Etam Cru (Poland), who I mentioned earlier, while they were in Australia at a festival. The duo was among the first to pursue art school from a graffiti background, which somewhat led the way to really large-scale work. They were my first influence.

Your murals are renowned for their scale and impact. How does the process of creating large-scale public art differ from working on smaller gallery-based pieces, and how does the public space influence your creative choices?

The expansive scale of a mural necessitates a distinct physical involvement and heightened endurance. This physical engagement injects vibrant energy and dynamism into the artwork, in contrast to the more intimate and serene atmosphere of my studio work.



What's exciting to you currently in art?

I'm overflowing with enthusiasm for my studio practice. With a recent spinal injury momentarily diverting me from the mural scene as I await surgery, I've redirected my creative force into crafting my solo show scheduled for March 2024. The exhibition, part of the Benalla Street Art Festival, curated, by Eddie Zammit, goes beyond the conventional solo display – it's a two-day, multi-disciplinary culinary experience interwoven with my paintings.

Offering a glimpse into the show's inspiration, I've recently delved into the enchanting realm of M. F. K. Fisher and her profound food writing. Her philosophy and poetic expressions have profoundly influenced my creative sensibilities, shaping a new chapter in my artistic journey.

I'm also collaborating with The Kremer Collection and Museum in the Netherlands, a thrilling opportunity to contribute to a project associated with a remarkable 17th-century Dutch Master

collection. This honour seamlessly aligns with the enduring influence of Dutch and Flemish Masters evident in my work. **V**

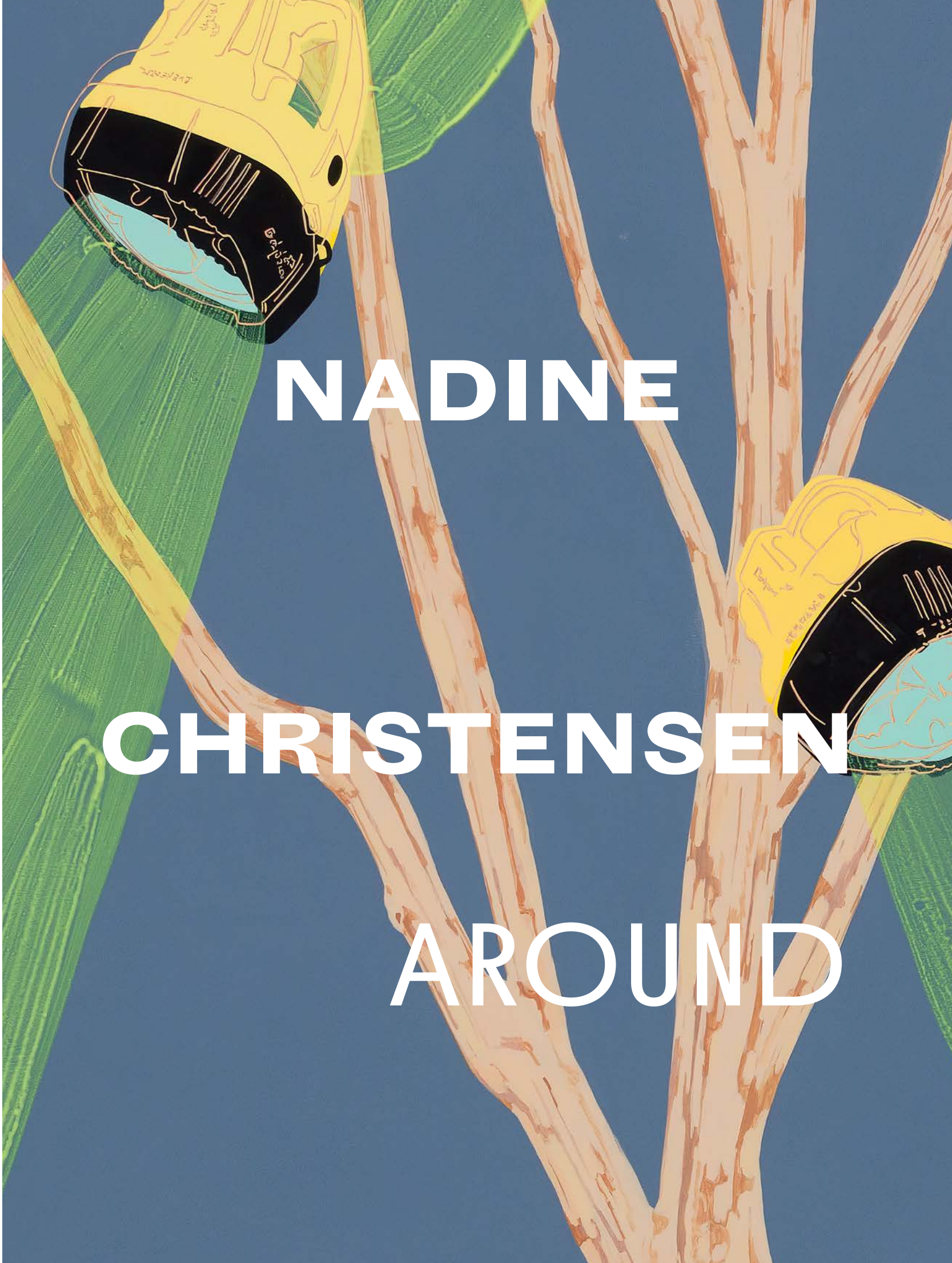
Lisa King is showing as part of the Benalla Street Art Festival, curated by Eddie Zammit, from March 21 to 28, 2024.

The exhibition and dining experience is on for two nights only, Friday March 22 and Saturday March 23, 2024. The show is a takeover of the Benalla Town Hall and a pop-up exclusively for the Benalla Art Gallery, presented by the Benalla Rural City Council. Tickets are strictly limited and can be purchased from benallastreetartfestival.com.au

Top to bottom
LISA KING
While she sleeps
(work in progress)
acrylic and aerosol
Melbourne, Victoria
2500 x 500 cm
Photo: Shannyn Higgins

LISA KING
Alex & Carmilita, 2019
acrylic and aerosol
on concrete wall
Whangārei, New Zealand
1100 x 900 cm

All images courtesy
the artist



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Nadine Christensen, *Up all night* (detail) 2023, courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne. Photograph: Christian Capurro



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