

## INTRODUCTION

Shane Guffogg is a Los Angeles-based American artist that has exhibited his work internationally for over 30 years.

The art of Shane Guffogg consists of oil painting, pastel on paper, mixed media on paper, Murano glass, and marble sculpture. Regardless of the medium, his work looks through the lens of humanity at past and present civilizations, as well as viewing time as a thread that connects all people. Guffogg's work is a visual language that is informed by the spiritualism of abstraction and the realism of the old masters. These two ideas are usually seen as separate but Guffogg fuses them seamlessly into works that transcend and become testaments to thoughts that inform us of who we are in the 21st century.

Shane Guffogg is a Cal Arts graduate and interned in New York City with the artist, Gary Stephan, for a semester in 1985. From 1989 through 1996, Guffogg worked as a studio assistant for Ed Ruscha, the American Pop artist. In 1992, Guffogg moved his studio from Venice Beach to Hollywood, occupying the studio spaces that Ruscha worked in for 25 years starting in 1963. The building in Hollywood was originally a shopping mall built in the 1920s, with storefronts facing out into a courtyard. Guffogg began recruiting other artists to move into the vacant storefronts, creating an artist's collective in the early 90s. This would set the groundwork for Guffogg to create Pharmaka gallery, in 2004. Pharmaka, an ancient Greek word meaning a poison or remedy, and also, artist's colors, was a non-profit that explored and engaged in the dialogue of the relevance of painting in the 21st century. During the 5-year run, Guffogg curated dozens of exhibitions, often finding young artists and presenting their work to the public for the first time. Guffogg also began a publishing venture called Pharmaka Press, publishing catalogs of many of the exhibitions, including a group show of homeless people in downtown LA. These people were given a platform to show

their work and for the public to see and hear their stories. Guffogg was also elected to serve two- 2-year terms on the Downtown Neighborhood Council, where he chaired the Arts and Education committee. This role gave him the opportunity to get public funds and create the LA Downtown Art walk, which was a major force in the economic recovery of downtown. The Art walk grew from a few dozen people to 30,000 in a matter of three years, bringing new life to the once boarded-up buildings.

The conversations that were started at Pharmaka about art via artist's talks were the seeds for the next step of bringing the voices of artists to the public. Thus began a TV show called, The art of Art. The premise is that Guffogg, as the host, visits artists in their studio to discuss their creative process, what inspires them, and who they are. This series, of which 12 episodes have been filmed and are currently being edited by the Production company, Heironyvison.com, has the potential to reach a global audience. This fits perfectly into the philosophy of Guffogg, which is that art is a global language that can transcend the ideologies and politics of the day, and delve into the more fundamental questions of who we are, as a human race, and what connects and defines us.

There have been a handful of short documentaries and currently a full-length documentary in the making, that explore his art, philosophy, and studio practice. Guffogg has maintained a studio in Hollywood California for over 30 years, and for the past 12 years has also maintained a studio at his ranch in Central California. Over the past two years (the pandemic years) Guffogg spent most of that time at his ranch, painting and planting an orchard that now consists of over 100 varieties of fruit trees and also a vineyard. This past fall was the first pressing of olive oil from his orchard. For him, this is all about the balance of nature, physical labor, and his studio practice. He doesn't have studio assistants, preferring to stretch and prime his own canvases, stating that, "It is the beginning of seeing the pictorial space."

He prefers solitude while working, having people around while painting makes it nearly impossible to be present and in the moment.

Guffogg experiences painting as a form of meditation, often spending a full 8 hours each day in his studio. His daily studio practice begins with music, usually classical Indian or Western, that sets the tempo for what is to happen. Guffogg started as a figurative painter, learning the glazing techniques of the old masters. After his time at Cal Arts, his ideas shifted away from figurative work to abstraction, though he doesn't see his work as abstract. Instead, he views his work as a dialogue between his subconscious and consciousness, with the art being the visual documentation of the conversation.

The ribbonesque movements that first began to appear in the late 90s was a means of going back in time, using the visual concept of the Renaissance window to bridge the ideas of realism and abstraction, and form a new visual language. Over time, these ribbonesque movements began to take the shape of patterns, mirroring themselves, which created a third image by the shapes that appeared within. These patterns became his subject in 2001 starting with the Cannac series. With this body of work, Guffogg would make large gestural brush strokes on the canvases, each stroke representing and serving as an extension of his own physicality. Then, he would sit and draw what he had just painted, consciously seeing this subconscious moment of creation. This drawing would become the template to create a series of patterns that were the micro of the macro, or as he likes to say, the relationship between his mind and body. The Cannac series was followed by the Avalon series, in which Guffogg imagined the four seasons on the mythical island of Avalon, where legend had it, is where King Arthur went to heal after battle. Regardless of the myth, the series became a way to see the subconscious and conscious mind working in unison. The patterns that were created were based on an unplanned moment of simply being present in front of a canvas and making

sweeping gestural brushstrokes, evoking the art of some of the abstract expressionists. With the addition of a layer of patterns that floats across the surface, functioning as a form of writing, the paintings take on an Eastern dynamic, that in some ways bridges the visual art of the east and west. The final painting of this series was *Ocean*, which now hangs at the UAE Embassy in Washington DC.

Next was a series that was inspired by the poem of TS Eliot titled, *Four Quartets*. In this body of work, which is ongoing, the words become the starting point for each painting. As Guffogg often states, he hears colors and sees sound. The abstract ideas of time and space that TS Eliot explores, make for a perfect gateway into ideas of Eastern philosophy and Western science. The paintings are again a documentation of the artist's hand, moving across the canvas, eventually creating order out of chaos through an inherent balance of color and form.

Guffogg's years in Hollywood introduced him to collectors that are best known in the entertainment business, with household names such as Meg Ryan, Dustin Hoffman, Ed Harris, and many others who have a Guffogg hanging in their home.

The deep-rooted connection Guffogg has with the painters of the Renaissance and Baroque periods of Europe, the calligraphy of China and the Middle East, and the ideas of spiritualism of the American Abstract Expressionist, has created a 35-year body of work that is embraced as much in the middle east and Eastern Europe as it is with Europe and North and South America. This fusion of ideas and history has led to major museum exhibitions in Italy, Russia, Azerbaijan, and group museum exhibitions throughout Europe and the United States, with works in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum and the Jumex Foundation in Mexico City, to name a few. These topics are discussed and archived in a series of podcasts and essays that are published through the studio as Newsletters.

Guffogg is currently in discussion with Italian Curators to create a painting that will be a visual conversation with Caravaggio's *The Seven Acts of Mercy*, which is over 12 feet tall and 8 feet wide. This painting will delve into what Guffogg wrote about for an LA- based art and culture magazine (where he is now a regular contributor), that looks at Caravaggio's use of chiaroscuro and how that melds into the ideology of a hidden but present world.

Shane Guffogg is not a painter that follows trends. He is a painter who looks at life, art, science, and cultures as an extension of all people of all races. He doesn't think of himself as a LA or California artist, or even an American artist. He sees himself as an artist whose job is to take journeys within and bring back his findings, presenting them to the world through art. In this way, Shane Guffogg is a shaman.