

Meet an Artist Monday: Alexandra Grant

SHANA NYS DAMBROT | MAY 27, 2019 | 9:00AM



Alexandra Grant by Manfredi Gioacchini

Alexandra Grant is a visual artist with an interdisciplinary love of language, specifically the written word. Across paintings, sculpture, photography, installations, and publishing, she evinces a painter's love of text and an author's love of images. Known to many for her 2008 Love House project and its subsequent image, object, and design manifestations, and currently enjoying acclaim for lauded titles by a range of artists and writers released on her X Artists' Books imprint (a partnership with Keanu Reeves), Grant shows a new series of large-scale, intensely textured and prismatically colored mixed media paintings based on the story of Antigone at Lowell Ryan Projects in West Adams on June 1st.

L.A. WEEKLY: When did you first know you were an artist?

ALEXANDRA GRANT: “Artist” is the best word for all the things that I love to do and have been doing pretty consistently since I was a child: reading, staring into space, daydreaming, inventing symphonic-scale projects whether a chemistry experiment or growing seeds into plants, finding meaning in the patterns of bathroom tiles and cracks in the ceiling, believing in the goodness of people and love, drawing while listening to music, experiencing language as images and colors, and desiring to be solitary while doing most of the above.

What is your short answer to people who ask what your work is about?

My work explores my passion for literature and poetry, giving shape to written words based on formal elements such as repetition, rhythm, and alliteration.

What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?

I can't imagine I'd be doing anything differently! My mother found a school project from when I was 7 or 8 years old – the assignment was to write a newspaper article and I created a whole newspaper, designing the masthead and even assigning my best friend to write some of the articles. We drew “photographs” and photocopied the whole thing on newsprint. Every other kid in class handed in a piece of lined paper and we had created a whole newspaper. It seems like I've always been this way: very creative and interpreting instructions my own way!



Alexandra Grant, *She Said To Creon (8)*, 2018 (detail)

Courtesy of Lowell Ryan Projects

Did you go to art school? Why/Why not?

I went to college to study mathematics – I was interested in patterns, discrete mathematics, and problems of efficiency. I studied at a small, liberal arts college founded by Quakers – so I felt that I needed a professional education in the arts to understand how to have a career. I loved my graduate program, at the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, because I was allowed to hire faculty mentors

from any field, from painting to playwriting. It allowed me to pursue my own curiosity and was the place where I learned to trust my instincts about my work.

Why do you live and work in L.A., and not elsewhere?

I grew up in part in Mexico City, Washington, DC, and Paris, moving between languages and cultures. Los Angeles felt like home from the moment I first arrived in 1995, especially the diversity of people, idioms, foods, and plants (like jacaranda and bougainvillea). There's an incredible work ethic here – many people are creative and entrepreneurial. Having friends who are working hard practicing their crafts – whether it's set design, publishing, or acting — is very inspiring.



Alexandra Grant, *She Said To Creon (5)*, 2018 (detail)
Courtesy of Lowell Ryan Projects

When was your first show?

My first show was in 2004 at a gallery in Santa Monica called “16:1”. I was working in sculpture wire filigree, drawing, and painting, based on the idea of Homecoming, from the Odyssey and C.P. Cavafy’s wonderful poem, Ithaka: “As you set out for Ithaka hope your road is a long one, full of adventure, full of discovery.” So far so good!

When is/was your current/most recent/next show?

"Born to Love" based on the Greek myth of Antigone opens June 1, at Lowell Ryan Projects.

What artist living or dead would you most like to show with?

I just saw the overwhelming and beautiful show by Hilma Af Klint at the Guggenheim. I'd like to have a conversation about how her ideas came to her, as I understand mysticism was a big part of her inspiration and she channeled images and messages.

Website and social media handles, please!

Website: alexandragrant.com

Instagram: @alexandragrantstudio @grantalexandra



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