

KATERINA

Katerina is a young artist, painter, and jewelry designer, she graduated in Fine Arts at the University of Ioannina. She now works in her family's store, [AnKa Arts](#) shop, located in the castle of the city. The place, decorated with taste, presents a multitude of wonderful creations in various and beautiful styles.

Katerina loves life. She spreads good energy and kindness all around her. Although it is often complicated for artists to identify themselves as such, the expression of her art occurs in all circumstances. It was with curiosity that I met her the first time, in her workshop, discovering her universe; it was with joy that I met her every other time.



Who are you?

I do not think I am anything special. I am a 25-year-old woman trying to figure out my place in society to define myself.

I am a person who needs to live and experiment with different things. You know, there are many people of our age who feel like giving up on everything. For me, I try to pick the beautiful part of living.

You said you feel people of our age giving up, is it about the situation right now or in general?

I think we grew up during the [economic] crisis, so everything around us seems to be falling apart. Many of us feel like we do not have the chance to make a difference or to find their place.

And do you feel like that?

Not really. I can see it, but I always try to look at the bright side. I try to find a way to see the wonderful things, the beauty of the world.

There are many people - and this is a conversation I had with my sister the other day – wondering what is the point of giving birth to a child if the world is like this. To me, I think of life as a gift. If you step back and see the world, it is beautiful, and it is true that if you get closer and closer and become part of the society that men have created, maybe it can be bad. But we all deserve to fight for something better, and even if it will not help, we can try.

What do you do in life?

I think creation is a big part of my life, and I really want to keep doing this. I really like to experiment, to try new things all the time. I like to live, to try everything. If I could live forever, I would (laughs).

When I talk about what I do, I may be referring to our store [[AnKa Arts](#)] because it is a job, but it is something that includes creation, so it is good for me. I worked in many cafeterias during my studies, it was bad. But with this shop it is different because I can do whatever I want in my creative process. I can also practice painting at the same time with the support of our shop.

What does it mean for you to create? Do you think your inspiration comes from your experiences?

I never thought about that, but I think so. It must be true because I like to challenge myself. If I see something that I like, the next day I try to create something similar or related to what inspired me. So yes, I think that what happens during our lives influences our creations, our thoughts, everything.

Creating my last project in school for my graduation, I was feeling like I had boundaries. My creation had to be something new, that no one had ever seen before. Now that I am out of school, I feel freer, able to express myself the way I want to about anything I think about.

Even working with my parents at the shop, I have always felt free, in every way, and it is still my feeling when I am with them. We have a good relationship, we understand each other, and I think that is why I feel good working with them.

Do you think what you do has an impact on the empowerment of women?

Well, I think everyone could help with that, that every woman could help. I hoped that my final project was something that maybe could help as well. My intention in creating this project was to spread the feeling I had about sexism and patriarchy.

Can you explain your project and what was the idea?

I was in my fifth year of university, and I had to come up with an idea for my final project. So, I kept painting

to have inspiration. I took a picture of myself and started to sketch on a 2-meter canvas. At that time, I was painting in my room because back then we did not have this workshop. When I finished the sketch in my room and went to sleep, I was thinking about adding colors the next day. When I woke up, I felt like magic was happening. I was still sleepy, the sunlight was falling on the sketch, and the drawing felt good just the way it was. I did not want to put color on it anymore, in the sense that it would destroy the feeling I had at that moment. When I saw this that morning, it was like seeing myself empowered; I felt my femininity, my power. It was a figure looking at me and telling me "I can do this, I don't care". And that made me realize that I wanted to express this feeling on several canvases and to put them all in one place just for the audience to feel that.

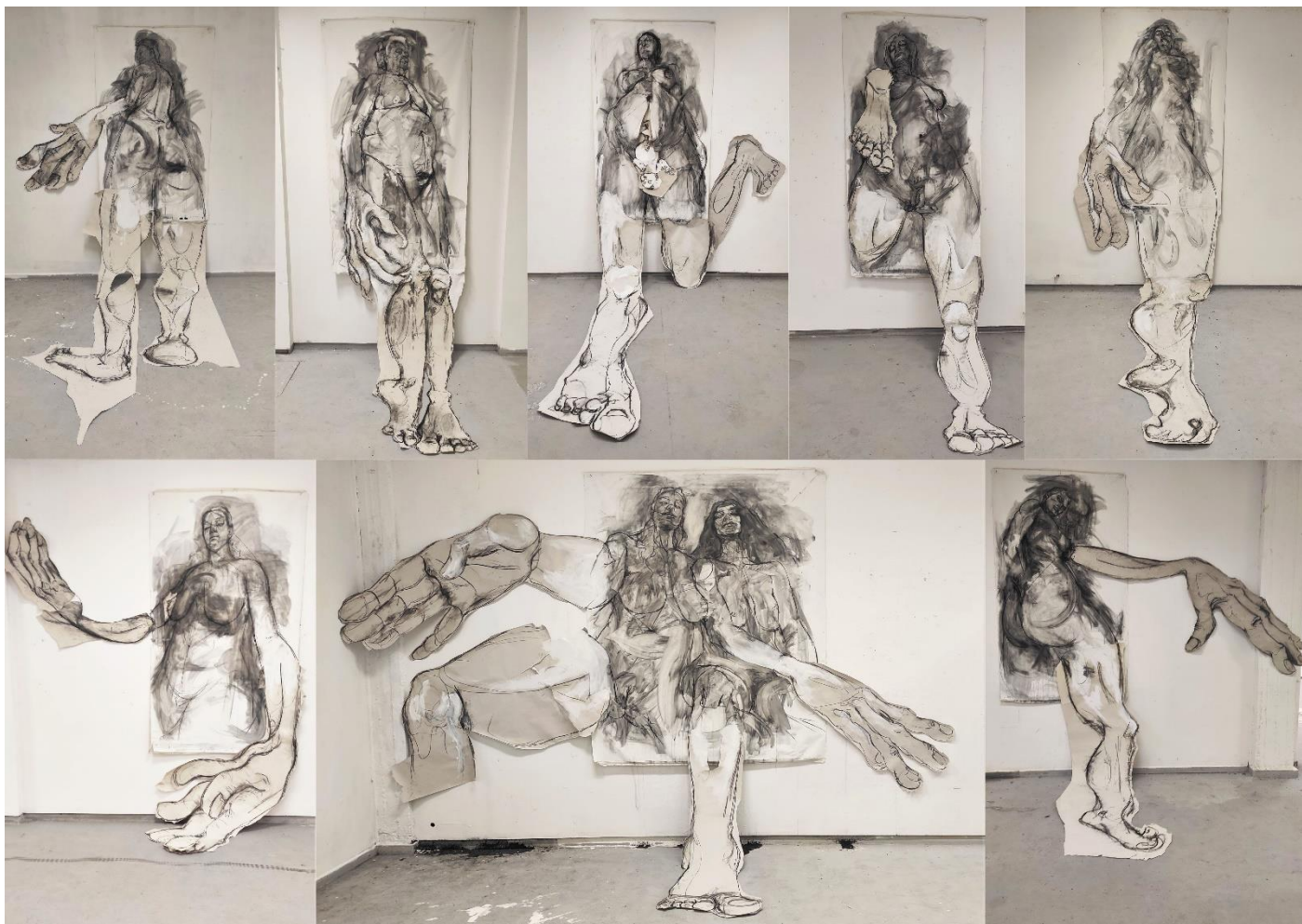
Later, I created six figures with pictures of friends, my grandmother, a pregnant friend who was very empowering for me. I went with this work to my teacher to have him look at it, and he told me again about that boundary, that the project needed something more, something different. I had to propose something new to the art society.

Then, there was the lockdown (the first one), and I had no place to work. We rented this place and placed the canvases here, hanging them on the wall. I printed the canvases in A4 to experiment and figure out what to do, creating the arms and legs using distortion.

The paintings are more realistic, they are based on the photos I took of my friends. But the legs and arms came from my mind. I think the idea just came to me, I did not think a lot about it, it just came.

Initially, I wanted to create these pieces on the walls and the floor. The arms and legs would be part of the room, not part of the canvases. But I could not do it, so I had to come up with an idea to create them on paper and to stick them to the canvases.

I like the expression of those legs. During the first quarantine, the first feeling we all had was that no one knew what was going on and creating these pieces was like expressing my doubts and my feelings about it.



What does this project mean for you about women's empowerment?

Well, you can see a piece of art from different perspectives, you can translate it with different opinions and perceptions. So, there is a way for a man to look at these paintings and their expression and feel just the same way we feel when they look at us like that, like we do not matter, and we do not have the right to do what we want and they are above us.

During the exhibition, the paintings were placed so that 8 women surrounded the space and looked down on the audience. They were telling us "Take a look at me, I am not ashamed of my nudity and all those things you tell me to be afraid of and try to hide". It was something that made me feel glad to make some men feel that way so they could understand how we feel.

When I did the exhibition, all the women I painted and who were exhibited came to the event. All these women were there and, I do not know, maybe I saw what I wanted to see but, I felt all of them proud and free.

As for you, what does it mean to be a woman?

I do not know, I never tried to be a woman, I was born that way. It is not an achievement; it is who I am.

I think I feel proud of my parents because they never put me in a place because of my gender. They treated me as an equal member of society and taught me to fight for my rights. They raised me as a child, a person, a human.

I am lucky to have them, because I know that not all girls have this chance, and that many of them are oppressed from the day they are born. There are still many people now, in 2021, who cannot feel free to express themselves. This must stop. And I think it will. I think so because if we compare the situation with our grandmothers when they were our age, things have changed a lot.

Tell me about a woman who inspires you?

There are many women I have met in my life that I have been inspired by. There are little things that make me feel that beauty of life I told you about. For example, my grandmother, and what she went through. Or you, or anybody. I am inspired by the little things that

maybe we cannot define but that matter. And that change I was talking about before will come from those little things.

Yes, we all have inspiration from each other.

But I keep trying to be and act like me, not like they want me to be. I think I am trying, and I never stopped trying. This is our society; we were born being told how we were supposed to be, and there is no way that it does not bother me. I try to fight that because we have to be ourselves.

You know, I heard something the other day. They asked someone for their opinion about artists. If there is something new about the evolution of the art. That is why my teacher asked me to create something new.

To this question, the answer was “no, it is flat”, “there is nothing new”. And that is something that bothers me.

I heard something several years ago, that art will change things. Art will remind us of who we are and make the revolution. And I am just trying to think how art could do this?

When I heard that art was flat, I thought, “Does my art really have an impact on anything?”. But you know, there are too many artists, too many exhibitions, too many experiments... too many. We do not have time to focus on all that. I just wonder what could be that big thing that would have a real impact on our society.

Do you want to have an impact on society?

Of course. Who would not? ●



To see Katerina's work:

- www.instagram.com/katerina_nikopoulou
- www.anka-arts.business.site
- www.etsy.com/shop/AnKaArtsJewelry