November 28, 2016

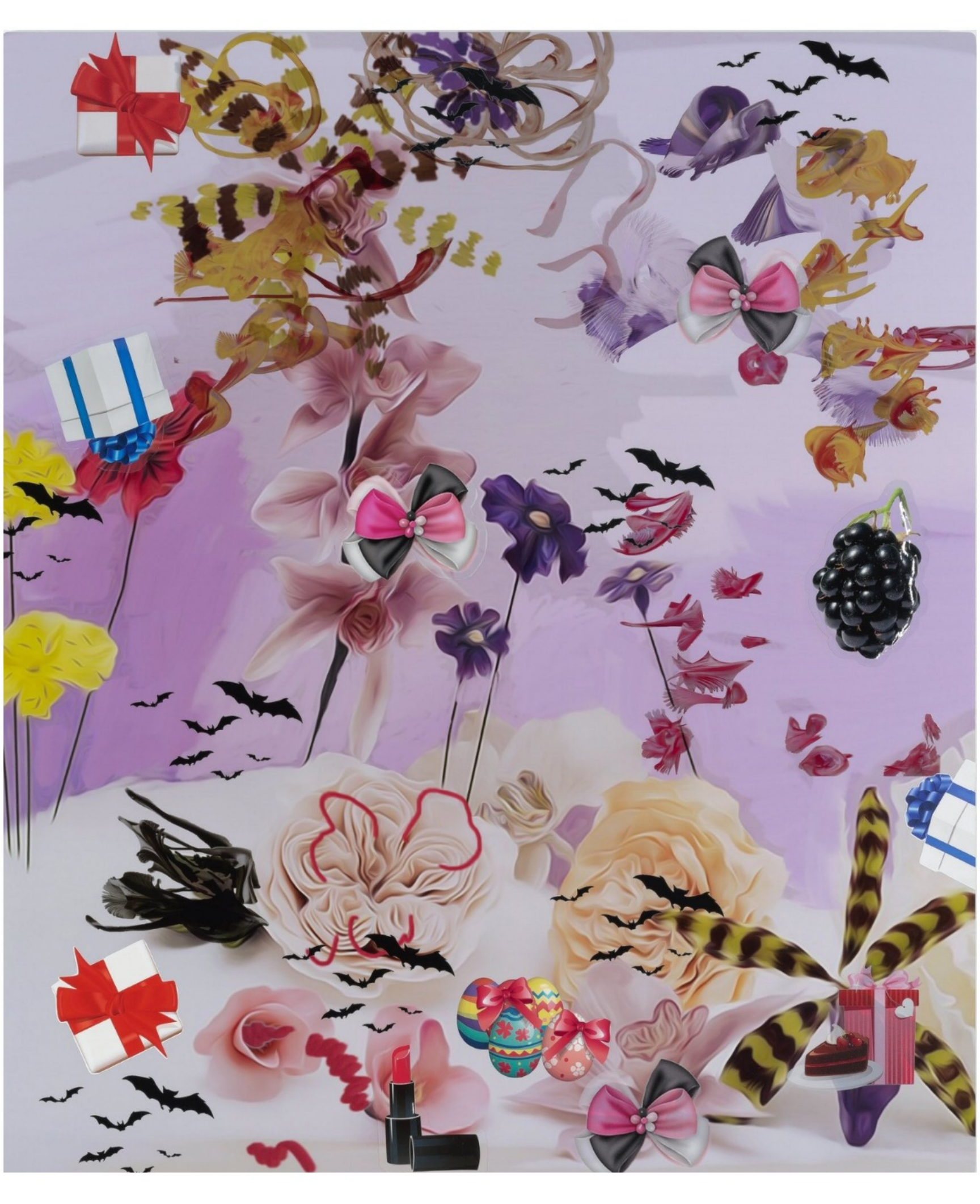
An Interview with Internet Artist Petra Cortright in Los Angeles, California

Portrait courtesy of Petra Cortright's studio.

LA-based internet artist Petra Cortright and I were introduced by the Swedish gallerist Carl Kostyal during her recent solo exhibition *Orange Blossom Princess Fucking Buttercup* at his London space. Standing before her digital paintings, I felt as if I had discovered a new medium as I experienced the impact of seeing her evocative work in the flesh. In fact, I was blown away by her kaleidoscopic paintings made using digital software to blend figurative and abstract elements. Previously, I had focused on her self-portrait videos, which are made using the effect tools on a webcam, before being uploaded to YouTube. In time, these had also led me to her wildly popular Instagram feed @petcortright, which is the perfect balance of artistic innovation, intimate portraits from her everyday life as well as the blissfully mundane.

In Santa Barbara, Petra grew up in an artistic family with a sculptor/printmaker father and a mother who painted. In terms of her education, Petra studied Fine Art at Parsons School of Design, New York as well as the California College of the Arts, San Francisco. From the early days, the internet artist always had a playful relationship with computers as she worked within an online community of other artists, googling images, making videos with her webcam and painting on Photoshop. As described by Artsy online, "Petra uses a range of mediums, both digital and analog, to explore the aesthetics and performative cultures of online consumption." Her work has also been met with critical acclaim in publications such as The Wall Street Journal, W Magazine, Artforum and The NY Times Style Magazine.

Over the past few years, Petra has exhibited worldwide from Mexico to Switzerland, Germany and Argentina. Notable exhibitions include *Electronic Superhighway* at Whitechapel Gallery in London, *Brushes* at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, *The Metabolic Age* at MALBA in Buenos Aires and *Bridal Shower* at Frieze Art Fair in London, which was also broadcast on Channel 4. Ever the polymath, Petra has also had successful collaborations within the fashion industry, making videos with the British designer Stella McCartney that play with the patterns of her designs as Petra models them. Follow her Instagram @petcortright to keep up to date with her adventures.



Let's go+kick_rom, 2015 (digital painting)

Was there a pivotal moment when you decided to be an artist?

no its just always been an affliction that i've suffered from my whole life

Can you tell us about the process of making your artwork?

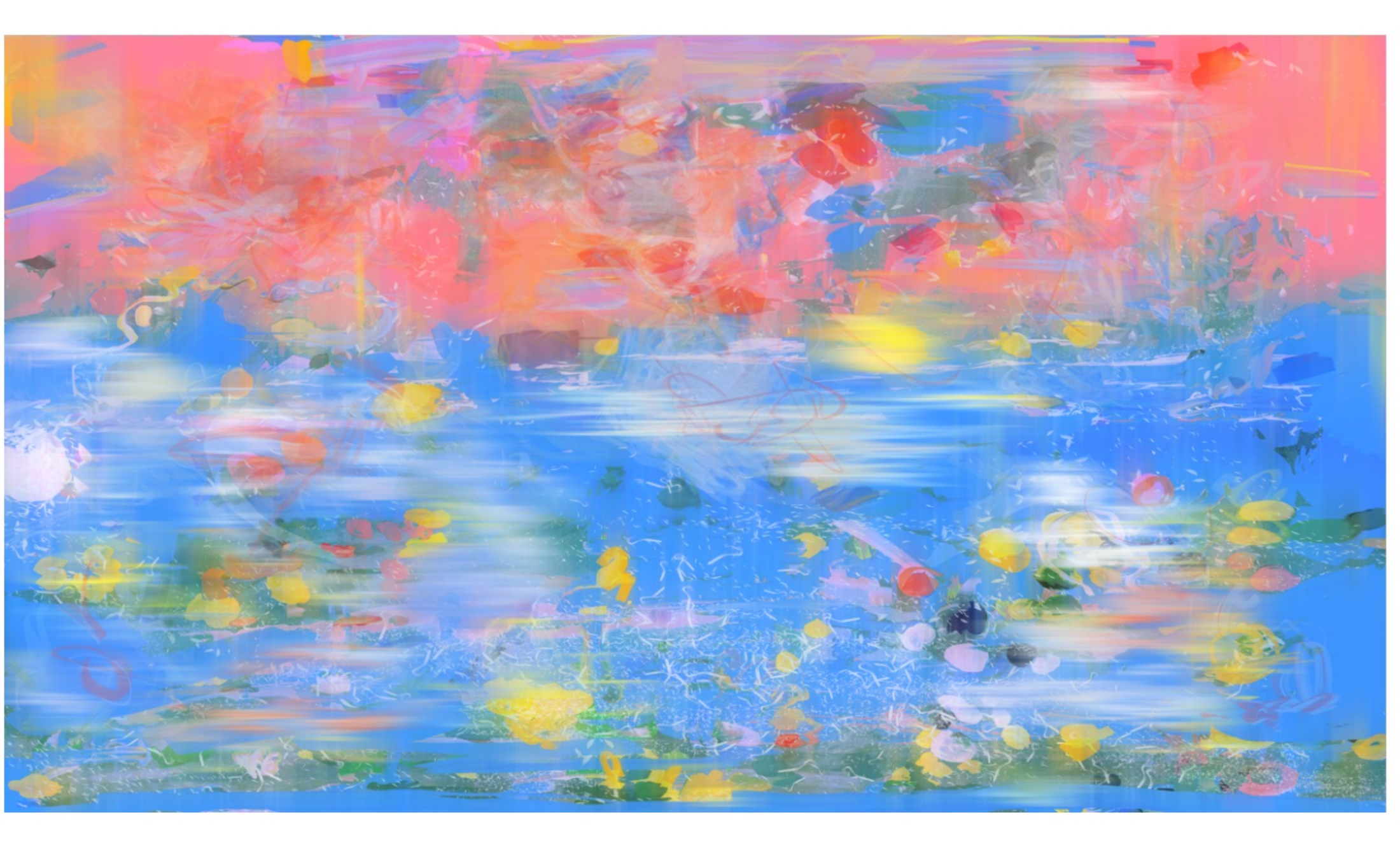
i troll the internet for scraps to use, and then i use some of those scraps, change some scraps around, break up some of the scraps, put some scraps back together, add my own scraps and scratches, do this all of this very quickly -- and then post it. sometimes i print it out later, sometimes i don't.

What is your favourite art gallery in Los Angeles and why?

and/or gallery just re-opened in pasadena after years of hiatus. originally it was in dallas, tx. i've always had a huge respect for paul slocum and the community of artists that he has supported, we have all been a tight knit group of nerds for years now. i am thrilled to be working with brian butler of 1301PE now, brian and the gallery are both so cool and for lack of a smarter word so chill and we just get on so well. 1301PE is also in an area that feels so 'LA art' to me and i just love the way that gallery is set up, i always love an upstairs/downstairs situation like that. also maybe because its by LACMA but i just have always deeply loved that area. it just seems so so so classic LA. palm tree emoji.

What piece of your artwork would you like to be remembered for?

i might be remembered for my first webcam video "VVEBCAM" or was it spelled VVEBKAM... who fucking knows… l... um i guess that seems liek a good one to be 'membered for... i realize i could have just stopped making work in 2007 that might of been the pinnacle. Oops.



_6_v211132013_still3, 2015 (digital painting video)

How has social media helped you to develop as an artist?

its been a good place to dump all my shit up onto for years now... was easy + convenient. sort of hate it now, become such a garbage fire, internets not as cool anymore, wahwah wah…

Do you like to make or receive studio visits?

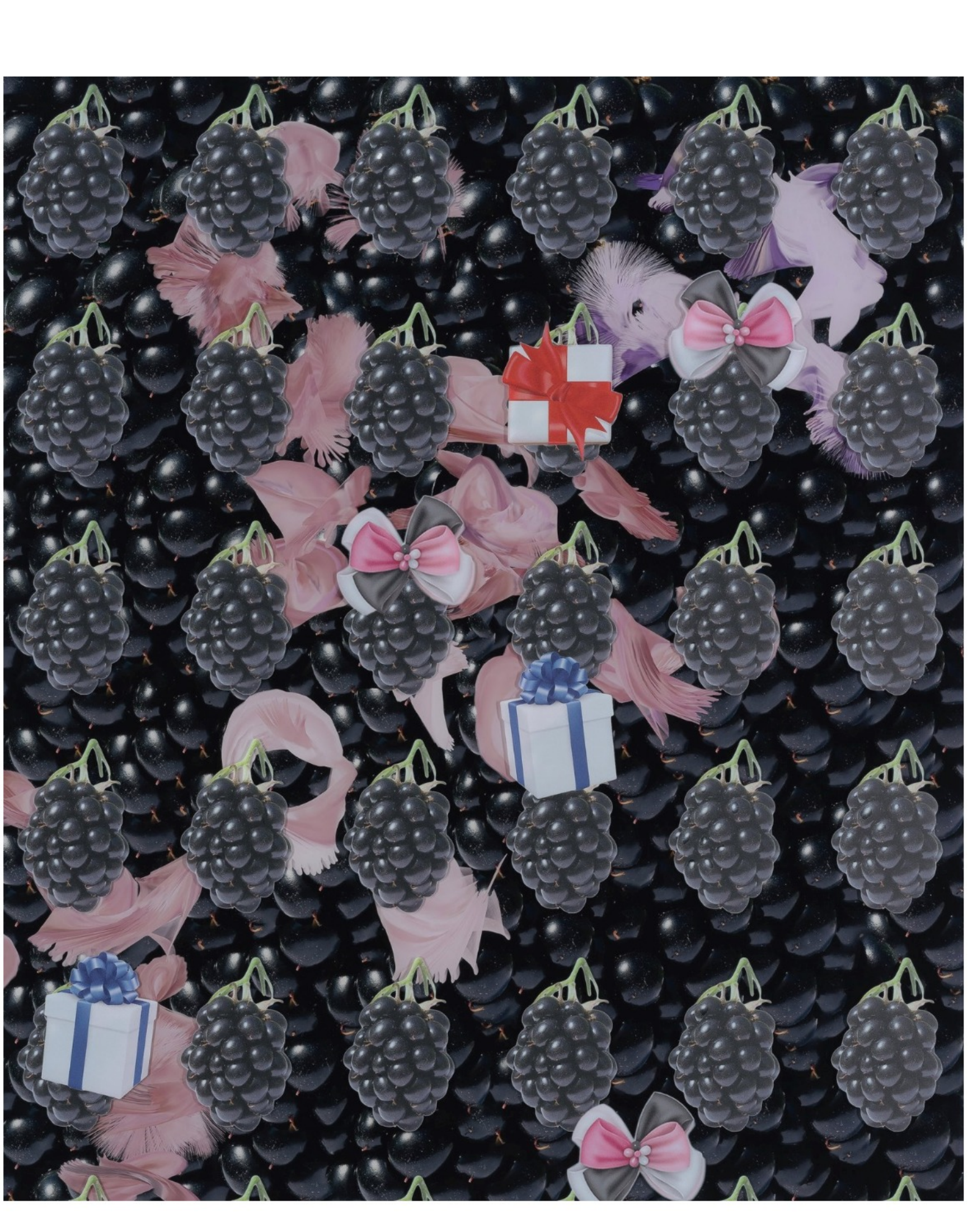
can i say neither? i dont like talking about work, i like making it. everyone in the art world could benefit from a little less talking and a little more making imo

If you could work within a past art movement, which would it be?

whichever one would have allowed to me to have a cool flower garden and i could sit outside and paint and probably wear a cute hat. i dont think video was around prolly but would have loved to make vids in the garden as well.

How would you define beauty in 140 characters or less?

a noble pursuit + thing to try to work towards and contribute to the world



Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 2015

What visual references do you draw upon in your work?

lots of nature, pinterest images (domestic images), classy kitchens, etc.

What is your greatest indulgence in life?

i just bought some baby clothes for my friend, and the clothes were so cool and im worried i might have a future issue with this. designer baby clothes. really unnecessary because the kid grows out of them in like, a day. but they are so good. it's going to be a real problem i can already tell.

Can you offer some insight into the cultural scene of Los Angeles?

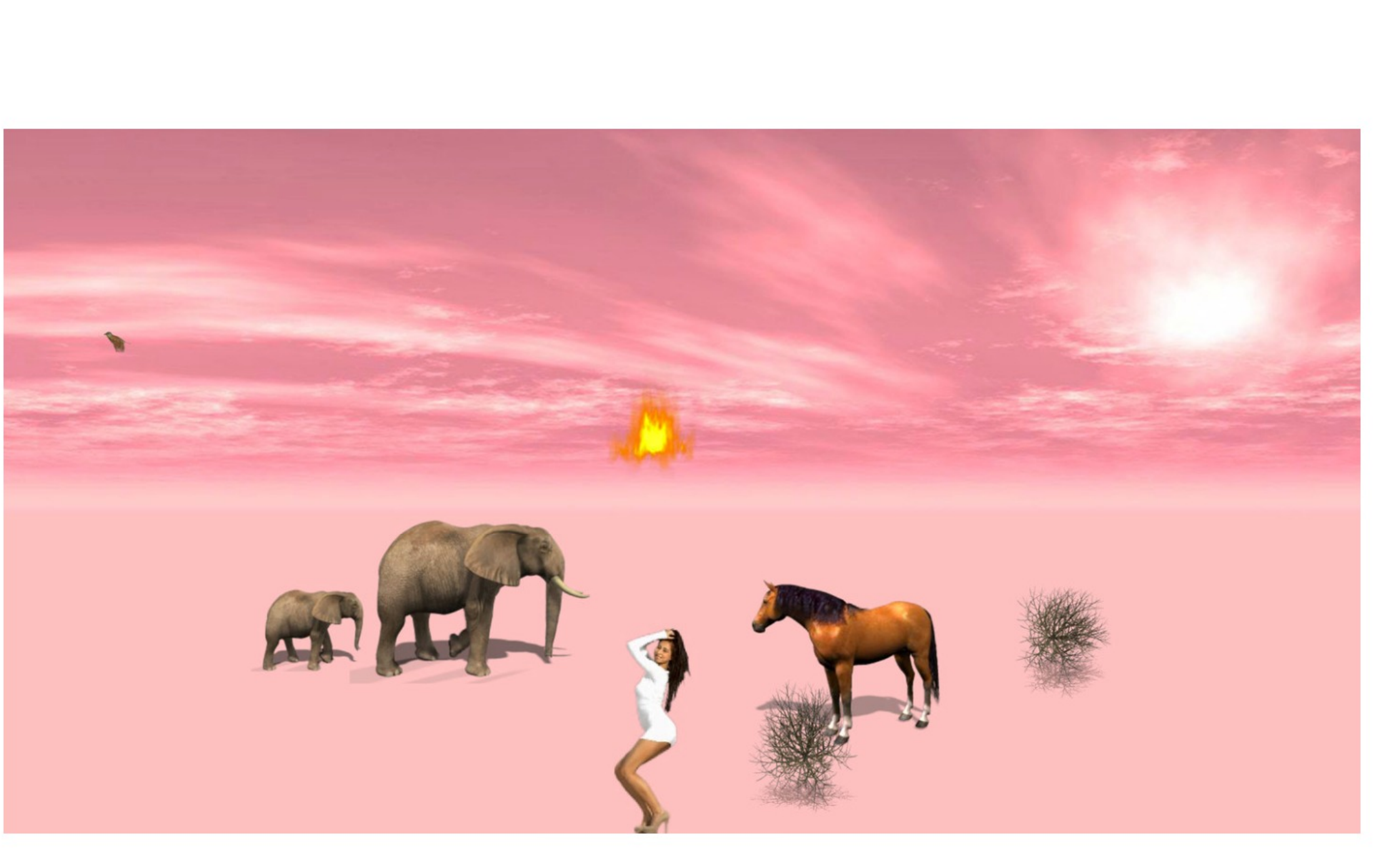
there are so many different cultural scenes in los angeles, i dont even know where to begin. its a sprawling city which is always the most interesting kind of city to me. i cant answer this question accurately i really cant speak to all the cultural scenes that are making LA "LA" without sounding like a total prick idiot so im gonna skip this

Which artist of the past would you most like to meet?

martha stewart

Why have you chosen to make work that interacts with the digital world?

the internet was my lifeline when i was younger and it provided me an alternate community of artists for a very long time. before i knew anything about the "art world" i wanted to gain respect of the other artists that i would meet online in these communities that were formed, and i wanted to share my work with them mostly. the fact that it started to reach outside of those communities now has been great, first and foremost i always make work for myself but often i feel like im still thinking about making/performing for a small core group of nerds that i still want the respect of, and maybe always will.



What do you wish every child were taught?

um better coping skills for life lol

Have you ever questioned your career entirely?

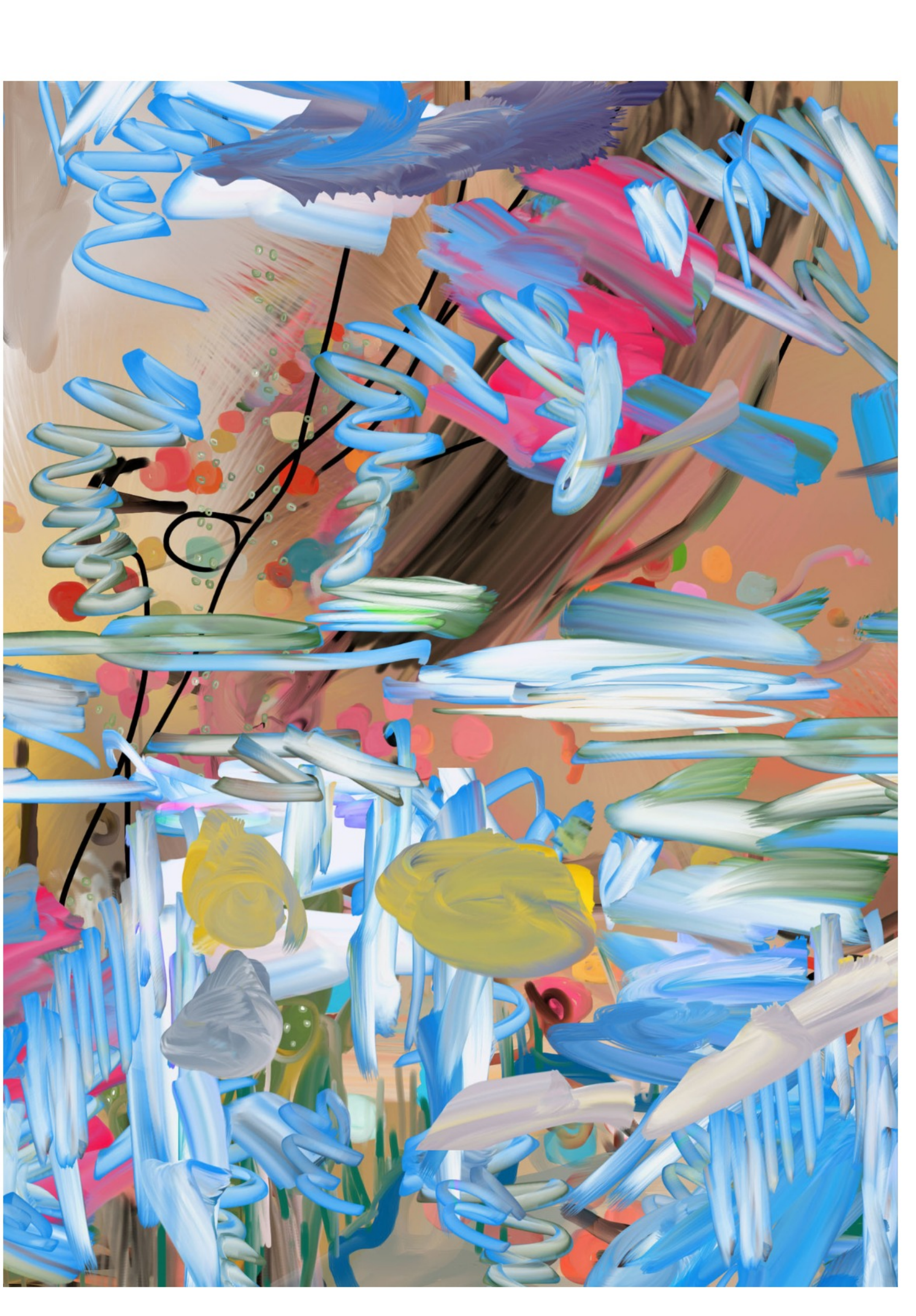
i questioned my soccer career entirely and gave that up and decided not to go to college for that. making art is just this innate thing that has always been with me, i cant really question it and i know it will not go away, so its not a matter of even being able to question it

What is your experience of being a female artist within the art world? Is it a positive or negative one?

same shit as being a female in the World

Who would you most like to collaborate with and why?

im already collaborating with a dream collaborator and visionary Stella McCartney.



Do you have a favourite photograph or painting, which inspires you?

im more inspired by watching soccer games, which i watch quite a lot of, or watching like a really beautiful snowboarding film (the art of flight is my favorite and it always makes me cry because its such intense athletic achievement paired with crippling natural beauty) i dont normally find looking at art inspires me to make art, its like when you put two magnets together of their like poles, they repel, but the opposite attract. i just get so much more inspiration from things that have nothing to do with art (yet everything to do with art ohhhh shittt)

What is your daily routine when working?

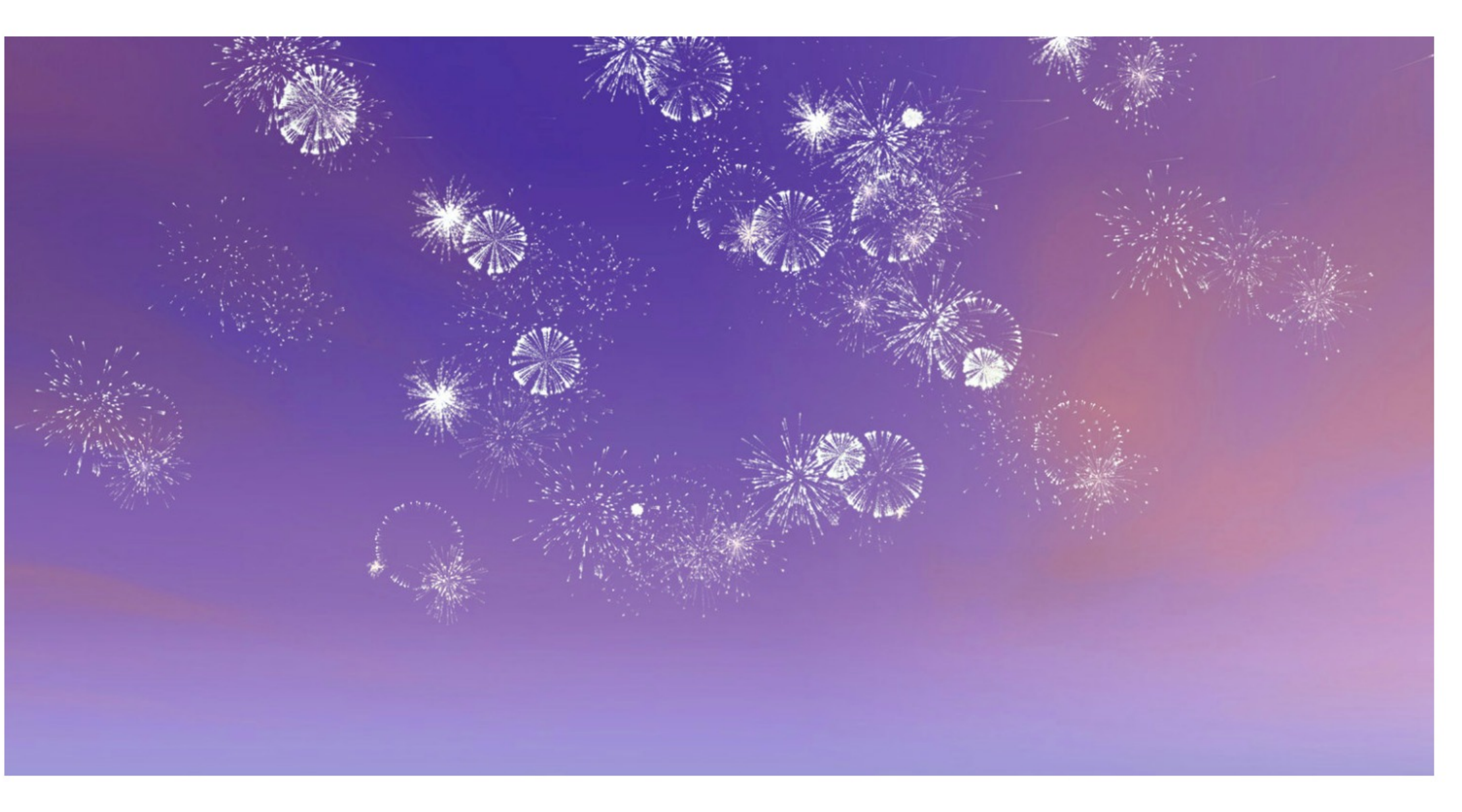
i don't work everyday, and i don't work that "hard" but i am a prolific worker, and i like to work fast, dumb and efficient. i work quickly, make decisions on work very quickly and know what i like very quickly, i think this just pains people to hear because there is this bullshit idea of artists really struggling and toiling over the work and thinking about it and talking about it for long periods of time. this fantasy is ridiculous to me. its so easy for me to make my work and i really love to do it. people just dont want to hear that though, somehow i think especially from a woman. believe me when i say this though, that my work comes very easily to me. very hateable thing to say apparently.

What advice would you give to a young artist?

make a lot of work and then make more work and then make some more work after that. Then after that make some more work.

Do you love what you do?

i actually sincerely do enjoy making my work. some of the other things that come along with being an artist in this day and age, not so much. i have to really "turn it on" for some things that i really despise doing. but the making, that will always be so pure for me and nobody can ever take that from me which always makes me feel very powerful to think about that.



Fireworks, 2015 (flash animation)

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