

An abstract painting featuring a complex composition of colors and textures. A large, dark, vertical shape on the left side is rendered in black and dark grey. The central area is dominated by bright yellow and orange tones, with some darker, charcoal-like strokes. To the right, there are large, textured areas of red and white, with some blue and green accents. The overall style is expressive and gestural, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of movement.

Andjana Pachkova

From Light to Dark

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8 March - 1 April 2023

Stanley Street gallery
SYDNEY

11am - 6pm Wednesday - Saturday
1/52-54 Stanley St, Darlinghurst NSW 2010
T: 02 93681142 E: art@stanleystreetgallery.com.au
www.stanleystreetgallery.com.au



FROM LIGHT TO DARK ANDJANA PACHKOVA

The tension between gesture and structure, narrative and abstract form forges the core argument of abstract expressionism. Between the physicality of the brush and the symbolic energy of colour, a painter asserts their language in a crowded field. For Andjana Pachkova, line, the challenge of scale and her own private mythology form the bedrock of work that is both primal and enigmatic. With a broad palette, you could say that she engages extremes. From the urban grit of charcoal, scarlet and black to the liquid skin of a sunlit ocean heaving under a pink sky, her paintings can whisper or roar.

Generated over three tumultuous years, this new collection of works are both intensely personal and resolutely bold. A public expression of private themes. As a painter her works come out of the lineage of strong Modernist forebears and her own original experience as an artist who surfs at dawn and then wrestles her forms, informed by a process that is both visceral and physical. Pachkova says that she paints from her shoulder and not the wrist and the experience of the sea literally inverts her compositions. The centrifugal quality of many of her paintings are informed directly by the inverted perception of being underwater. 'In the sea', she reflects, 'the horizon changes, and what is below becomes what is above'. The result are works suffused with energy, that break from the predominant landscape format that still governs Australian painting (in all genres). By radical contrast in these works, any way and many ways can be read as UP. And she admits that revolving her canvases as they are being painted is part of the process.

"My newest works reflect my love affair with the Ocean. We move from the Sunlight Zone where the light penetrates. The show is roughly divided into the oceanic layers or zones: it starts with the Sunlight, then it goes into the Twilight, then Midnight and then the depths of the Abyss and Trenches. I saw it in a simple way of the transition from light to dark but then on a metaphorical level of when you engage deeper into the unconscious. I see the oceanic trenches as a place of depth and replenishment. In the fathomless depths there is bioluminescence, even in the deepest darkness a source of light".

The metaphor of descent and ascent reflects in works that glitter with the opacity of pale colour or brood with the classic existential forms and inky palette of early European expressionism. But slicing through the idea of spontaneous gestures are forms that are this artist's alone. The symbol of the castle, over time, has come to dominate many of her strongest pieces. It is a form she attributes to disparate sources: from her childhood in the Ukraine, the longing for "what has never been—Die Sehnsucht," to the Jungian idea of the castle as the seat of the soul and consciousness. In some of her paintings it is a structure that looks as if it is tumbling. In others, such as "The Dark Castle" it pierces the sky with a knife-like urgency. This work, the artist concedes, openly alludes to modern warfare and occupation of Ukraine. Of so many Australian painters few are as close to this event in contemporary history as Pachkova. And her identity as a Russian born in Ukraine informs the themes of displacement in her work as well as her response to colour and light. Light, like culture, forges perception. As a painter her evolution has spanned hemispheres, aesthetics and ideologies. These distinctions matter. Trained in Moscow, her reflection on the winter light and brief summers is that these were conditions for intricacy in her art. The American light that bathed her nascent early works began to open her palette but it was in Australia that the full range was revealed and her emotional response to colour under a naked sun reach its peak of both experimentation and verve.

"Australian light changed my perception. Moscow is grey like London. The light is wonderful for nudes and portraits but it flattens and drains the landscape. In New England the light was softer. In California the landscape opened. Yet it was only when I moved here that I saw the brilliance of the spectrum. I don't like blunt direct light. It can be flat and menacing, you can almost feel the radiation in the air. That's why I surf at dawn or dusk. Every morning when I surf there is a lustrous unity between sunlight and the moving skin of the water, what the wind, clouds and sky are doing. In the surf you lose the horizon line. The experience physically is convex. I try to be very fluid with paint and composition."

The joy Pachkova brings to colour and the angst of the darker works face off in this show. The discipline that unites such contrasts is her unified proportion of scale. Having collaborated with the artist Richard Goodwin in a group show that hinged on canvases that were 2 meter by 2 meters, she has made the format her own. The impact of larger scale works is intensified when large canvases are bolted together as a diptych. In these works, the eye submerges and is truly invited to walk inside rubble or coral or sheer volumes of light. Physically the works have a restless surface, balancing textures that can be raw or overwrought with accretion of all sorts of paint: housepaint, impasto acrylic and vivid enamel:

“There is something about sculpting an image between areas of flat and gestural paint. A feeling of liberation of working on a large scale. It’s a grand gesture. This exercise is pure physicality and it is liberating somehow.”

For many painters the arc of the last three years has been something of a drawn bow. The tension and suppressed energy of the pandemic and, for many, the violence of climate change and war represent much deeper themes than simple confinement or release. The idea of painting through a storm is an ancient one. JMW Turner was said to have lashed himself to a mast to experience the extremes of the ocean. Other painters in this century gravitate to areas of conflict and loss, literally painting from the battlefield. But the strongest works do not succumb to the sheer drama of conflict or the encroaching threat of the elements. The aesthetic of the works that make up this show seem to possess their own weather system and folklore, their own rules of contrast and chaos. Squaring off with the epic gestural painters of Abstract Expressionism and the Trans-Avant-Garde painters of the 80s, Pachkova does more than lean into her heritage. For every large surging painting the view changes and the canvas forms the portal, like gazing at the turbulence above from the peace of the sea floor below.

Anna Johnson

ENQUIRE

Sunlight — Castle in the Sky

2022

Oils, acrylics and oil
sticks on canvas

195 x 160 cm

\$5,500





Fairy Floss Castle

2021

Mixed media on canvas

175 x 195 cm

\$5,700

ENQUIRE



Moonrise Kissing — He and She Series

2022

Oils, acrylics and oil sticks on canvas

195 x 160 cm

\$5,500

Sold

ENQUIRE



Falling Castles — Ladders to Nowhere

2022

Mixed media on canvas

175 x 195 cm

\$5,700

ENQUIRE



Inverted Castles

2022

Mixed media on canvas

175 x 195 cm

\$5,700

ENQUIRE



Swirling Waters — Goodbye Lucy

2022

Mixed media on canvas

175 x 195 cm

\$5,700

Sold

ENQUIRE



Crescent Head Blushing

2022

Oils, acrylics and oil sticks on canvas

175 x 195 cm

\$5,700

ENQUIRE



Dark Castle

2021

Mixed media on canvas

175 x 195 cm

\$5,700

ENQUIRE



The Falling House of Cards,

2022

Mixed media on canvas

175 x 195 cm

\$5,700

ENQUIRE



Andjana Pachkova

Born in Ukraine, Andjana Pachkova comes from a traditional Russian art tutoring background. Following the political movement Perestroika, she moved to Moscow and took classes at Stroganov Academy of Industrial and Applied Arts.

In 1997 Pachkova won the prestigious Davis Fellowship and subsequently moved to the United States. Alongside her academic studies, Andjana developed a drawing and painting practice informed by a passion for human relationships to landscape, in particular exploring the subtle changes in human psyche that occur when a person moves through a series of places.

Grounded in the intuitive, Andjana's paintings team with passion, submerging the viewer in an active experience of movement and self-actualisation. Responding to both invisible and ephemeral connection, to topographies both travelled and felt, her practice explores the mutual interaction of the human within the landscape, how they move to shape and touch each other. Recently interested in the infinite and treacherous possibility of oceanscapes, her works and painting process have taken on the turbulence of substance, of flowing paint and swirling water, to find a place for herself on canvas that is fluid yet grounded.

Pachkova has studied with notable artists such as Idris Murphy, Jo Bertini, Brandt Lewis, Denis Clarke and Tony Tozer. Upon her move to Australia in 2013, she began to exhibit her work in Sydney and since 2017 has been represented by Stanley Street Gallery in New South Wales and Mercury Gallery in Moscow.

Andjana's works are held in private collections across the United States, including Harvard Law faculty in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Iceland, Finland, Israel and Lebanon.



Andjana Pachkova - Curriculum Vitae

Education

2014	Diploma of Visual Arts	Northbridge Visual Art School, NSW, AUS
2000-2001	Master of Law	Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), USA
1998 - 2000	Master of Arts in Liberal Studies	Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH), USA
1992 - 1998	Bachelor of Law	Moscow International University, Moscow, RUSSIA

Solo Exhibitions

2022	From Light to Dark	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2020	Fernweh - Into the Blue	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2018	Die Sehnsucht	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2016	Disintergration Anxiety	Paper Plane Gallery, Rozelle, NSW

Group Exhibitions (Selected)

2022	Soupcón	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2021	#GroupShow	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2020	Art in Isolation	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2020	5 Lone Goats on Cezanne's Mountain	Lone Goat Gallery, Byron Bay, NSW
2019	A Time of Gifts	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2018	Home	AVWAR, Northern Soul Kitchen, New Jersey USA
2017	Anima Mundi Festival	Its Liquid Group, Venice, ITALY
2017	Pop Up	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2017	Introducing	Stanley Street Gallery, Darlinghurst, NSW
2016	Lindfield Art Fair	Holy Family School, Lindfield, NSW

Awards and achievements

2018 Finalist, Ewart Art Prize
2016 Finalist, Northbridge Art Prize 2016 Finalist, Ewart Art Prize

Collections

Pachkova's works are held in private collections across the United States, including Harvard Law faculty in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Russia, all over Australia, Iceland, Finland, Israel and Lebanon.

Reviews and publicity

TV Appearances: Several of Pachkova's paintings in the Secret City TV series, 2018-2019, available on Foxtel and Nextflix.
Music Album Cover Commissions: Reza Naemi: Castle in the Sky, July 1, 2018
The Best Pessimist: Drawing the Endless Shore, DRAMA November 2017
MUU!: Seminal relased on MicroCastle, February 2017
Paranoid Dancer/Patrik Carrera: Vacant, January 2017; Paranoid Dancer/Patrik Carrera: Type 7-9, December 2016
Paranoid Dancer/Patrik Carrera Whim, December 2016; Paranoid Dancer: Reset November 2016

Full CV: www.stanleystreetgallery.com.au

Andjana Pachkova is represented by Stanley Street Gallery

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Contributors: Anna Johnson, Claire de Carteret

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Stanley Street Gallery would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land upon which this booklet was researched and written. We pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty never ceded.

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