

# The metaphysical portraits of Marina Gavanski Zissis

MARTIN C. BARRY

Take the whirling continuity of the circle, add some intuition, even a bit of mysticism, and you have a few of the main ingredients for Marina Gavanski Zissis's portraits.

After 30 years of practicing her craft, the Town of Mount Royal resident can truly be considered a professional artist. Of Serbian heritage although raised in Canada, Marina attended university in Belgrade, Serbia, where she studied art and learned the skills that serve her so well today.

Her portraits often have at least two distinguishing characteristics: the celebration of the body, and a metaphysical mystique, which sometimes is represented through a circular pattern that envelops her human subjects. She's come up with a name for her style: sensu-expressionism.

"In my paintings I paint the physical and the spiritual," she said in an interview with the Mount Royal Journal.

"I put a lot of psychology, a lot of the spiritual in my paintings. I don't paint just what I see. I paint also what I feel. I paint intuitively and expressively with the emotions, as well. So when I paint portraits, I paint the person's real character."

While some painters often conform to the prevailing trends in art, and their output is a testament to their talent for imitation, Marina has for years been heeding her inner call. As a result, her works have a distinctiveness.

Some of her paintings involve movement, with the circular motif as counterpoint. In one, which hangs on a wall of her St. Laurent Blvd. studio, a nude woman at the centre spins orbs of fire in a circular motion. Marina sees the round pattern as representing the universe and the iris of the eye at the same time.

"To me the circle is the most perfect geometric form," she says. "It's a form that perpetuates itself. To me it's a form of eternity, because a circle goes on and on and on. And I have a feeling that this is something that represents our life like a cycle and it just continues. To me the circle is also very aesthetically pleasing."

Marina paints portraits for her own pleasure, but she also does quite a few on commission. "When I paint a person I kind of perpetuate them into eternity. To me, each person that I paint is kind of a hero. They are there at the moment. I immortalize them."

## Résumé:

Après 30 ans de pratique dans son métier, Marina Gavanski Zissis, une artiste peintre résidente de Ville Mont-Royal peut vraiment se considérer comme une artiste professionnelle. D'origine serbe, mais élevée au Canada, Marina a fréquenté l'université de Belgrade en Serbie, où elle a étudié l'art et a acquis les compétences qui lui servent si bien aujourd'hui.

Ses portraits ont souvent au moins deux caractéristiques: la célébration du corps, et une mystique métaphysique, parfois représentée par un motif circulaire qui entoure ses sujets humains. «Dans mes tableaux, je peins l'aspect physique et spirituel», a affirmé dans un entretien avec le Journal de Mont-Royal.

«J'y mets beaucoup de psychologie, beaucoup de spirituels dans ma peinture. Je ne peins pas juste ce que je vois. Je peins aussi ce que je ressens. Je peins de manière intuitive et expressive, les émotions, aussi. Alors, quand je peins un portrait, je peins le véritable caractère de la personne», affirme la talentueuse artiste.

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Photo: Martin C. Barry

"When I paint a person I kind of perpetuate them into eternity," says local artist Marina Gavanski Zissis.



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