

Marina Gavanski Zissis: A Look At A New Generation of Canadian Artists

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At the age of thirty-five, Marina Gavanski Zissis has accumulated the acclaim and recognition that most artists struggle a life-time to achieve. Her work has been exhibited on numerous occasions in Belgrade, London, Vancouver, San Francisco, Toronto and Montreal to the delight of both art "aficionados" and the general public. Recently, I had the opportunity to chat with Marina about her work, her life and her commitment to art.



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Marina's paintings exude a psychological dimension portraying a directness or honesty; which is sometimes unsettling, sometimes arousing. The observer of her art will be forced to react due to the deep emotions many of her works convey. Very candidly Marina maintains: "If we give up on deep emotions we are all in danger. My art is there to remind us of the human condition, even if we struggle against our feelings we ultimately have to come to terms with them". Rather than depicting her work as following either the patterns of expressionist or figurative art she views her work as falling between "emotion and logic". Marina believes that: "there is more to life than mere logic". The dialogue between these two worlds is her canvas.

The psychological dilemma of being uprooted from one's country of origin to Canada is faced by many ethnic Canadians, including Marina Gavanski Zissis. Marina and her family left their native Yugoslavia when she was seven years old. This experience has enabled Marina to always be in tune with deep emotions from a very young age. "I learned how to listen to these emotions; don't blend in, don't conform, I would rather create honest work. That strong feeling of not belonging is part of my creativity, you always belong yet you never belong".

A renowned art critic Paule Vasich wrote of her art: "In her painting there is conflict, uncertainty but never capitulation".

In 1974, Marina left Vancouver to study at the University of Belgrade in the Faculty of Fine Arts. By 1979 she was awarded a Master's degree from the same university where she received the student award for best achievement in the field of visual arts.

During her studies Marina realized that: "there was no going back or away from my art, my path was taken". This commitment to art has given Marina the drive and energy which is vital in order to attain any degree of success in this field.

Marina Gavanski Zissis is at the forefront of a new generation of Canadian artists. As part of this generation she has struggled successfully with her own identity and ethnic ties - in this manner she has enriched the prism of Canadian art.

Oils, aquarelles and portraits can be viewed at her studio in Montreal.

