

# **DOSSIER :** **GLEDIS NASKA (ARTISTE)**

- ❖ Interview with Gledis Naska by Hédi Bouraoui
- ❖ Collection of artwork by Gledis Naska

## INTERVIEW GLEDIS NASKA BY HÉDI BOURAOUI

1. H.B.: Gledis, I know your parents are originally from Albania. Could you tell me where you were born, and when?

G.N.: I was born in Berat, Albania on April 19, 1989. We lived in Kuçovë, Albania.

2. H.B.: I see you working every weekend in Il Fornello. I assume you were born in Canada. What do you know of your Albanian heritage?

G.N.: What I remember very fondly is that Albania was a communist country when I was living there. I remember myself watching television and listening to politics at a very young age. We were fighting for freedom from communism. I used to run around the house screaming passionately “LIRI DEMOKRACI”, throwing the peace sign with my hands. Liri Demokraci, means liberty and democracy.

I remember going to church with my grandfather, going for walks with him, catching fireflies, collecting chamomile flowers to dry them for tea. To me that is my heritage. My family, the memories we shared together, that have the utmost lasting impression on my life, which floods my art.

What I know now about my country is that we accept all religions and do not discriminate which one is better. I guess that is the influence of all the different countries that invaded us, and then when we gained our independence from our invaders, the president decided to abolish all religion. So we maintained a state of neutrality, which I believe has influenced my life in a way that I can only understand now at this age.

3. H.B.: Could you compare the two cultures you are familiar with?

G.N.: Food is a very important feature of Albanian culture, we make delicious food! To me nothing compares to it. Here in Canada I can say that the food does not even come close. Our food in Albania is freshly prepared, it does not travel far to get to our tables, it

has no preservatives, it's just the way Mother Nature intended it to be.

I love living in Canada though, it has brought me opportunities, which I don't believe I would have had in my home country. Canada has opened my mind dramatically to the different cultures of the world. I love the diversity of people here; it is one of the most beautiful aspects of this country I believe. Since I came to Canada at the age of 8, my mind was fresh and open. I remember I was so excited seeing so many different skin colors, and types of dressing when I came here for the first time.

At the end of the day, I see more similarities between the nations of the world than I do see differences. That is why I picked food as the main difference. I'm sure someone with more knowledge of politics and history can compare and contrast the two different nations better than myself.

4. H.B.: How did you come to the art of painting?

G.N.: I remember since I was in Albania, art was always my favourite subject. I remember intricately using a ruler to draw houses. I remember when I was here at a young age drawing, and doing art in school. I can tell you I do not remember anything from math class, but art class I have vivid memories of the different things we did. From writing stories with drawings in French class, to using geometry to make intricate shapes with pastels. It was always very fascinating to me.

I had a grade nine teacher, who always encouraged me to draw, to paint, telling me that I was really talented. I never saw that in myself. I remember my grade 11 art teacher was also just as encouraging of my talent. I thought everyone was better than me. I still kind of think the same way now, but I don't have a teacher encouraging me. In university I wanted to get into visual arts, but I strayed away from it because I was picking my career based on what made the most money, so I picked psychology, because it was one of the only subjects in which I did not need to have a good math mark for. I hated it, for the most part. So I figure I would change my major in the last year I was there. Since I had finished most the courses I needed to for my Psychology major I thought I would fill my schedule with mostly visual arts classes. I then realized it would take me too long to finish, graduated with psychology and called it a day!

It was not until a few months after graduation that something just came over me. I call it the will of God. Creativity was burning my body, and anything and everything I did was just an act of creation. It was out of my control. It was a burning passion. If I may describe it in Yoga terms, my root chakra was alive!

I've never felt anything like it before. So I continued drawing and painting. I discovered wood boards, which brought the most elaborate feeling of beauty to me. The wood grain was out of this world. At first I just purchased any type of wood, I was not so picky, the way I am now. At the time I was dating a guy, who was also an artist. I told him that I think we should make a painting together. He said okay, come up with the concept and we'll get started on it. He was not as excited as I was, so the next day I already had the theme of the painting and the drawing laid out. Soon as I got his okay, I went to go purchase a wood panel. I could not wait. So as we were painting (It was a man and a woman kissing, from an old Indian film called "The Kiss"), I was wondering what to do with the background. Soon as I asked the question, the light of God fell upon me, and I saw an image in the background. Following the wood grain, I saw trees in an enchanted forest leading to a pond. Soon as he approved of my idea, we began painting. That was the birth of my using the wood grain in all of my paintings.

I know the story is long, but I did not want to leave out any parts of it.

5. H.B.: Are there some artists who have inspired you?

G.N.: Rembrandt inspired me when I was in high school. I loved how most of his backgrounds were black. My all time favourite artists are Gustav Klimt, and Salvador Dali.

6. H.B.: As you know, I like your paintings. You sent us at the CMC REVIEW eleven pictures. We are planning to publish six in our next issue, and five in the following one. How do you feel about this project?

G.N.: I think it is a fantastic project, that way people will not forget about me! Ahaha I am just joking.

7. H.B.: I like the description you gave of each painting. When do you write these descriptions, before or after, and why?

G.N.: I write the descriptions both before and after. Before I write exactly what I'm feeling. It goes through a long process. From the initial vision or dream that inspires me to create a painting. I make a drawing in my sketchbook. Write my dream or vision, or a small description. I make several drawings with lots of descriptions. The final words I choose to write for each painting are written after the painting is done. Since I did most of those paintings for the art show, the final description for each of them was written a week before the show. Since my paintings are all based on feelings, I remember exactly what each of them mean to me. It's a very easy process for me.

8. H.B.: I know you have been a York University student. You were in Psychology, I believe, not Fine Arts. Did your studies in Psychology affect your art work? Did you take courses in Fine Arts? Did any faculty (or other persons) influence you? Which College were you affiliated with?

G.N.: I think the only way that Psychology affected my art work, was by bringing to light the fact that I needed to be making art instead of learning psychology.

I took a few courses in fine arts. Painting the human figure, Intaglio, photography, just to name a few. My Intaglio, and Painting the human figure, professors really influenced me and challenged me to strive for more from my work.

I was affiliated with Atkinson College.

9. H.B.: As I told you, I like your paintings because they have some abstract qualities, yet they are always based on some material elements. How did you arrive at this form? And why do you like the combination of colors?

G.N.: I don't know if I would say I am the one arriving at these forms. I simply am a messenger of God. I was given a gift, and through me God is expressing itself.

If I were to explain my work I would say that, what is going on in my paintings is simply expressing the beauty that already exists everywhere. Mother Nature is my biggest inspiration and there is no grander creation than the life that comes from the earth, including human and animal life.

My personality does come through in my paintings. I am a very scatter minded individual and believe I can make a difference in this world. I want to be everything to everyone, though unrealistic; I think it is expressed by the intricate details in my paintings.

The colors, I don't really put any thought into. They just somehow work. We see the world with our eyes, and our eyes translate light information, which at a very fine detail, is the colors of the rainbow. So everything we see is technically the color of the rainbow in different degrees.

We also know the world through feeling. I think this is a part of our selves that most of us really are not too in touch with. So in my paintings I also explore those feelings. But I know deep down the purest form of my existence is God, and intrinsically I am happy, no matter how angry or sad I may be at any given moment. That too shows up in my paintings of light coming from the stars in the universe.

10. H.B.: I suppose you consider yourself an amateur painter. Are you ambitious to move to the professional level?

G.N.: I don't really believe art is about becoming anything, or moving to a certain level. I have no ambition for the politics of art.

Painting is my meeting place with God.

If people like my work and want to purchase it, I do always say, respect the time I put into it, and don't devalue it, though at the end of the day you can never put a price tag on art. Just like you cannot put a price tag, or a level of professionalism on love.

Art is love, love is God, God is within us all. That may turn off a lot of people, but I do not worship God through any religion, for love does not have a religion.

11. H.B.: I have recommended to the Master of Stong College that he offer you an opportunity to present some of your work in the student shows that take place in the Samuel Zacks Gallery. He promised to pass on some of your work to the Art Gallery

Directors, and they are supposed to get in touch with us. Needless to say, I don't guarantee anything, but I hope you will have an opportunity to exhibit your work, and compete for the Gérard Sendrey Prize which I instituted at Stong College. Please give me some reaction to these questions and suggestions.

G. N. : First of all, I want to say that no words can express the deep gratitude I feel towards the opportunities you are presenting me with. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am deeply honoured that you have such great faith in my art. I have no expectations on the matter, and whatever is meant to be will be.



**Title:** “The Dance”

**Dimension:** 18” X 24”

**Medium:** Acrylics on Wood

**Description:** I sat there in the quiet of the morning, on the dining table, drinking a cup of coffee. It was winter, ice covered the trees, as the wind shook them. The rhythm of the wind brought the trees to a beautiful dance. So beautiful I jumped off of my seat to grab my camera. Snapped a photo, ran to my room, and began to draw the trees on a wood panel. It must have been so beautiful, because I do not leave my coffee unfinished for anything.





**Title:** "Ode to the butterfly"

**Dimensions:** 24" X 18"

**Medium:** LED lights and acrylics on Wood

**Description:** The Dogon people of Africa have a dance for the creation of the universe. The way things came to be. Like the caterpillar that becomes a butterfly: Spring has sprung and life begins to sing and dance, colours begin to encapsulate your sense. The silent tempo of the winter begins to fade, as the melting snow gives life to the patient earth below.



**Title:** “Seasons”

**Dimensions:** 27” X 27” X 23”

**Medium:** Copper and acrylics on Wood

**Description:** The in between of seasons. A time of expected, but non-receptive change. New feelings trying to blossom from old memories. It is a time that brings forth personal growth and change.

“Each season bares a worthiness all its own...we live a seasonal faith and with that living, comes a time for everything—every joy, pain, frustration, surrender, sorrow and celebration. Nothing in our lives is exempt from the cyclical process of our winter, spring, summer and fall. We can choose to walk through these seasons, with little or no effect to our hearts, but we cannot deny the possibility of growth extended to us because of them. Each season of our lives is rive with eternal possibilities. The soul shift happens when we bow low and lean into those possibilities.” – Elaine Olsen





**Title:** “One”

**Dimensions:** 12” X 24”

**Medium:** Acrylics on Wood

**Description:** In order to have a beginning there needs to be an end. In order to have an end, there needs to be a beginning. So you see, essentially they are one in the same. Their very difference is what connects them, because they simply cannot be separate.



**Title:** "The dream"

**Dimensions:** 18" X 24"

**Medium:** Copper, LED lights and acrylics on Wood

**Description:** Have you ever seen the wind blowing through the willow tree? The sun glimmering on the tops of the leaves, the underside dark. Every moment, so different but the same. Every moment leading to this very moment, to the next, and to the next. But I cannot write or think fast enough to catch the moment, because it fades into something, which cannot be captured. You see, a painting is not a movement. It is not an event or a time. It is everything and nothing. It is emptiness and fullness. It is pure indecisiveness, it doesn't know what. It just is. But in its indecisiveness there is something that grabs hold of you and draws you in.





**Title:** "Dream catcher"

**Dimensions:** 16" X 20"

**Medium:** Twine and acrylics on Wood

**Description:** There is something so pristine about mountains. The way each line has a story carved by the wind, the waters, or the shattering of the earth. Each line is the continuous action of time. The pure essence of the divine. You could never know how today's winds move the mountains tomorrow.