

The Visual Storyteller

Deftly demonstrating the African aesthetic, artist Louise Duggan has an intuitive sense of creativity, distorting her subject matter while maintaining a balanced composition. Durrah talks to the Ophelia Art Consultancy Founder about her art and her creative work for Burj Al Arab.



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WHAT IS IT ABOUT AFRICAN ART AND CULTURE THAT CAPTIVATES YOU?

Having grown up in West and East Africa, my early visual reference points was the art I saw around me, from murals painted on the side of walls to carvings and artifacts being sold on the side of the road. The styles and subject matters vary as one travels around Africa, but what captivated me the most was the abstract representation of the subject rather than a realistic representation.

YOU WERE INVITED TO DEVELOP NINE ARTWORKS FOR BURJ AL ARAB. HOW WAS THAT EXPERIENCE?

As with any new commission, the first feeling is fear! Thinking 'will I really be able to do this?' I was given a fantastic brief and so, once I found my direction and the feeling I wanted to convey, I began to feel the rhythm of the collection.

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR ART CLASSES? WHAT CAN STUDENTS EXPECT?

My art classes are all about abstract art, feeling your way with the use of color, balance, and intuition. I encourage the students to be mindful about what they are doing, and I share the more theoretical aspects while they are working on their

paintings so that we end up with a unique painting balanced in color and proportions.

WHAT WAS THE MOST DEMANDING PAINTING YOU'VE EVER DONE?

In The Burj Al Arab collection, there is a 225cm x 110cm painting for the VIP Lounge. This is a huge canvas! This was the painting that had to bring all the four elements that run through the hotel together. The first attempt was a much safer version and then I took the brave move to have all the colors dripping down the canvas, running into each other.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE AMONG YOUR WORK?

I recently finished "We will reach the top" I really did enjoy the process of painting this piece. I tried a new technique to create more texture onto the canvas, to illustrate the various terrains we navigate in our daily life

WHO HAD THE BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON YOUR ART? ARE THERE ARTISTS WHOSE WORK INSPIRES YOU?

I don't know where to start! I love the modern artists of the early 20th Century who really focused on strong saturated color and wild brush strokes.



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I loved art by Gauguin and the Fauves. This was followed later by Frida Khalo and her wonderful surreal storytelling, David Hockney, whose use of color is phenomenal, and Basquiat who created these huge fearless canvases with elements of street art and graffiti, while telling various stories.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST TREND IN THE ART WORLD TODAY?

The rise in NFTs. However, this is still an area that is very new to me. I will need to further explore it as a platform to sell my work.

WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS AS AN ARTIST? WHEN WOULD YOU SAY YOU ACHIEVED THAT GOAL IN YOUR CAREER?

My definition is my ability to tell a story, share a feeling, and to be lucky enough to dedicate so much time to working on my art. I am constantly trying new techniques, new materials, and pushing myself out of my comfort zone. I often start a painting without knowing where I will end up and that's exciting as an artist. My goal is constantly evolving.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A NOVICE ARTIST?

Find your unique voice and stay true. Don't paint what you think will sell, paint to enjoy the experience. Practice each day and really work on those skills you studied and learned.

louiseduggan.com

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