LA WEEKLY

Meet Painter and Sculptor Greg Ito
Written by: Shana Dambrot
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Greg Ito in his Studio

Even when Greg Ito moves from the canvas to work in sculpture and installation, whether crafting vistas for the wall or walk-in environments, his narrative symbolism is always pursued with a painter's sensibility. His work tells complex, empathetic stories fusing intimately personal experiences with geopolitical and environmental events, collapsing history into an eternal, spotless present, a kind of late-summer surrealism that's as infinite and glassy as a dream. His iconography and palette references stylizations with a post-digital flourish — a post-modern pictorialism, catastrophic and full of hope. An exhibition of new large-scale paintings and an immersive installation will open at Anat Ebgi in Los Angeles on October 2.

L.A. WEEKLY: When did you first know you were an artist?

GREG ITO: Ever since I was young I gravitated toward the art and crafts classes and wanted to be an artist someday. I remember doing a book report on Vincent van Gogh in the 3rd grade. Since then I continued fueling my creativity making art and here we are today.

What is your short answer to people who ask what your work is about?

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My work is simply about life and is a reflection of what I encounter on my personal journey, both good and bad. I talk about my family's history, hopeful futures, tragedies of today, the endlessness of time, and the cycles of life. My practice is multifaceted and lives in the realm of painting, sculpture, and installation art.

What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?

I'm not sure. I feel like I would always be doing something art related like curating or running a gallery space. But if it wasn't art related I always thought being a chef or an architect would be cool.

Did you go to art school? Why/Why not?

I went to a pre-college art program called CSSSA at CalArts, in high school and it changed my life. It's what solidified my decision to go to college for my BFA at the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI). It is also where I met my wife, the love of my life and mother of our baby girl Spring.

Why do you live and work in L.A., and not elsewhere?

I'm from L.A. and my family has been here for four generations. I feel connected to L.A. on a deep level and know it's the best city in the world. I love it here and I would never live/work anywhere else.

When was your first show?

My first art show was in San Francisco while I was in college. I was invited by an older student to be in a show in their apartment. It was a group show and my first time ever showing art in a "show" format. Even though it was just an apartment show, it was the first time I felt included in an "art scene." From that day onward I continued to show my art, and host shows for other artists too.

When is/was your current/most recent/next show or project?

I have a solo exhibition opening at Anat Ebgi Gallery [at their new Miracle Mile location in Los Angeles] on October 2nd called Apparition. It's been in the works for two years and is finally about to open. I'm showing the largest paintings I've made to date, and the most immersive installation I have ever created. I'm so excited to see it come together and share with everyone soon.

What artist living or dead would you most like to show or work with?

This is a tough question because there are so many to choose from. Off the top of my head I think it would be epic to show with Rene Magritte, Takashi Murakami, Urs Fischer, or Utagawa Hiroshige.

Do you listen to music while you work? If so, what?

I listen to all sorts of music while I work from rap, house, jazz, or classical, but my favorite music to listen to is anything cinematic like soundtracks to movies I love. And old Italian library music albums.

ANAT EBGI

6150 Wilshire Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90048
+1 (323) 272 3418

anatebgi.com

4859 Fountain Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90029
+1 (323) 407 6806