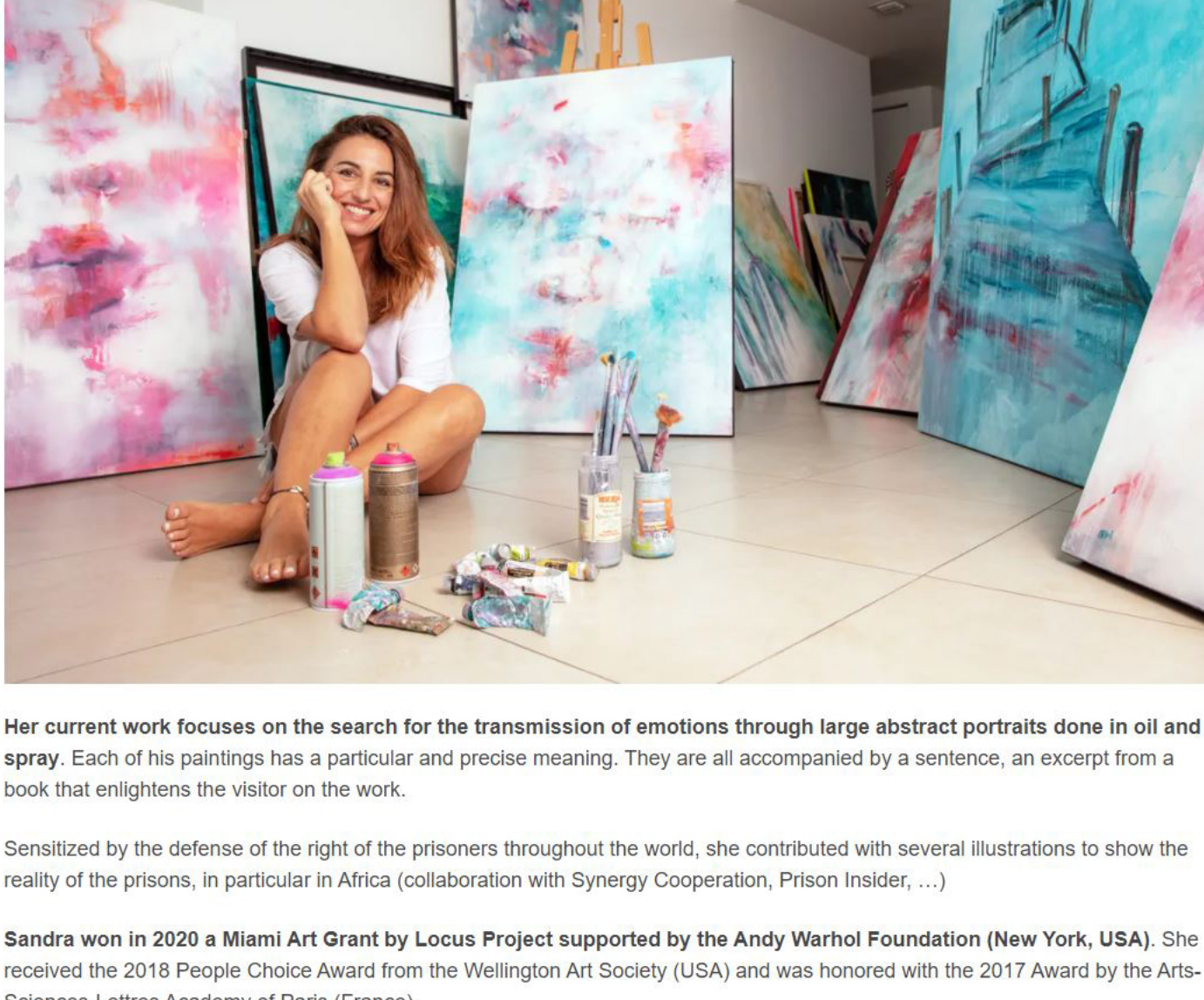


Meet French artist Sandra ENCAOUA

Sandra ENCAOUA art Sandra ENCAOUA artist

Sandra ENCAOUA is a French artist born in Paris in 1974. She currently lives and works between Paris and Miami. Fascinated by nature and raw elements, she creates in her paintings a changing, violent, free universe where she strives to touch the truth of the subject, to perceive its essence.

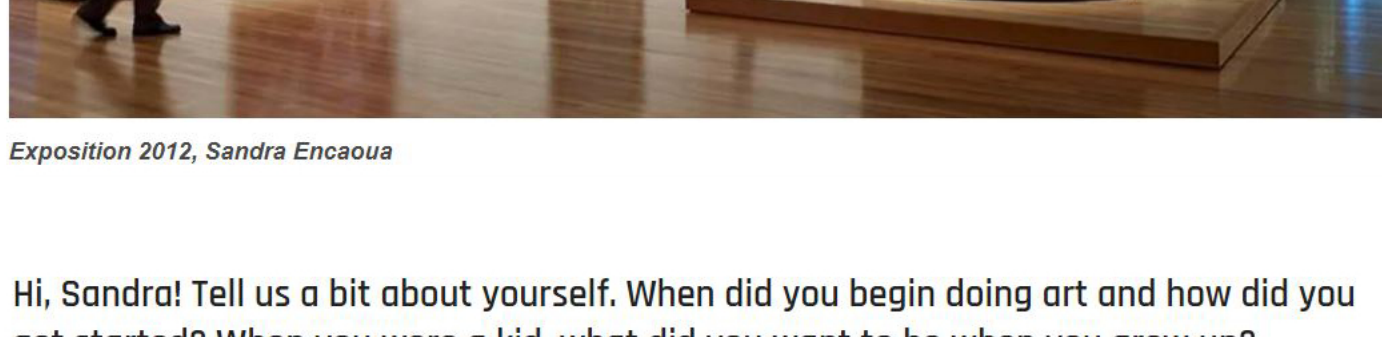


Her current work focuses on the search for the transmission of emotions through large abstract portraits done in oil and spray. Each of his paintings has a particular and precise meaning. They are all accompanied by a sentence, an excerpt from a book that enlightens the visitor on the work.

Sensitized by the defense of the right of the prisoners throughout the world, she contributed with several illustrations to show the reality of the prisons, in particular in Africa (collaboration with Synergy Cooperation, Prison Insider, ...)

Sandra won in 2020 a Miami Art Grant by Locus Project supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation (New York, USA). She received the 2018 People Choice Award from the Wellington Art Society (USA) and was honored with the 2017 Award by the Arts-Sciences-Lettres Academy of Paris (France).

Her work is regularly exhibited in the United States and Europe. She is a member of the Taylor Foundation (Paris, France), the Jewish Art Salon (New York, USA), and the Wellington Art Society (Florida, USA). Her works are listed on the Art market since 2012 (Artprice / Drouot).



Exposition 2012, Sandra Encaoua

Hi, Sandra! Tell us a bit about yourself. When did you begin doing art and how did you get started? When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Sandra: For as long as I can remember, I have always drawn and tried to express my emotions through drawing or painting. As a little girl, I wanted to be a fashion designer; I used to fill my school notebooks with drawings of women dressed in long, stylish dresses.

After my high school diploma, I decided to study visual communication and marketing, which my parents told me were more serious studies. But you can only go against yourself for so long, and after several years in marketing and sales, I decided to take a painting class to learn the technique; that was in 2007. After a few years of learning, the exhibitions followed quickly. I painted a lot, worked a lot. Because it is not enough to know the technique, the most important thing is to find your own 'writing', and what you want to express, of yourself, of the world, with the most sincerity possible.

What are some of the tools you use to create your distinct style of artwork?

Sandra: I started with oil painting and I have never changed. I like its material, its vibrancy, its deeply sensual side. For a few years, I have been adding spray paint, the kind used by graffiti artists, which allows me to add more fluorescent colors. I also insert gold or silver leaf.

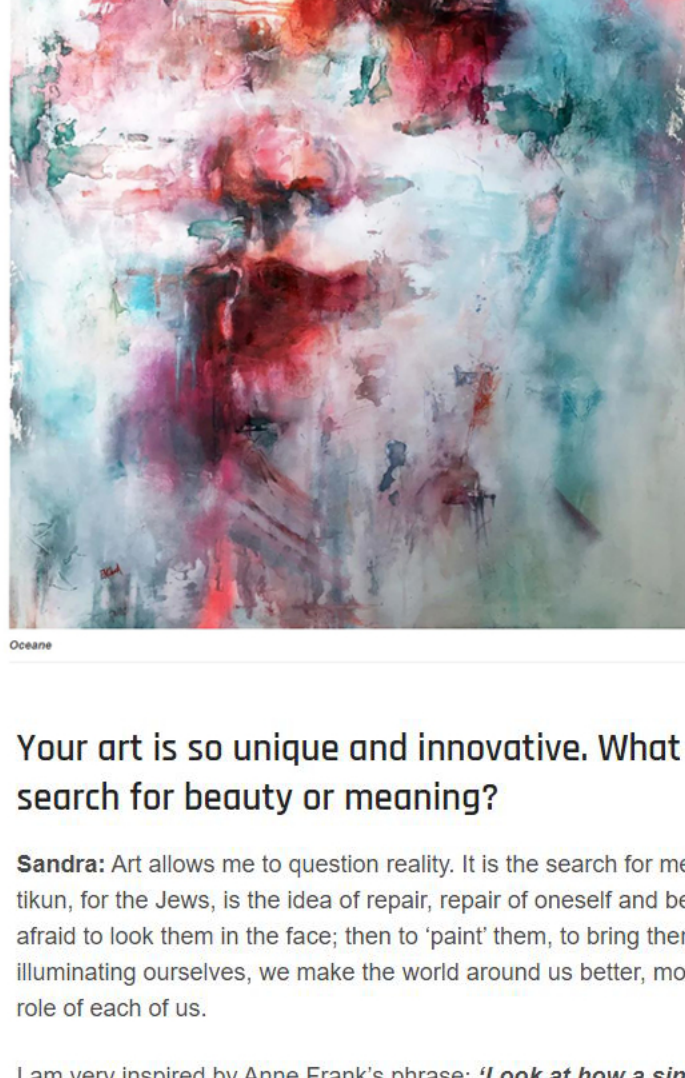
The 'accident' in painting is very important to me, those moments when you completely let go of your mind and when the unconscious, through the painting, expresses itself fully. The result can be very surprising and above all very sincere. It is the authenticity that you put in your art that will touch the spectator, that will enter in resonance with him.

What is a day of working like in your studios, both in France and Miami? Do you have any rituals that help you get motivated or in "the zone"?

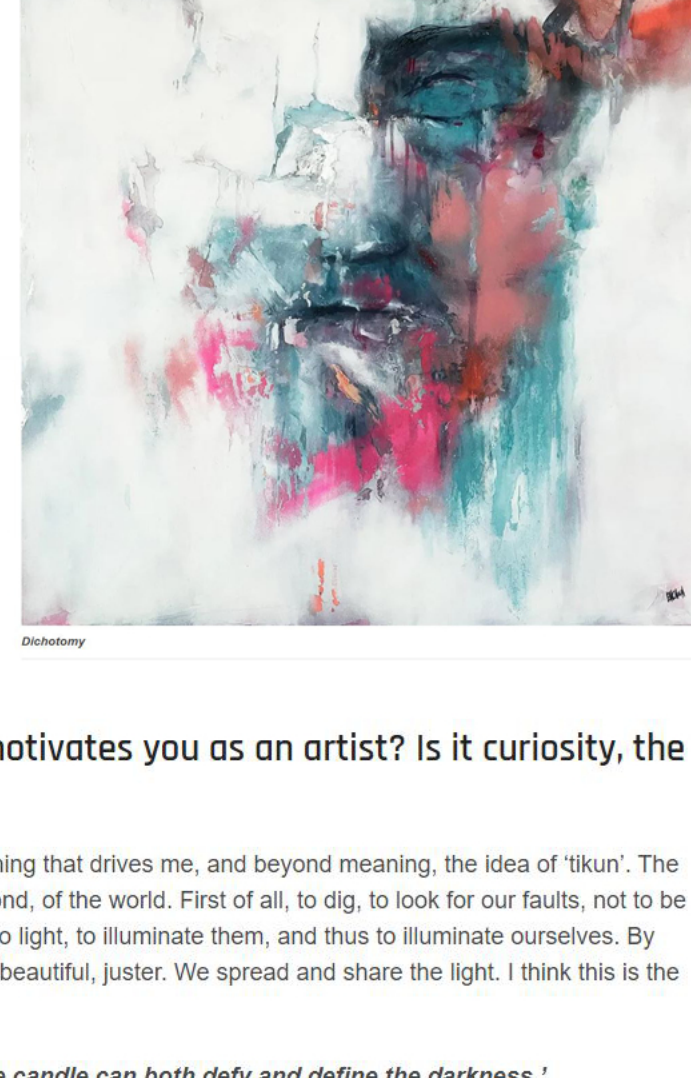
Sandra: With coffee... (joke) More seriously, music helps me to get into that 'zone' you speak of and to let go of the mind. I am in love with French songs from the 70s and 80s. The voice of some of them takes me to a different dimension. I pick up the brush at that moment.

I also often listen to American rap music, especially Eminem whom I love for his naked sincerity, his flaws. I surf on his rhythm, his voice, and it frees more buried energies.

I like to paint alone, without interference from the outside. I have a lot of admiration for some of my painter friends who manage to paint outdoors or with an audience. For me it would be very difficult; I need calm, to take refuge in myself.



Oubaine



Dichotomy

Your art is so unique and innovative. What motivates you as an artist? Is it curiosity, the search for beauty or meaning?

Sandra: Art allows me to question reality. It is the search for meaning that drives me, and beyond meaning, the idea of 'tikun'. The tikun, for the Jews, is the idea of repair, repair of oneself and beyond, of the world. First of all, to dig, to look for our faults, not to be afraid to look them in the face; then to 'paint' them, to bring them to light, to illuminate them, and thus to illuminate ourselves. By illuminating ourselves, we make the world around us better, more beautiful, juster. We spread and share the light. I think this is the role of each of us.

I am very inspired by Anne Frank's phrase: 'Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.'

What's the most challenging part of your artistic process? And how do you overcome it?

Sandra: The most difficult part is to be 'right', not to give in to the easy way, and not to stay on the surface. To seize the subject, to exploit it, to go to the end of oneself, and to transcribe it on the canvas.

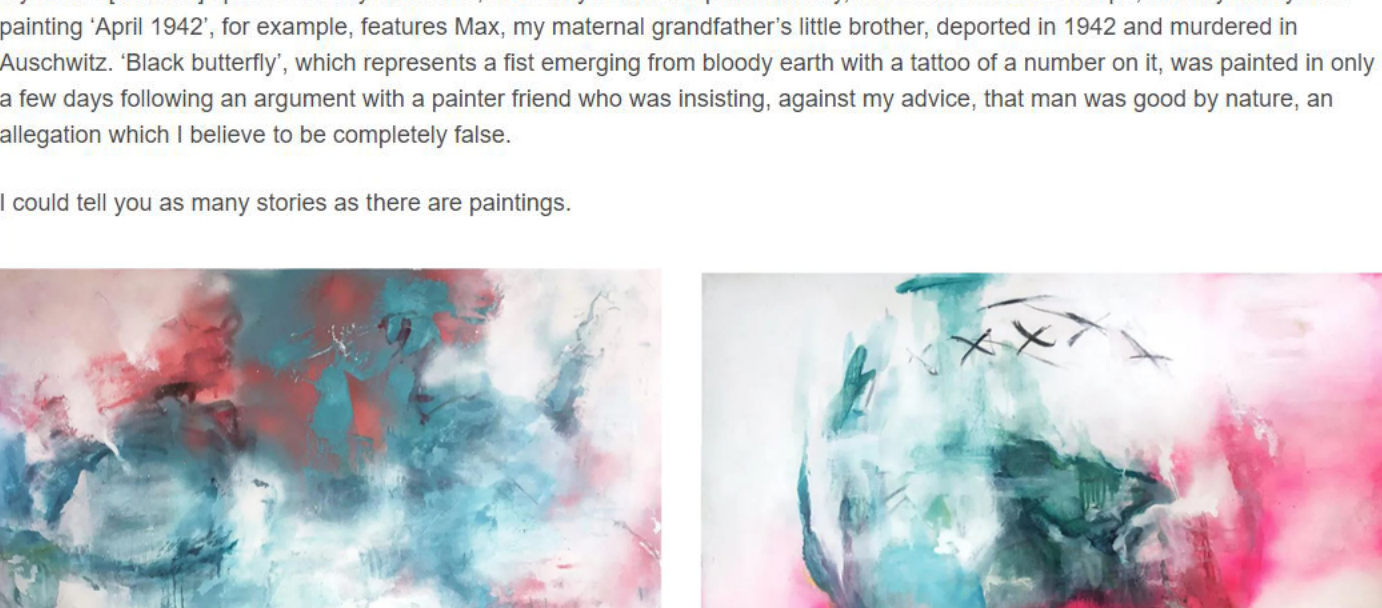
Oil painting is an advantage. Indeed, we superimpose layers of paints, glazes more or less fine with a drying time of 3 to 4 days between each layer. Therefore, the creation of a canvas is long, 3 months at least for me. This allows me to immerse myself in the subject, to reflect, to look at the canvas throughout the creative process. It helps me to go further and to go beyond the easy way.

You live and work between Paris and Miami. Very different inspirations from these places or locations don't affect your inspiration?

Sandra: My inspiration is inner, it comes from my emotions, my feelings, my encounters too. So places don't really affect my inspiration. On the other hand, the light is very different whether you are in Paris or Miami... In Florida, the light is much more raw and violent. Working in Miami changes my colors; they are brighter, more cheerful, even for dark subjects.

For example, my series [Passing Through] was entirely made in Miami. It is a series that speaks of pain, resilience, the difficulty of going through sorrows, delusions, and loves. Yet the colors are vivid, even fluorescent, even if the canvas is hollowed out in

My colors are more muted under the Parisian light. The subjects are more anchored in history; because Paris is impregnated with history. The vibrations are different.



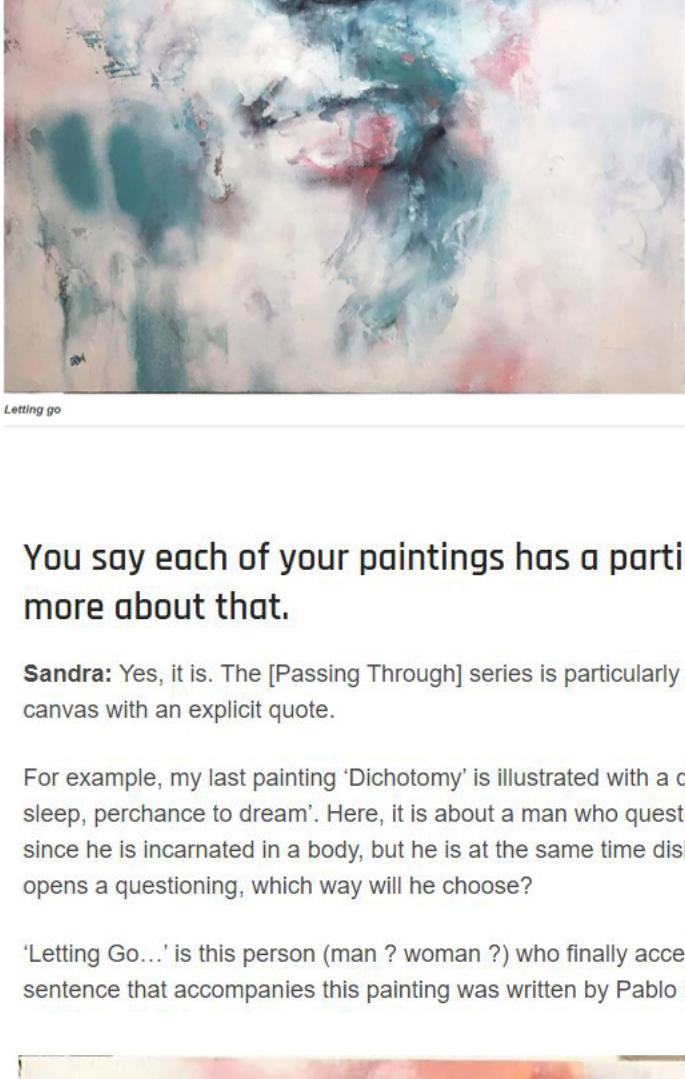
La violence de l'aube

What are some of the stories behind your work? And if you can, describe a real-life situation that inspired your artwork.

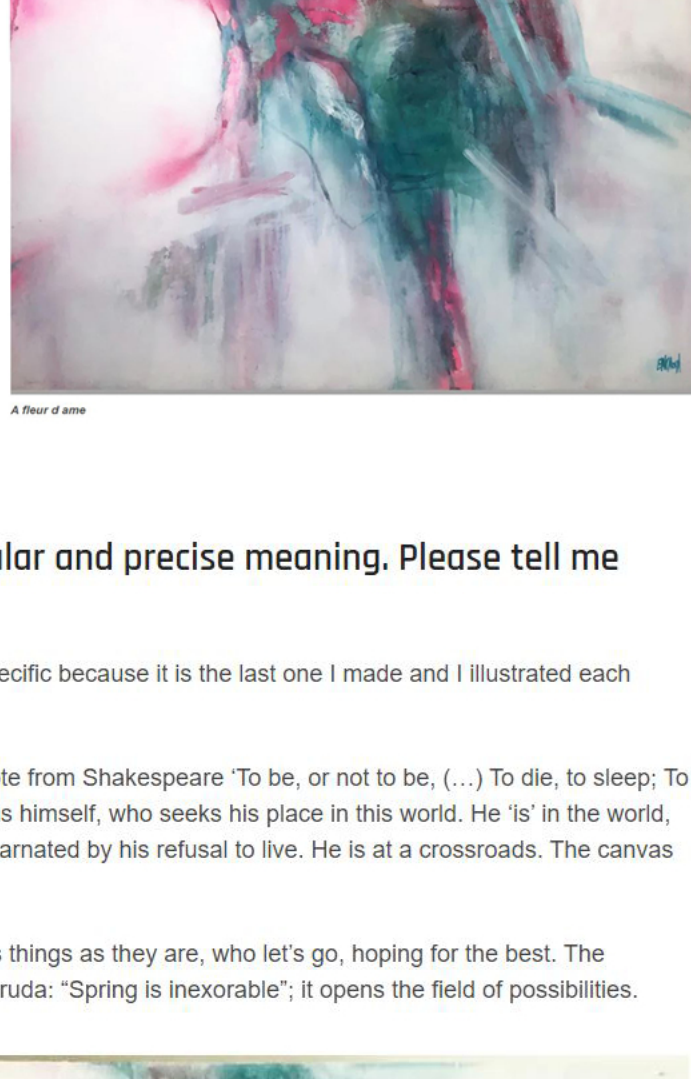
Sandra: There is always a story behind my paintings or drawings. I accompany each work with an extract of text, a sentence, supposed to enlighten the spectator on the meaning of the painting, even if I prefer that each one finds his own interpretation.

My series [Judaica] speaks directly about me, about my relationship with history, that of the Jews of Europe, and my family. The painting 'April 1942', for example, features Max, my maternal grandfather's little brother, deported in 1942 and murdered in Auschwitz. 'Black butterfly', which represents a fist emerging from bloody earth with a tattoo of a number on it, was painted in only a few days following an argument with a painter friend who was insisting, against my advice, that man was good by nature, an allegation which I believe to be completely false.

I could tell you as many stories as there are paintings.



Letting go



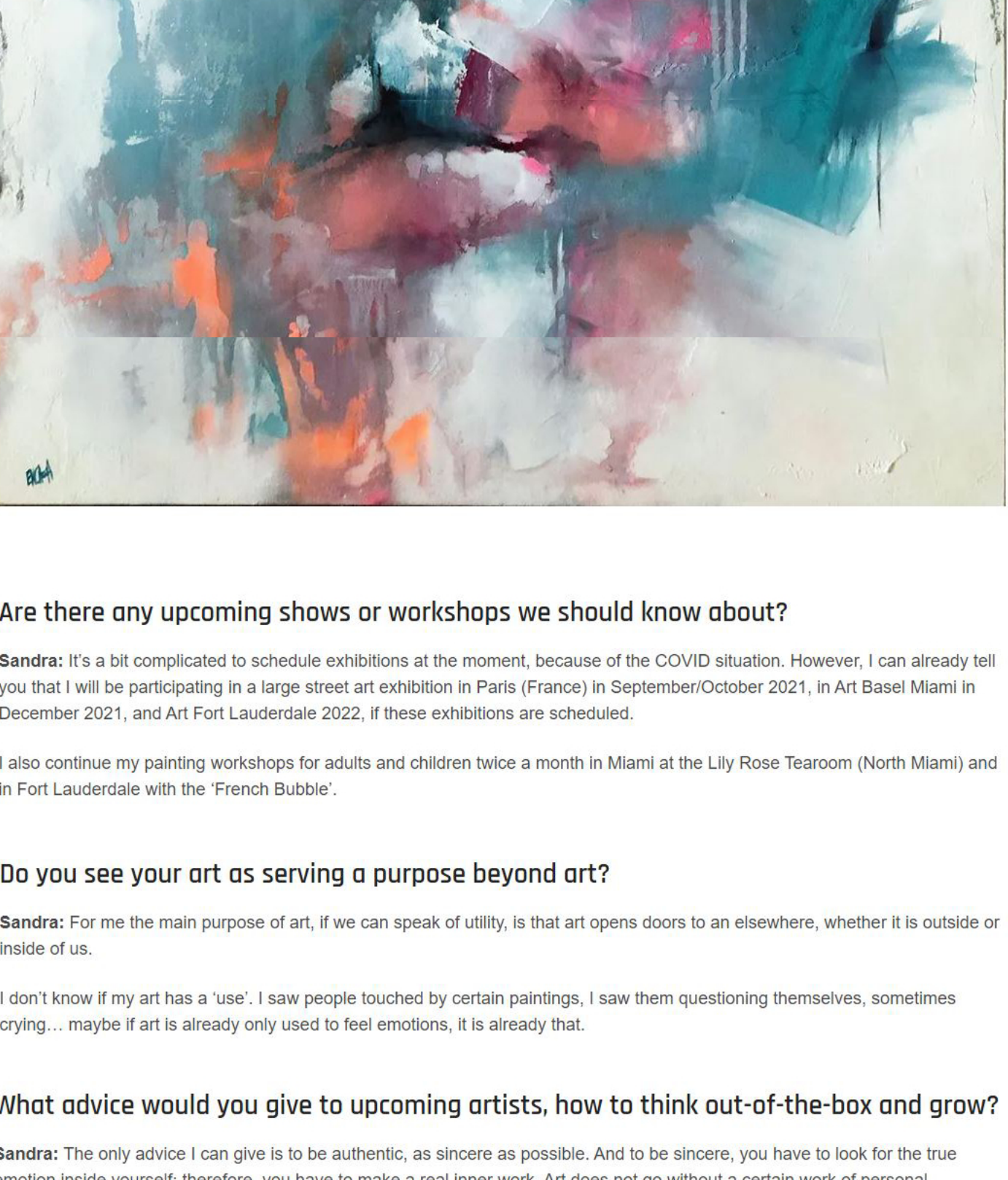
A flower of ash

You say each of your paintings has a particular and precise meaning. Please tell me more about that.

Sandra: Yes, it is. The [Passing Through] series is particularly specific because it is the last one I made and I illustrated each canvas with an explicit quote.

For example, my last painting 'Dichotomy' is illustrated with a quote from Shakespeare 'To be, or not to be, (...) To die, to sleep; To sleep, perchance to dream'. Here, it is about a man who questions himself, who seeks his place in this world. He 'is' in the world, since he is incarnated in a body, but he is at the same time disincarnated by his refusal to live. He is at a crossroads. The canvas opens a questioning, which way will he choose?

'Letting Go...' is this person (man ? woman ?) who finally accepts things as they are, who let's go, hoping for the best. The sentence that accompanies this painting was written by Pablo Neruda: "Spring is inexorable"; it opens the field of possibilities.



Are there any upcoming shows or workshops we should know about?

Sandra: It's a bit complicated to schedule exhibitions at the moment, because of the COVID situation. However, I can already tell you that I will be participating in a large street art exhibition in Paris (France) in September/October 2021, in Art Basel Miami in December 2021, and Art Fort Lauderdale 2022, if these exhibitions are scheduled.

I also continue my painting workshops for adults and children twice a month in Miami at the Lily Rose Tearoom (North Miami) and in Fort Lauderdale with the 'French Bubble'.

Do you see your art as serving a purpose beyond art?

Sandra: For me the main purpose of art, if we can speak of utility, is that art opens doors to an elsewhere, whether it is outside or inside of us.

I don't know if my art has a 'use'. I saw people touched by certain paintings, I saw them questioning themselves, sometimes crying... maybe if art is already only used to feel emotions, it is already that.

What advice would you give to upcoming artists, how to think out-of-the-box and grow?

Sandra: The only advice I can give is to be authentic, as sincere as possible. And to be sincere, you have to look for the true emotion inside yourself; therefore, you have to make a real inner work. Art does not go without a certain work of personal development. Otherwise, you risk remaining on the surface and you stop progressing quickly. So learn the technique, because the technique, once mastered, makes you free; then work, search, question, and create, put in the world your own singularity.

What's next on the horizon for Sandra?

Sandra: A complicated year... But how rewarding. I wish myself beautiful meetings, and to go to the end of my dreams... 😊

To learn more about Sandra and her art, please check:

- www.encaweb.com
- www.facebook.com/Sandraencaoua
- www.linkedin.com/in/sandra-encaoua-berrih-33695595
- www.instagram.com/sandraencaoua

Thank you!