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Munchies Art Club Magazine



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## Artist Spotlight : Melanie Daniel | Utopian & Dystopian Narratives



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# MELANIE DANIEL | CAPTURES THE PERVADING DUALITY OF UTOPIAN AND DYSTOPIAN NARRATIVES.

We share with you on the Munchies Art Club the art works from the gifted artist **Melanie Daniel** in our [Artists Feature](#).

Born in Canada the artist now lives and works between Tel Aviv and the Grand Rapids.

This dual perspective imbues her paintings with elements of both the militaristic and anxiety-inducing environment of Israel and the tree dense historically charged landscape of her native Canada.

Her paintings capturing this pervading duality of utopian and dystopian narratives.

Slowly, over the years developing her own artistic language and “look”, although never clinging to any signature style.

Explore and enjoy her work and story in our feature.

## WHO IS MELANIE DANIEL?

[Melanie Daniel](#) is a contemporary Canadian artist, living and working between Israel and Canada.

The artist Captures the pervading duality of utopian and dystopian narratives.

## SHORT INTRO:

Originally from Canada, I immigrated to Israel 25 years ago and am currently working in Canada.



This dual perspective imbues my paintings with elements of both the militaristic and anxiety-inducing environment of Israel and the tree dense historically charged landscape of my native Canada.



Melanie Daniel | Portrait of the artist

## SHORT STORY ABOUT MY WORK:

Facing possible apocalypse, the characters in my densely narrative world forge a Mad-Max D.I.Y. method, trying to save or recreate a nature threatened with extinction.

They have adopted various methods to adapt and survive, sometimes with ambiguous results, other times humorously hopeless.



They still attempt the mundane tasks of daily life, but in an inhospitable world they appear unmoored.



Gamma Charged | 2011 | Oil on canvas | 42 X 48.5 inch

My paintings want to capture this pervading duality of utopian and dystopian narratives.

Slowly, over the years I developed my own artistic language and “look”, although I've never clung to any signature style.





Honey grind | 2019 | Oil on canvas | 85X70 inch

I'm too restless for that and I don't think it reflects the age in which we live. I've discovered however that even though I make visual shifts from one body of work to the next, that my own kind of mark-making is always present because I'm always present.





Pinepony | 2019 | Wood, wool, dyed cotton | 4ftX3 ft

In terms of an art career it's not necessarily a smart move because you don't end up with a signature look, but, as artists, what do we have? We basically have our freedom, so if we don't use it then what good is it?

Recently, my paintings have been loosely focused on two dirty words that worries many people, namely Gen X and millennials, and makes all politicians squeamish: climate change.





Silent Contract | 2019 | Oil on canvas | 40X30 inch

We have completely forgotten the role we are supposed to play in the natural world.



It is commonly said among the First Nations indigenous peoples that we must always consider the results of our deeds on the seventh generation that follows our own.

We are completely out of balance and as a result, the earth is out of balance.



I Lost Myself | 2020 | Oil on canvas | 40X40 inch

Most of my paintings don't portray doomsday imagery because that would be too obvious and it isn't very interesting.



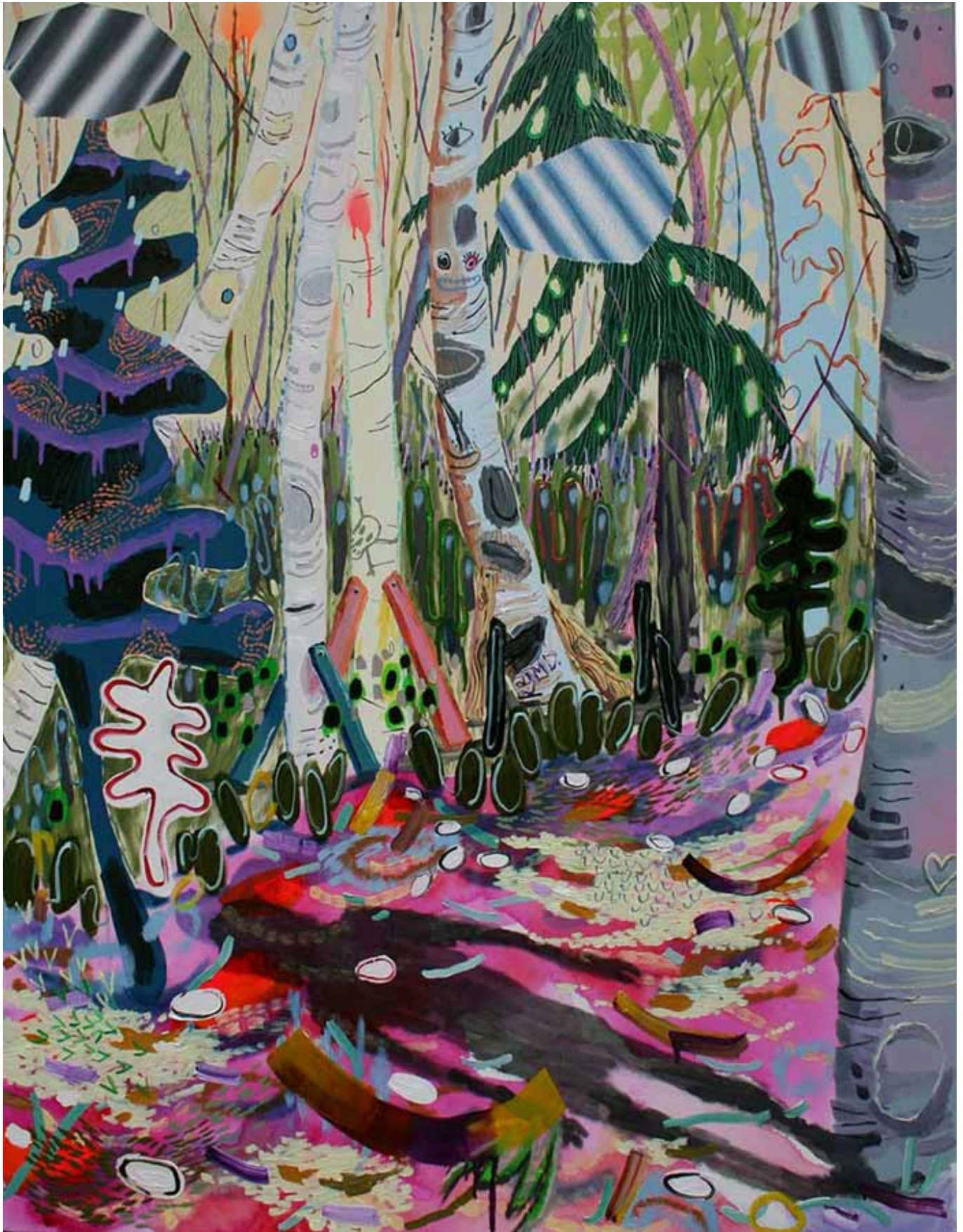
I prefer to make maniacally colorful landscapes (retina scorching colours!) that celebrate the characters in their attempted resistance.





It's a double-edged sword: daily life and its usual routines and creature comforts act as a kind of balm, but also a kind of blind spot.

I've been making sculptures as well. Objects like old floor lamps and rocking horses become armatures that peek out through soft sculptures.



When You Walk the Wood Where We Once Walked Together 2019 | Oil on canvas | 54X42 inch

They're hybrid, freak specimens that jump out of my paintings and onto the floor.



Looking back, much of my academic career, fulfilling as it was, in retrospect was also a long process of elimination.

During my first year at university, I was convinced that I would go into medicine, so I studied science and minored in English Literature.

I soon realized that the health and safety of humanity would be better off without me in the medical profession.



Houhouse Artist | 2018 | Oil on canvas | 48 X 48 inch

Then I shifted my focus to a combination of Literature/Philosophy/History.

After four years of studies, (I still didn't have a degree) I took a break and travelled to India for a year then came back to British Columbia to tree-plant for the season.

All the while, I painted when I could, and it never ever occurred to me that I might pursue a career in art.

If DNA determines what aptitudes a person enters the world with, then the decision was made for me on a visceral level.

Painters have been in my family for generations, although I am the first in my family to have made art my vocation and not merely a hobby.



Installation shot at Asya Geisberg Gallery | New York | Solo show Late Bloomers | 2018

The year I travelled to India and met the person who I would later marry -- another traveler who happened to be Israeli.



In 1994, I moved to Jerusalem, Israel, and applied to a school I had heard much about: the renowned Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem and I was accepted.

It's a fantastic art school lead by teachers who are themselves the best in their fields, all artists of international acclaim.

Following the completion of my MFA I ended up teaching there for several years.



Only Four Degrees | 2019 | Oil on canvas | 77 X 120 inch

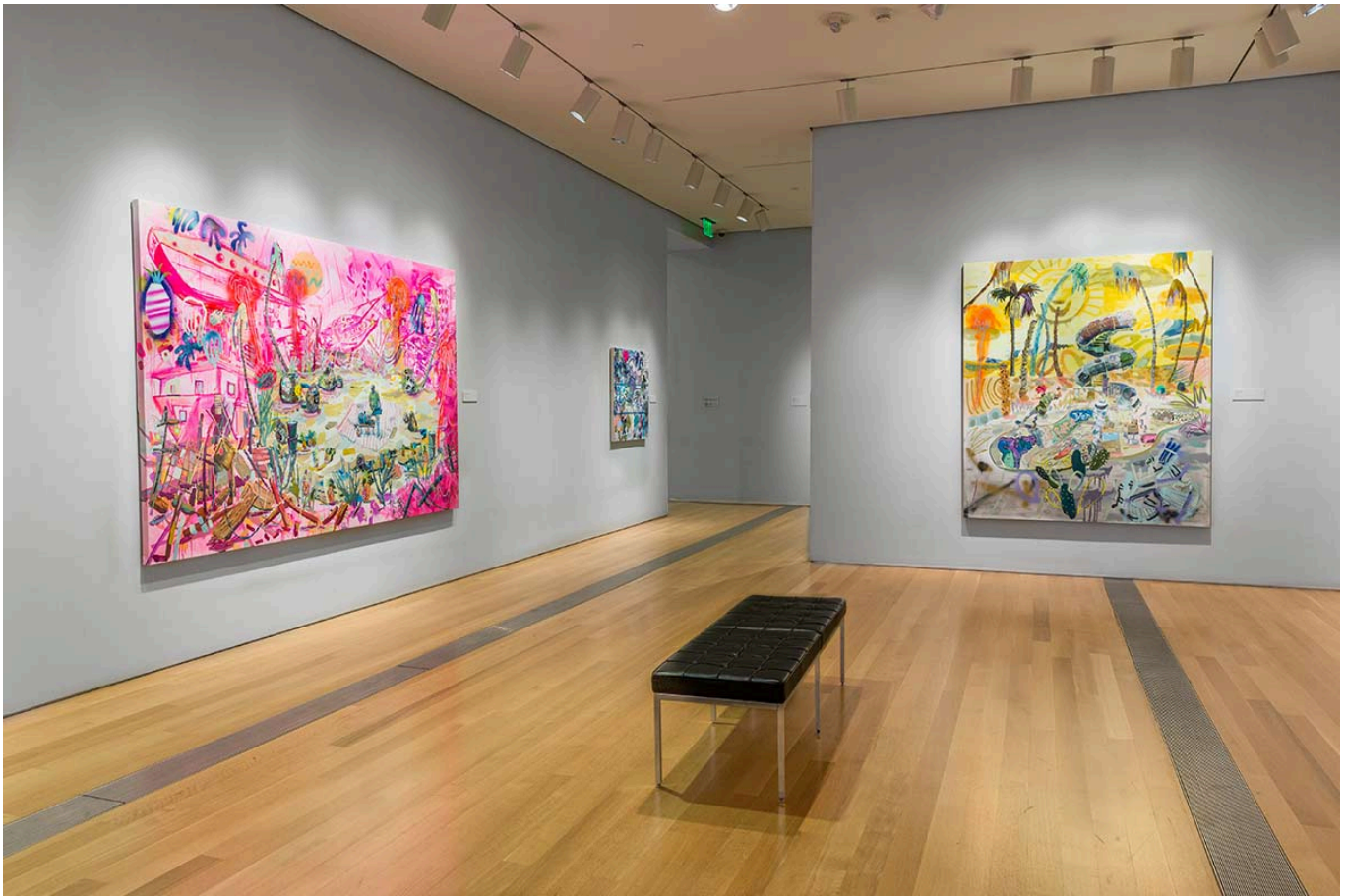
The move to Israel was the moment that I really understood what I wanted to do with my life - I wanted to make art.

I discovered that it not only made me feel alive, but that I was not bad at it.

Fast forward, I have two children now who are the center of my universe.

I waited a long time to become a mother mostly because I had the distinct impression that being a serious artist and being a mother were incompatible.

That primordial urge didn't kick in earlier in my life. It didn't kick in at all.



Installation shot at Grand Rapids Art Museum | Michigan | Solo show Only Four Degrees | 2019

The decision to have kids was cerebral and it was the best thing I have ever done.

The biggest challenge as mother/artist was balance - being very strict with my time in the studio, and knowing when to call it a day.

All artists I know work very hard and understand that the mind is always incubating and churning ideas.

But the actual act of being in the studio can't compete with family. It's one or the other or to simply become frustrated, confused. Ironically, I'm more efficient now than when I had more time.





Goat Love In A Digital Age | 2018 | Oil on canvas | 54 X48 inch

Covid year and art? No school for my kids basically translated to a grinding halt in my studio work.

Sure, my husband, who is a writer, and I took turns allowing the other to work, but the momentum was gone.

I had a solo show in Miami last November that I couldn't attend and another forthcoming solo in NY next month which I'll probably miss in person as well.

It's nigh impossible to get in or out of Canada at the moment.



Bendhairy | 2019 | Wood, wool, dyed cotton | 4ftX3ft (121X 91 cm)



After a three year university contract in Michigan, my family and I decided to visit my parents in Canada for a month before returning to Israel.

But as the month went on and unrest and lockdowns continued in Israel, we realized it would be safer to stay put for a while.

Fortunately, we're very close with my parents, and get along well.

My 22 year old nephew is living with my parents as well for the year.



Two Shores Away and Still Sloshing | 2014 | Oil on canvas | 130 X 200 cm.

We're like a large extended family under one roof. My studio is a garage and I have spent a good deal of this winter /spring schlepping stuff back and forth over snow to the house so the paintings can cure in a warm space.

I wear three layers of heavy clothes and heavy snow boots when I'm painting.

It's pretty cold even with a heater.

I have great views though, with frequent visits from coyotes, deer, black bears and the rare moose on the property.



In her cold winter studio with two roosters | Kelowna | British Columbia | 2021

## ADVICE FOR ART STUDENTS, AND YOUNG ARTISTS:

*Art: We're Not Born With This Knowledge. It's Learned. Read! Look! Always.*

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