

ART & CULTURE: INTERVIEW

SULLIVAN GOSS: AN AMERICAN GALLERY

# Inga Guzyte: Young Sparrows

Opening 1st Thursday, 5 to 8pm, November 4th and on view through December 27th

By Kerry Methner



Sky High, 2021 by Inga Guzyte

**Guzyte:** My hope is that my portraits will lift the viewers up and inspire other “young sparrows” to also spread their wings and do the same, follow their passion, their voice and intuition.

**VOICE:** Please talk about the symbolism of the portrait adornments...

**Guzyte:** For this particular body of work I chose to combine my portraits with nature and I was very intrigued by the symbolism and different meanings of flowers and trees. Therefore, for example: I chose yellow Daffodils for the Amanda Gorman portrait because it symbolizes rebirth, hope, and positivity, as the feeling she gives me when she recites her poems.

I chose Anemones that symbolize protection to combine with the portrait of Millie Bobby Brown who advocates for children as a UNICEF Goodwill - Ambassador. I was inspired to combine Greta Thunberg portrait, a young environmental activist, with oak

leaves, a tree that Ancient Celts saw as a symbol of persistence and greater force that can't be stopped. I

admire her persistence and her big heart she has for this planet. And



Young Sparrow - Green - Gold - L, 2021 by Inga Guzyte

I chose sparrows to represent the fact that you don't have to be large to be heard. In addition to that, I like to think of these young girls full of passion and courage as birds that are free.

**VOICE:** This age is ripe to receive your work. What are you most proud of so far?

**Guzyte:** I am proud to have never given up following my artistic voice no matter how hard at times it seemed to be.

**VOICE:** Any suggestions for folks trying to find their own voice and passion?

**Guzyte:** Being curious, asking questions, listening, reading, traveling, stepping outside the box and your own comfort zone, will at least push you in the right direction of finding those things.

It is very tempting to choose your passion based on the promise of its success. To that I can just say: no one can tell you how successful you are as long as you are happy doing the things that you do.

part of the world without sons can designate one of their prepubescent daughters as a son in order to help their families with work that girls are not typically permitted to do.

Guzyte agreed to answer a few questions for VOICE readers prior to the 1st Thursday opening.

**VOICE:** What inspires you to do portraits of women?

**Inga Guzyte:** I chose to create female portraits because I found something in their personal story to admire. The more I think about their stories, the more

resilience I gain myself. Their courage and strength transferred to me. I feel stronger and have more hope for the future. I want to share their stories, not because they are unique, but because they are not. Every woman out there can be an advocate for positive change in this world. Many can't wait for change to happen.

Being raised by a single mother, it feels like second nature to me to admire women as I admire my mother and to listen to their stories and ideas. In a way, the portraits I create are telling my own personal story because they speak on the things that I care about and want to address. Therefore, celebrating women by creating portraits of them feels very empowering to me. And why should we not celebrate, lift each other up, feed off each other's energy, and strive for greater things together?!

exhibition as part of the 2022 Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. Out of over 2,700 entries, Guzyte's sculptural portrait joins 41 other Finalists next year in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C.

Among the portraits at Sullivan Goss are five “daughters” or “young sparrows” most readers will recognize: Amanda Gorman, Momiji Nishiya, Greta Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai, and Millie Bobby Brown. The sixth portrait is of an anonymous young woman that she calls *Bacha Posh - Daughter, You Will be my Son*, highlighting a custom in

Afghanistan and Pakistan, where families in that



Inga Guzyte

Photo courtesy of the artist

**ABOUT THE ARTIST:** Inga Guzyte was born in Lithuania and emigrated to Gelsenkirchen, Germany with her mother and brother when she was still young.

In Germany, the skateboarding community welcomed her, which was vital in helping her to build a life in a new country. When she turned 21, she immigrated to the United States, making her way to Santa Barbara to study English and art at Santa Barbara Community College – one of the best regarded City Colleges in the country and a place associated with such skateboarding companies as Shorty's and Powell Peralta. After finishing school, Inga got to work – exhibiting broadly in her adopted home city of Santa Barbara. Since then, she has shown in San Francisco, Oakland, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Zürich, Vienna, and Los Angeles. Last year, Inga won first place in the *At the Edges* exhibition at the Westmont Ridley-Tree Museum of Art, as juried by Marcos Ramirez. She also got the Mayor's Choice award at the L.A. Art Association's exhibition *Floating Worlds* at the Brea Gallery last year. Right now, her work is showing at Barney's in New York as part of a special presentation of the Women Who Dared Collection through Northwell Health Group.

**AS THE ARTS & CULTURE SEASON HEATS UP,** galleries and museums are stepping up to add their own flair and excitement to the mix.

As one of Santa Barbara's finest galleries, Sullivan Goss: An American Gallery is leading the way with several new exhibitions by local favorites, including Nathan Huff: *Almost Here*, and the second solo exhibition by Inga Guzyte: *Young Sparrows*.

In her exhibition, Guzyte will present a second body of sculptural portraits in her current medium of choice, scrollsaw cut skateboards.

*Young Sparrows* focuses on young women, and follows on the heels of the National Gallery's announcement that her work was selected for



Young Sparrow - Green - Orange - R, 2021 by Inga Guzyte