

An interview with Nathaniel Aric Galka

The painter as the story teller

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Nathaniel Aric Galka

[Nathaniel Aric Galka](#)'s paintings have an old-world feeling while they are simultaneously contemporary - and perhaps futuristic - in his elegant depiction of what he thinks Earth may resemble post-human. His paintings transport us into a fairytale world of fauna and flora. Galka has a deep reverence for art history and nature that is reflected in his paintings. He works in a combination of oils and India ink, and India ink on its own. He paints on a linen canvas that he wraps over a wood substrate. First, he primes the linen cloth by troweling multiple layers of Carrara marble powder mixed with titanium white pigment. While painting, he may easily surpass one hundred plus layers of paint and glazes, and then upon completion, he finishes the painting with three coats of hand-polished wax. This patina gives his paintings an illuminating effect and it adds to the old-worldly feel of his paintings.

I met up with Galka at his studio in Mount Kisco, New York. His studio is thoughtfully arranged, and it is pleasantly fragrant with orange and lavender scents stemming from the non-toxic sustainable solvents and oils he uses. Galka presented his paintings to me and then propped them up below a large canvas in the works. The decor of his studio nods to one of a by-gone era with a vintage Persian Tabriz rug covering the floor, and there are portieres made out of Indian print fabrics that distinguish the studio from private spaces. Let's get to know Galka a bit more.

Creativity and beauty are a rite of passage for us.

(Nathaniel Aric Galka)

Did your parents object to you becoming an artist?

Absolutely not! My mother is a very gifted artist in her own right and my father has worked in the wallpaper industry for over forty years now. My grandfather was a well-known and sought-after industrial photographer from the late 1940s well into the 1980s. As you can see, being an artist was well accepted in my family.

Are you your happiest when you're painting?

Painting is not my ultimate “happiest” place. It is exceptionally rewarding but can be filled with trials and tribulations. Painting can actually be a fearful thing to have a calling for. Every day is new and reliant on one's need to stay creative... it can be daunting but the rewards outweigh the fear.

I think of you as a painter and yet you are also a photographer? Tell me about the different mediums you work in.

I have always been a painter. My mother said that I was given a brush with paint before I picked up a pencil to write. Painting is my language. It is how I explain my soul and how I wish to see the world. Photography is a more immediate energy. It can still be poetic and haunting but it does not speak in the same way as painting. I actually received my Master's degree from Northwestern University in Chicago with a focus on photography. The majority of the iconography in my paintings stem from my own photos. I do love photography and how it serves a vital purpose in the research and development of my work.

Are you working on any new projects or collaborations?

I am always working on new works and I have collaborated with a contemporary New York music composer/singer Dyllan White. I do love to put soundtracks to my exhibitions. I relish a full sensory exuberance. I would actually love to include olfactory/fragrance in my exhibitions when available. I am very interested in how all dynamics of sensory intake create a fully developed presentation in one's memory.

Do you have a favorite book or poem?

The poem *Thanatopsis* by William Cullen Bryant.

Do you have a dream project?

I would love to curate a show where contemporary artists are invited to hang a single piece of art next to historical works that have greatly influenced them in the galleries of the permanent collection of The Metropolitan Museum. Showing how valid history is as a continuum. One artist, one piece of art per room against the influences of history. I would find it to be such a dynamic spotlight on how we are losing in the art world the connection to the past. Everything has been moving so fast forward that we are losing the fragile beauty of the past.

Name one favorite artist.

John Singer Sargent.

When you're not working how do you spend your free time? Do you have any favorite museums, dining and travel experiences you would like to share with our readers?

I spend countless hours in upstate New York in the Bedford area transcending with nature. I only paint four days a week about ten-hour days, so nature is my respite for sanity. Without question, The Metropolitan Museum is first and foremost a weekly luxury, to be followed closely by the Frick Collection on Fifth Avenue. Obviously, “travel” has been delayed but I do day trips to find “hole-in-the-wall” experiences with adventures and curiosities.

Where would you like to go when the pandemic is over?

My parents live in Tennessee! They live in the foothills of the Smokey Mountains. It has always been a place for respite and to recharge... but mostly I just want to hug my parents again. It is hard not seeing a crucial lifeline for as long as it has been.

Galka through painting beautifully communicates the necessity for us to take care of our Earth, our planet, our home. Galka's message is clear the world doesn't need us for continuum. The world will heal without us. And yet we need the Earth for our continuum. Galka's paintings are as enchanting as spending time in nature itself.



Noelle Newell

After years of practicing interior design, Noelle finds writing a more inclusive way to share her passion for the arts with a broader audience. Noelle is a graduate of Curry College and the Fashion Institute of Technology. After university, she studied art history and Italian language at The British Institute of Florence, Florence, Italy, and the decorative arts at Sotheby's Institute of Art, London, Great Britain.

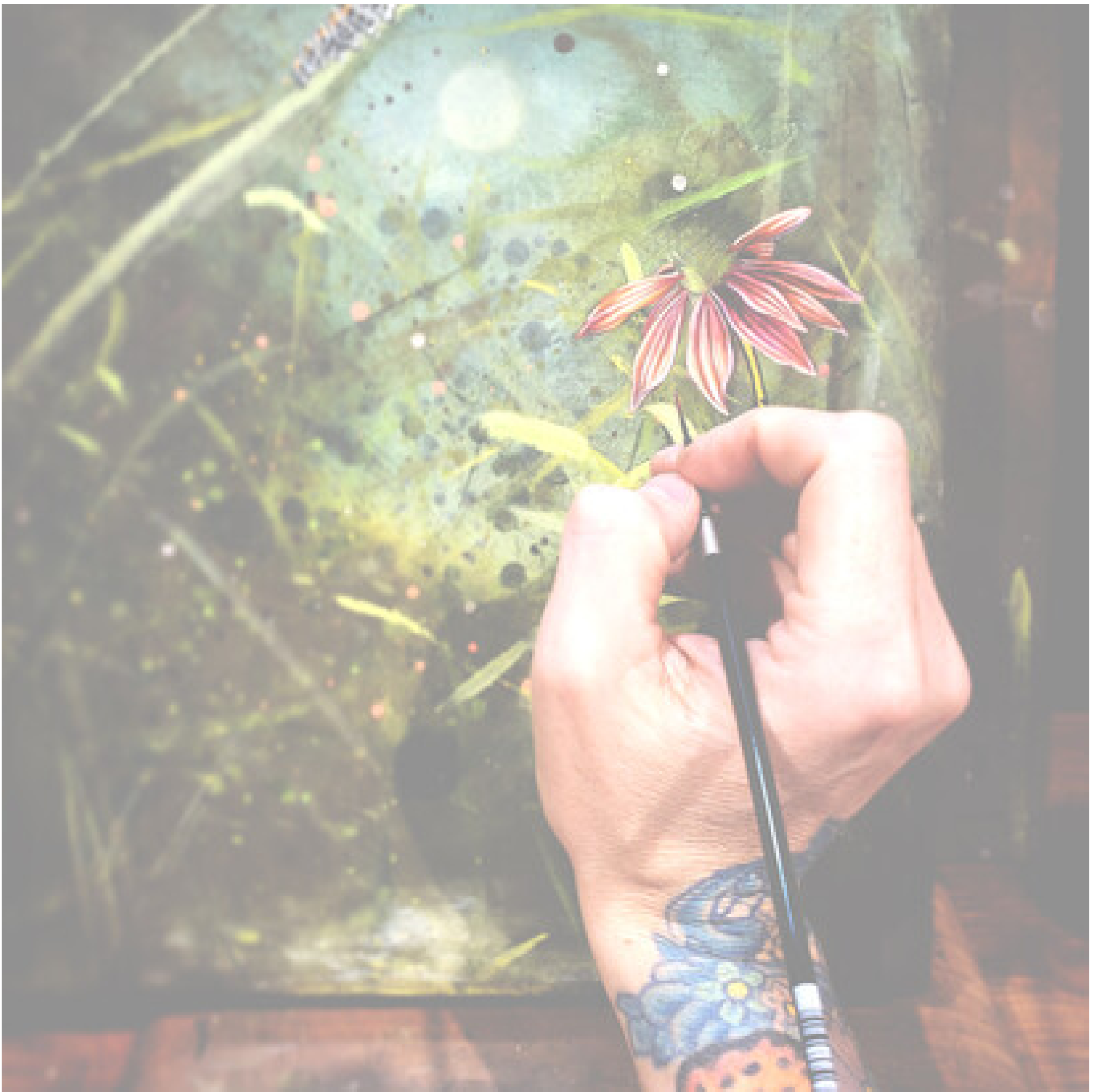
[Author profile](#)













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