

# ART AND CAKE

A Contemporary Art Magazine with a Focus on the Los Angeles Art Scene

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## Studio Visit: Leigh Salgado, The Power of Pink

**Author** / 3 hours ago

Leigh Salgado, Studio Visit. Photo credit: Gary Brewer.

### Studio Visit: Leigh Salgado, The Power of Pink

**“The beauty of the world which is soon to perish, has two edges, one of laughter, one of anguish, cutting the heart asunder.” ~Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own.**

**By Gary Brewer**

The weave of a pattern, the frilly ornamentation of lacy shapes layered into thoughts and ideas, feeling and form. Beautification and the playful delight in adornment as a celebration of the feminine and as a statement of power; story telling through a craft with a history dating back 1500 years.

Leigh Salgado creates cut-paper works that express a fearless embrace of her sense of the feminine. They exude pleasure, sexual playfulness and beautification; her work conveys this not as an expression of passive role play, of being an ornament for the male gaze, but as an assertion of the universal act of adornment and allure as a form of performance and as a show of personal power.

Her works allude to craft and the feminine, harkening back to pattern painters such as Miriam Shapiro and Joyce Kozloff, who used traditionally defined feminine crafts as a way to assert a feminist aesthetic. Miriam Shapiro coined the term “femmage” to describe a combination of painting and sewing techniques, fusing traditionally female crafts such as embroidery and quilting, and adding these elements to her work to articulate a female perspective. Leigh’s work adds another layer to this historical approach of investing work with ideas of the feminine through form and craft as an act of empowerment.

Women’s underwear, bustiers, corsets and flowers are a constant theme in many of her works. These forms freely morph as she cuts and pieces individual parts together. It is intuitive and follows a path in which each choice creates a problem to solve. It is a form of free association where the final design is arrived at from a process of discovery.

Leigh said of her working process, “Art is a form of problem solving. You have to make a choice and then you find the solution to get to the next move. It is a sequence of decisions through which I find the next form, color and pattern to arrive at the final design. It does not sound romantic but it is the way that I work.”

Her statement reminded me of the Miles Davis quote, “It’s not the note you play that’s the wrong note – it’s the note you play afterwards that makes it right or wrong.” Her works begin with very personal thoughts and ideas as a thematic direction but as the works develop, these ideas become camouflaged in the intricate weave of lacy patterns, present, but obscured in the complex layers.

She tells stories, narratives from her personal life and of the social and political events that affect her. The history of the craft of paper cutting as an art form flows through the look and feeling of many of her pieces. The art of paper cutting started in China in the 4th Century AD, with the invention of paper. Every culture has created a form that expresses the aesthetics of their world and time. In Leigh’s artworks one can sense elements that suggest Mexican designs or others that look as though they are referencing Indonesia or stylistic forms from China. When I asked her about this she said, “It is not intentional, I have Mexican-American ancestry on my fathers side but I do not intentionally try work in a style that emulates any art from other cultures. It happens naturally and I feel it is partly a result of living in Los Angeles, with the rich patchwork of people and cultures living side by side and influencing each other. “

She spoke about her use of fem themes and designs in her work and of it being a statement with a social and political meaning. “I was a therapist for years. I mostly saw young girls, many of whom had suffered various forms of abuse. Most of them hated the color pink, because they saw it as a feminine color and to be feminine was to be powerless. They were drawn to black and colors that were “masculine”. To be a girl was to be weak; pink was a color that represented their powerlessness. I want to assert the power of the feminine, to work in a silly, playful sexy way, inhabiting this space of pleasure, beautification and play as a place of power. I know that it is a complex area, that the shifting nature of gender is not fixed; but I love the idea of wearing sexy underwear that no one else can see just for the sheer pleasure of wearing something beautiful and playful; my work expresses the desire to be beautiful, even if it is just for oneself.”

Adornment and beautification are not solely a cultural construct of human nature. It is expressed in animal behavior as well. For example: in the male Bowerbird who creates

elaborate nests adorned with bits of blue glass, berries and other objects in shades of blue, in order to attract a mate. One finds it in the richly patterned designs on birds, fish and mammals, at times for the purpose of attraction and at other times, for no discernable purpose at all. Creatures living in the lightless dark of the deepest ocean can display beautiful markings with no eyes to see it. Darwin was so distraught over the ostentatious beauty of a peacock's feather that the sight of it made him sick. He developed his theory of sexual selection to address this problem as it contradicted natural selection. However, beauty stands outside this purpose driven notion; it seems to exist at times for its own sake, as an expression of the creative forces that have brought our world into being.

Leigh allows her deep sense of design and the intuitive feeling of how much detail is enough or too much to guide her work. Complex, playful, humorous, and intelligent, these works communicate on many levels.

She had several works in process when I visited her studio. There were small pieces near completion and larger ones that were in the beginning stages. She first draws loose patterns and designs onto paper and then cuts out the negative spaces intricately, with a high level of skill and craft. Elements were arranged on panels in compositional layouts, or scattered randomly on her worktable. Certain motifs recur; flowers, corsets and other images show up in her work or are suggested by the forms that she uses. I asked her about the iconography. "I depict flowers because they are beautiful and you are not supposed to be a flower painter if you are a serious artist. I hate rules, the restrictions that are put on about what one can and cannot be done, bothers me. Being an artist is about being free to do what you want, and I like flowers. I use sexy undergarments because it is fun and girly. I know it is not universal but it is an expression of my sense of the feminine, of wearing frilly, fun things for the pure pleasure of it."

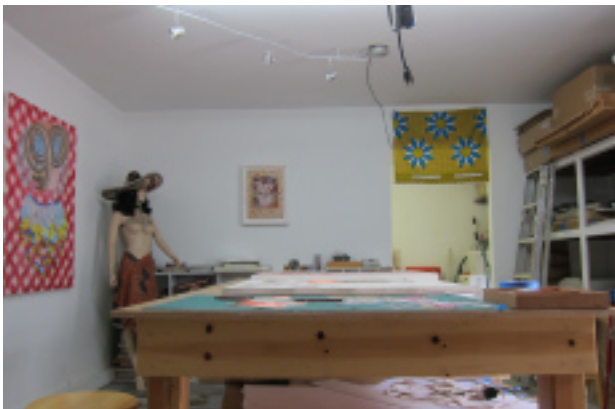
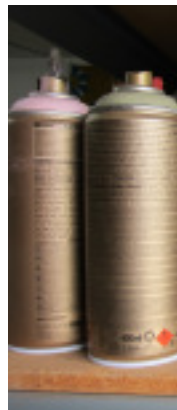
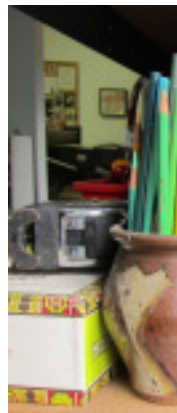
The current pieces have an emotionally charged theme that underlies the rich patterns. In 1963 Leigh's father died. There was a funeral, but the kid's were not included; there was never a ceremony to say goodbye or experience a feeling of closure. That same year, President Kennedy was assassinated. The absence of her father's funeral was juxtaposed with the elaborate pageantry of the funeral for JFK. Leigh wanted to create a piece that explored the emotional dissonance of these memories. The pink color of the dress that Jacqueline Kennedy was wearing when JFK was shot and the color of the suits his children were wearing during the funeral, have found their way into these works. Other subtle references allude to this moment. "Somehow this event is etched in my memory. I am using the colors and other references to create a starting point for the work. No one else may be able to see these themes in the work, but it is important to me. It is something that has come up in my thoughts, these difficult memories, and I wanted to use these emotions and memories and weave them into my work."

The creative act is cathartic; it is a way to reconcile and redeem painful memories and the contradictions of this complex universe that we inhabit. Private space and private rituals allow us to find ways for our identity to breath, and to be embraced in a safe harbor. It allows us to create "a room of one's own", adorned with patterns that symbolize power and play.

Leigh Salgado takes us on a journey into the intricate weave of stories and symbols that traverse worlds and identity. She does so with a sense of joy and humor, but also addressing serious subjects that are embedded in richly wrought works of art whose layers of memories and feeling are concealed and interwoven into a symbolic language of pattern and lace.

Upcoming exhibitions:

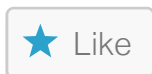
Kitsch-In-Sync: Art and its Opposite, curated by Bradford J. Salamon, at Coastline Community College Gallery that opens Jan. 26th, 2019 and a Solo show at LAUNCH LA , in 2019, date still to be determined.





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## Studio Visit: Leigh Salgado, The Power of Pink



Leigh Salgado, Studio Visit. Photo credit: Gary Brewer.

## Nettie Wakefield at Jason Vass



Nettie Wakefield, Brandy at Jason Vass. Photo credit: Kristine

## This Brush for Hire at ICA LA

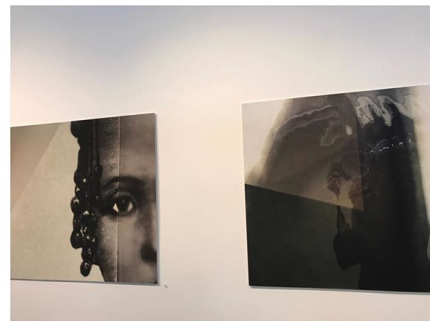


Alexis Smith, Wasteland 2 in This Brush for Hire: Norm Laich and Many Other Artists at The Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (ICA LA). Photo courtesy ICA LA

## Art Influencer: Astri Swendsrud



## Artist Profile: Cia Foreman

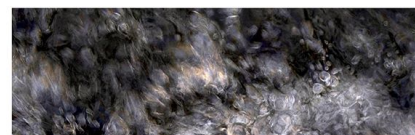


Artist profile: Cia Foreman at Fabrik Projects. Photo credit: Genie Davis.

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## Artist Profile: L. Aviva Diamond





### Provocative Plastic Cast in Bronze

Brandy at Jason Vass by Nettie Wakefield  
Through July 21st



Work by Erica Ryan Stallones. Elephant Art Space. Photo courtesy of the artist.



### From Pangs to Pangolins at Shulamit Nazarian



Zoey Hawk in From Pangs to Pangolins at Shulamit Nazarian.  
Photo credit: Lorraine Heitzman.

### In the Stillness Between Two Waves of the Sea: A Group show at Durden and Ray



In the Stillness Between Two Waves of the Sea. Durden and Ray.  
Photo credit Patrick Quinn

### The Candy Store and Something Extra at Shoebox Projects



The Candy Store by Debby and Larry Kline at Shoebox Projects.  
Photo credit: Genie Davis.

### Studio Visit: Katherina Olschbaur, Form as Potential



Katherina Olschbaur, studio visit. Photo credit: Gary Brewer.



### Blue Roof Studios Arts Festival: Celebrating Arts and Community through Summer Solstice

July 23rd 12-5pm

### Beyond the Streets LA 2018



Beyond the Streets Los Angeles, 2018. Photo credit: Evan Senn.

### Asad Faulwell and Katy Ann Gilmore at Denk



Katy Ann Gilmore, Fold #14 at DENK Gallery. Photo courtesy of the gallery

### Mark Dutcher at Beyond Baroque



Mark Dutcher, The Prisoners at Beyond Baroque. Photo credit: Jody Zellen.

### Breaking Down the Walls in Street Art:



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