



Day 144-146, 2020 From Nina Lipkowitz's January 2021 show, Meditations in the Time of the Pandemic, Watercolor, pen and ink, torn paper, 24x18"

## UPDATE WITH ARTIST

# NINA LIPKOWITZ

*Interview by Harryet Candee*

*Photographs courtesy of Artist*

**I know you are creating a body of new artwork I would love to hear about. What makes this work different or similar from previous work you have done?**

**Nina Lipkowitz:** When I look back over my life and especially my life as an artist I see how connected it all is. I minored in sculpture in college and my earliest work was done in stone; both marble and alabaster. Following the birth of my son in 1975 I became a potter and ran and taught at the West Side YMCA in Manhattan. In 1990, I left the world of crafts and clay and worked as a guide and educator at the American Museum of Natural History in NYC for 10 years while waiting for inspiration as to what I should do

next. It took a while but after moving to the Berkshires 15+ years ago I have been teaching yoga and painting in watercolor, oil and acrylics on canvas and paper. As you know I also spent several years painting on my iPad.

I have always been fascinated by circles, spirals and colors. (see images). My life has actually been a series of never ending circles and spirals. Much more than an artist, I consider myself an explorer. I often set myself assignments and ask myself "what if?"

**Are you feeling this may be just a stepping stone, or do you see yourself committing to what you are now doing? Maybe you will say,**

**I don't know. In which case, I would ask you if you feel a sense of newness and freedom?**

In every way I am committed to evolving. Nothing is static and neither is my work. The only thing that I am certain of that I will always be evolving and changing.

**The show you had in July was at 510 Warren Street Gallery in Hudson, NY. What was involved in terms of challenges and theme?**

One of my main challenges during this year was that due to scheduling changes caused by the pandemic I would be having two shows within 6 months (January and July, 2021) and I realized that I wanted to mark the changes with a new



Nina Lipkowitz *Where Does the Moon Go?* Mixed Media on Canvas 24x18"

body of work but the question was how to do it and what would do? A bit crazy no?

This new show which was up for the month of July is called- "After the Year of Living Dangerously: What's Next?". The show it followed was called "Meditations in the Time of a Pandemic".

The work shown in January began on March 12, 2020 when John and I locked down for the pandemic. Each painting was numbered with the day count beginning a few days after lock down day, March 12, 2020. During that year I kept a written journal. This daily work allowed me to stay grounded in each day and kept me from projecting into what I saw as a very unknown and frightening future.

For me the initial year of the pandemic as ending in March, 2021 after the vaccine became available and the fear began to abate and the world felt like it was beginning to open up. In addition to knowing that I had another show coming in 6 months I felt ready to challenge myself by trying to continue in watercolor and ink but using canvas instead of paper. I set that as my assignment, to find out- Could it be accomplished? It was something I had never seen or worked in. Wa-

tercolor moves on paper in a very different way than it moves on canvas. I coated the canvas with a watercolor ground which allowed me to start my paintings with watercolor paints since that was the language I was comfortable with. I began adding inks, acrylics and mixed media; mostly torn and cut papers made from mulberry pulp with elements of gold and silver leaf. I realized that the layering effects on canvas were very different and less spontaneous than on paper but in some ways very similar in feeling to my iPad paintings. Instead of one painting a day I would work for days, weeks and in some cases months on each piece.

**Hudson is a very exciting place, its evolving all the time. What are your thoughts about Warren Street Gallery?**

I feel so fortunate to be a part of 510 Warren Street Gallery in Hudson, NY. Hudson has evolved and become more and more exciting during the time we have been there. We celebrated our 10th anniversary last October. Being a member of an artist owned gallery is incredible. It allows me to curate my own shows. I decide what I am going to show and how I am

going to show it. We seem to have weathered the pandemic very well. We have an incredibly talented and diverse group of artists which over the years have changed and grown in scope and numbers. Kate Knapp, the gallery director has managed to give the gallery a very special vision. 510 Warren Street Gallery is always on the look out for new artists so if you are interested in becoming a part of it please contact us by email: 510warrenstgallery@gmail.com

**You have done an amazing body of work related to, and in honor of your father and his journey through WWII. Have you been adding to it all with new ideas and exploration? Maybe, you find it very contemplative and private now? Can you also, for readers unfamiliar with this work of yours, explain what this is all about?**

I think that you are referring to my show from 2018, "Battle Fatigue" which was inspired by a scrap book my father and mother put together after he returned from WWII. He was an officer with Patton's Third Army for 2 years and helped liberate Ohrdruf, the first concentration camp  
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## NINA LIPKOWITZ



**Lt. Polkowitz**

From the Show Battle Fatigue, 2018, Photo transfer and acrylic on canvas, 24x18"



Nina and her iPad work, direct descendants from working in pottery and the ancestors of her new abstract work

**Always Trust Your Cape**

Portrait from Ireland, Halloween, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 36x36"  
Nina's work when Covid Lockdown hit.

liberated by the US. Not only was this body or work a way to honor him but it was a way to heal what had been an often confusing and complicated relationship with this man who suffered from untreated PTSD. That work also on canvas used photo transfer images from his scrapbook. I have not continued with this work. I consider it complete although I am toying with figuring out how to include photo transfers in my new work. Another challenge I look forward to exploring.

**I know you had an amazing time in Ireland, before Covid. Please tell us what you brought home with you in terms of experience and memories of this magical land?**

This is a great question. This trip to Ireland was

incredible and inspirational. Although I have no Irish ties I was enchanted by the people, the music and the land. I came home in November 2019 ready to work on a new show which would hang at the gallery in Hudson in November, 2020. (This is the show that was postponed until January, 2021)

I began working on a series of portraits and was considering adding some landscape paintings. When Covid hit in March I no longer had any desire to create this body of work. I had completed several paintings which I had hung in a small show for the month of February. The gallery closed for 4 months during that time and stayed up on the walls basically sight unseen until last July, when we decided to reopen the gallery with all Covid protocols in place.

**Are you thinking of new travel plans on the horizon? It may be a while, yes, but, where might you be interested in going when we are all in the clear?**

For now, staying in the Berkshires, going in the New York City from time to time and staying healthy seems like a huge accomplishment. Definitely no major trips in the near future.

**Nina, how has your life changed, been altered, been touched by the Pandemic? What might you have learned from it?**

In March 2020 when I experienced my complete Covid, fear-based meltdown I was terrified of what would become of us. I had little faith that my husband John and I would survive this terrible plague. Being forced to isolate and leave



**Nina Lipowitz, *My Ladder***  
 From the show,  
 After the Year of Living Dangerously: What's Next?  
 Mixed media on canvas 24x18"



**Nina Lipowitz, *Day into Night***  
 From the show,  
 After the Year of Living Dangerously: What's Next?  
 Mixed media on canvas, 24x18"

everything that seemed like our "normal" life was frightening. How would we manage? How would we spend our days without our normal routines. Fortunately I mentioned all of this to Dave Halley, an amazing healer who I've worked with in the past and he asked if I would like to do a healing session with him over the phone. I trust Dave and although I had never done anything like this before and it turns out neither had he- Dave worked his magic (reiki and I don't know what else he did) over the phone. After that one session I was able to enter my studio, organize and clear the space which allowed whatever was next to flow through... and what appeared next were these meditative watercolor abstracts. I did at least one painting a day and sometimes two or three. Each one was

titled with the day count which continued up to day 365. The calm and comfort and grounding these brought me during this terrible time was nothing short of miraculous. The work flowed out of me with no planning or thinking. They were truly meditations in motion.

I think that I have learned how truly resilient and strong I am. Instead of folding and curling up into a ball, which is what I wanted to do I got help. I certainly watched a lot of movies during this last 16 months but I also did a lot of hiking, something I have always wanted to do. I've learned about our trails, waterfalls, beaver ponds, plants and mushrooms. All of this saved me and made me stronger in every way. You have asked me about my basic nature. I am lucky to be curious and optimistic.

**Nina, every time I see you, you have this happy smile on your face. It is a pleasure to talk with you. Can you share with us simply, what you think is on the rise in terms of the Art world?**

I have absolutely no idea. I'm hoping that people continue to find their creative souls and explore them. Life is too short to have to consider where it's all headed. For me it's a fulltime job just staying in the moment.

*Thank you!*