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Sheila Elias, Groundbreaking Artist

Sara Nardea March 7, 2016



Meet Sheila Elias: One of the most important and graceful American artists of our generation, Elias has exhibited everywhere from Miami's Bass Museum to New York's Whitney, and even the Louvre. She has been dominating the art scene for decades and has certainly always been one step ahead of the game. She constantly adapts her style and experiments with different mediums – from paintings to collages, from sculptures to photographs and even installations, she does it all. She calls the city of Miami her home and I was fortunate enough to interview her.

How did you start painting?

Elias: *The first time I realized I wanted to paint, I was at SAIC with my mother and saw Matisse and my heart stopped.*

Miami's art scene barely existed when you started working here. How do you feel about it and the way it's grown?

Elias: *In some ways the Miami Art scene is like being on a frontier. When I was first in a meeting related to Art Basel I actually didn't think that it could occur here as I had been to Switzerland and it was so international that Miami being a small town could not emulate it. I am thrilled that it is extremely successful.*

Sheila has recently been producing some of her work digitally and uses computers and iPads to achieve them. One of her latest digital series, "I Paint On My Ipad," was produced by digitally editing photos on her Ipad and the result is quasi-futuristic. This series was so interesting and effective that Apple stores all over the world had events showcasing it. She also was included in Art Basel Hong Kong.

Sheila Elias's mid-career publication, *Somewhere-Anywhere*, was published during a solo exhibition at Nova Southeastern University. The hypnotizing 144 page book traces the evolution of Elias's dynamic style and vision through both the abstract and the

figurative, object and performance, pop and expressionism. The book features a foreword by distinguished New York art critic and Fulbright Scholar Robert C. Morgan and presents the chronology of Elias's art as interpreted by noted Los Angeles critic, curator, and historian Peter Frank, who has followed Elias's work for almost three decades.

From my discussion with her, creating art is her life, her passion, and her number one priority. Her passion for her work is apparent at first impression and it's both inspiring and intense.

"My work is about the layers of life and art history, seeking in it a connection between art, aesthetics, and social consciousness. I like to portray a perception of urban tension, raw emotions and harsh realities tempered with gentle optimism and beauty, countering an American dream that has gone a bit astray. American sensibilities have influenced my life, the hues of my country found in the colors of my canvas. I like to bring an awareness of new directions and individual inventiveness. Through life experience, I incorporate visual, emotional, and psychological impressions and feed them into my paintings."

-Sheila Elias

Elias on a personal level is someone you immediately want to hang out with, talk to and learn from. She has more energy and is more vibrant than most people of any age that I have ever met. Her positive and upbeat personality is not only refreshing and delightful: it's contagious. I look up to her not only as an extremely accomplished and respectable artist but also as a kindhearted, personable and gracious human being. I can only hope to try to emulate her sophistication, her greatness of her outstanding career and the kind soul that she effortlessly is.

Sheila Elias is currently preparing for a show and discussion on March 15th at her studio in Miami – it is a private event focused on the question “what is contemporary art?” She and a panel of major collectors and experts will tackle that question alongside several young, local, and hot artists.

You can purchase Sheila Elias’s book on [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com/Sheila-Elias-Somewhere-Anywhere-Peter-Frank/dp/0615439535) <http://www.amazon.com/Sheila-Elias-Somewhere-Anywhere-Peter-Frank/dp/0615439535> or follow her on Twitter [@SheilaEliasArt](https://twitter.com/SheilaEliasArt).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Sara Nardea is no stranger to the art world, selling her own paintings and curating exhibitions -- from pop art to abstraction and now to art journalism, she is bringing her New York success to the up-and-coming Miami scene. Sara is now a contributing writer at L'Etage Magazine.