



*Protector - Patron
of Essential Workers
2021, acrylic on vinyl*

*Покровитель
необхідних працівників
2021, вініл, акрил*

At the start of the pandemic we were all suddenly forced into lockdown. Isolated and bereft of my usual

routines, I retreated to my home studio to channel the angst, fear, and frustration we were all experiencing. At the beginning of the quarantine, glued to news outlets, barraged by images of the virus, feeling vulnerable and confused and stuck at home, as an artist my response was to start painting.

Born first of nervous creative energy, my practice evolved over the course of a year and a half to what has become The Pandemic Collection shown here. This body of work now numbers over 200 pieces that take their shape from the circles on which they are painted. Circles are round, perfect, and continuous. They have a completeness. Circles offer a container in which to build depictions inspired by beauty but at the same time are ominously reminiscent of the virus. There are so many relationships. There is no precise edge. No beginning and no end. The circular forms also evoke mandalas, which can be used to facilitate meditation and provide sacred space. Using circular forms creates a natural window through which to illuminate our collective state of being. For me, the geometry of circles represents the cosmos. Each sphere allowed me to capture a momentary microcosm of the universe. Some days it was but an atom, a microscopic model for the structures of life; other times it felt more cosmic. I take comfort because creating mandalas is said to help stabilize and re-order inner life. I think we could all use a little more constancy right now as we witness Covid's daily threat to life as we knew it.

Creating this work is visceral for me. The Pandemic Collection seeks solace in aesthetics — it delivers hope and faith through image, form, and color. Its intention is for each painting to bloom in our collective gardens, offering glittering rays of sunshine, the echo of children's laughter, a burst of flowers to sustain us through these tragic times. Maybe we can survive the sudden news of a

colleague, friend, or family member attacked by the virus. Art can be a way to funnel grief, to channel the loss of friends and loved ones, and the loss of the world as we knew it. In recent months the world has literally been on fire, and yet, amid all the chaos, there is beauty. There is art. Paintings can glimmer in the distance. They can surprise us out of our torpor. They can mirror hope. Art outlives us and will therefore continue to tell our story long after this pandemic ends.

As I continue to work on the series, I feel that, at this moment in history, we are in profound need of sacred space — a faith that, while we may not emerge unscathed from this pandemic, we can at least not be undone by it.

Christina Saj is a contemporary artist whose abstract paintings reveal a fascination with vivid color and rich pattern. Her distinctly recognizable style calls on modernist roots and an interest in materials. Unlike a lot of modern art, Saj's work hails beauty to build her vocabulary. She is an iconographer of the future. Her colorful and playful paintings beckon the inner child while remaining in conversation with the Old World traditions in which her work is steeped. Her work offers the viewer a place of respite and visual joy. Her images allude to the tradition of sacred paintings, informed by her early training and work with Byzantine iconographer Petro Kholodny, the Younger, exposing her to ancient methods of painting in egg tempera. Saj holds a B.A. in Painting from Sarah Lawrence and an MFA from Bard College. She studied Byzantine Art History at Oxford University.

Saj continues adapting and innovating her techniques to engage modern audiences in new ways with the use of unusual materials that expand her reach as a painter. Her work has been exhibited widely, in such venues as the Museum of Biblical Art, The National Cathedral, The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, Union Theological Seminary, The Ukrainian Museum in New York, The Museum of Cultural Heritage in Kyiv, and the American Embassy in Qatar, as well as at the White House. Her works reside in private and museum collections in the U.S. and abroad. She maintains an active studio in New Jersey.

*Seeing thru to the Other side
2020, acrylic on vinyl*

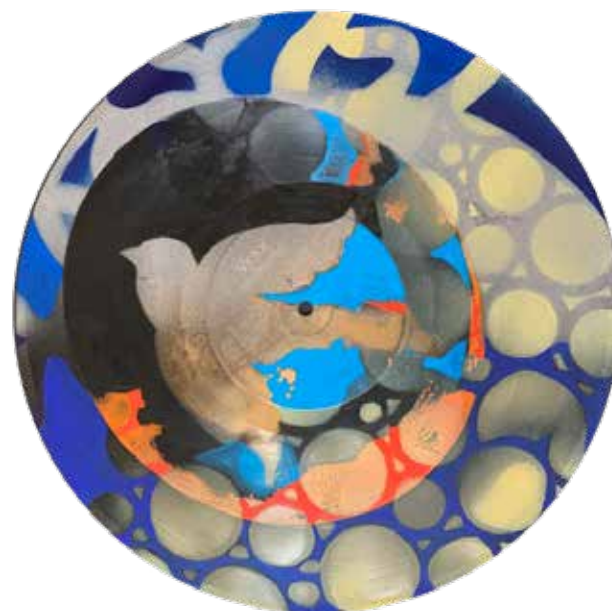
*Бачити наскрізь по той бік
2020, вініл, акрил*

*Memory of a Lost Friend
2021, acrylic on vinyl*

*Пам'яті втраченого друга
2021, вініл, акрил*



Finding Sanctuary During the Pandemic



У пошуках святилища в час пандемії



An Installation by Christina Saj Інсталяція Христини Сай



The Ukrainian Museum, New York
Український Музей, Нью-Йорк