

## **HAYAL POZANTI: "Interview – Materials and processes are pushing the boundaries of what constitutes a painting physically"**

Written by A Will Brown

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**New York-based painter Hayal Pozanti talks about her invented alphabet, working with digital media, and her belief that eventually paintings will be viewed and experienced through screen technology such as Google Glass**

Hayal Pozanti, who was born in Istanbul in 1983 and moved to New York in 2009, is an artist who works in painting, sculpture, collage and digital animation. Her work explores the relationship between new media technologies and the originality of the handmade through a vibrant yet meditative abstract pictorial language, conveyed through a unique alphabet of letters, or symbols, that Pozanti created.

**A Will Brown: What are you working on in the studio? Do you have new directions in your work, or exciting bodies of work coming up?**

**Hayal Pozanti:** I am working on a new series of paintings based on overlapping combinations of letters in my invented alphabet. I'm very excited about these because I feel they unify my interests in tactility, generative composition and conceptual colour combinations, particularly in reference to everyday consumer objects.

**AWB: You've talked about moving away from the appropriated towards making your own, new language or symbols. Do you see yourself ever returning to a process of appropriating images and motifs?**

**HP:** I've never lost interest in collecting images. Nowadays, these act as inspiration rather than a direct resource. So, in a way, one could say that I still appropriate conceptually but not materially.

**AWB: What are some of the most exciting or engaging projects or exhibitions you have been a part of?**

**HP:** I recently returned from the opening of the New Orleans Biennial where I have five works on display. I met a lot of wonderful artists, curators and writers during my time there. It was an invigorating and refreshing experience. Other than that, I will be launching a set of inflatable light fixtures with Studio Voltaire in London for its Christmas benefit sale. I have also taken part in AllGold at PS1, Museum of Modern Art, with a text piece. For that particular work, I edited and reconfigured a selection of tweets from my collection. It's a sound piece that mimics the voice of an elderly woman slowly articulating an amalgam of contemporary concerns that confronts humanity today.

**AWB: Does seeing your work outside the studio, in an exhibition or a home, change it dramatically for you? I'm interested in flexible interpretations here and how an artist's initial impetus may become muted, or enhanced, by changing surroundings. This has particular resonance for me when looking at your work because it is abstract and symbolic, yet uniquely so.**

**HP:** It depends on how much time has passed since I've made the work. If it's been a few years, there's a suspension of belief where I think back to all the precise decisions I made at the time. There is a very logical thought process to the way I make things and it's interesting to remember all the details step by step. It's like looking at the source code for a web page or an interface. Outsiders see the end result, while I instantly see a scroll down of commands. If it's part of an exhibition, I look at the other work in the show and try to find the common thread that connects my work to the other ones. The same is true when I see it in a collector's home. Both instances allow me to look at my work more objectively, and analyse what it might mean to others. If it's more recent work, I tend to skim over it because I've already overanalysed it and am not ready to confront it objectively.

**AWB: What kinds of places do you go to in order to think and find new elements of your paintings? Essentially does your process involve more of an introverted schematic, or are you more extroverted and outwardly gazing?**

**HP:** It's a combination of both. I enjoy observing the world with an anthropological perspective. I analyse how humans engage, react and adapt to developments in technology. I absorb a lot of information regarding this theme, both in terms of theory and also through daily culture. I think through and interpret these ideas to make connections in an introverted manner. I strive to make art that reflects and comments on these observations without being literal.

**AWB: Do you go to exhibitions regularly? What have been some of the most interesting that you have been to recently? What, in your mind, makes a great exhibition – at a gallery, museum or independent space?**

**HP:** I do visit exhibitions regularly when I can, yes. I also catch glimpses of a lot of shows online. I think a great gallery exhibition is one that requires you to be physically present to fully grasp the ideas. I don't mean this in the sense of an all-out entertainment experience, but there has to be something that the screen can't provide.

**AWB: Can you tell me about the process of making a painting for you, maybe through one particular work?**

**HP:** For the past two years, it's been a process of back and forth between the analogue and the digital. I would make a hand sketch, then place it in Photoshop, work on it on the computer using my trackpad, place that sketch on a panel, and work on it physically for a while, then put it back in the computer ad infinitum until I'm satisfied that the composition looks satisfactory in both physical life and also on the screen. For the latest paintings, I've created a set number of compositions that generate shapes by overlapping individual characters from my alphabet. They are more straightforward in composition and incorporate aesthetic sensibilities of everyday consumer objects.

**AWB: Do you think of yourself as making a kind of visual language, or a set of signs that identify particular ideas, objects, people or places? Tell me about the visual language you employ and how that evolved for you.**

**HP:** For several years, I've been investigating the idea of original content. It began when I asked myself how an artist could create a unique and universally recognisable visual language within an infinite image realm: the internet. The idea of immediate recognisability within the image economy, and the value that this creates on the physical object, have been my primary interests. In order to pursue this idea, I came up with a literal alphabet of shapes that I use to make my work. The final edit contains 31 characters. No final shape must resemble the previous shapes, and no shape must reference any object in the world. Painting, in this sense, is only a means of creating information vessels that disrupt the flow of images.

**AWB: I see a lot of study and interest in sculpture in your work. Are you interested in making sculptures, or objects, or have you made some in the past – works more sculptural than your cut-out works.**

**HP:** Yes, I am, and have made some before. I will start working on some for my forthcoming show at Jessica Silverman Gallery.

**AWB: Can you describe, and tell me a bit about, a few paintings? I'm interested in Unhosted (2014) and Twitter, Only With Fur (2014). These works reference internet-based mechanism and applications. Can you explain the relationship?**

**HP:** The titles for my work come from the stream of my Twitter feed. They have no literal relationship to the work itself and I only assign titles after I have completed the work. My Twitter feed comprises blurbs I come upon as I read about topics that interest me. The sculpture paintings themselves are purely abstract. They could be described as paintings of abstract sculptures that are not yet realised.

**AWB: What is coming up for you in the near future?**

**HP:** I will be showing some videos at Art Basel Miami in December. I will be having a solo show in February at Jessica Silverman Gallery in San Francisco. After that, in November 2015, I will be presenting work at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Connecticut.

**AWB: What do you think are the most important things happening in painting at the moment and is painting undergoing any big changes that you think are of note?**

**HP:** Due to rapid technological advancement, many materials and processes are pushing the boundaries of what constitutes a painting physically. A lot of artists, including myself, are exploring laser cutting, 3D-printing, developments in digital printing on varied materials, and incorporating industrial materials into paintings. It's a very exciting time to be making art. I foresee the future of these explorations will lead into a more spatial exploration of painting through virtual reality and simulation technology. I think painting will finally be able to fully incorporate the notion of time into itself by creating experiential paintings that can be viewed and experienced through screen technology which becomes one with our eyes (ie Google Glass/lenses) or everyday virtual reality simulators such as the Oculus Rift.