

MICHELLE GOLDSHMIDT

BFA MANIFEST 2023 SHOW



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

May 12-June 6, 2023

OUT OF THE BASEMENT: 2023 UNDERGRADUATE FINE ARTS THESIS EXHIBITION

Out of the Basement: 2023 Undergraduate Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition features the works of thirteen BFA candidates in Columbia's Fine Arts program. The exhibition, which includes paintings, drawings, sculpture, prints, books, garments, video, performance, and installation works, represents the culmination of four years of development of a cohesive body of work for each artist while earning their degrees.

Participating artists: Jacob Ashba, Charlotte Briskin, Daniela Castro, Michelle Goldshmidt, Amairani Martinez, Ariaunna McCloud, emmalyn mueller, Kevin Rivera, Carolina Romo, James Ross, Sofie Way, Cordelia Weatherby, Emma Wilmarth.

Out of the Basement: 2023 Undergraduate Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS) and the Art and Art History department, and Adam Brooks, Professor at Columbia College Chicago.

MICHELLE GOLDSHMIDT

Michelle Goldshmidt's artwork tells a story of what has been lost and the consequences of humanity's carelessness. Through her paintings of nature, she depicts the ethereal world that people have been blessed with, alongside reminders of what may cease to exist due to societal habits orchestrated by those in power.

Goldshmidt works to reconnect with her heritage through her art. The consequences that occur from mistreating nature tie in with the lessons behind Slavic folklore. Slavic mythology revolves around the consequences of immoral deeds, people being punished for their poor etiquette and selfishness. Each archetype in these folktales can serve as a reminder for what may come from disrespecting nature as well as disrespecting another's bodily autonomy.

Michelle Goldshmidt is an American-born Witch and painter of Slavic descent. Both of her parents immigrated to America with their families from Ukraine and Moldova to escape the harsh living conditions enforced by the Soviet Union. Goldshmidt's art practice is her way of worshiping nature. Painting Slavic archetypes in folktales is a way for Michelle to reconnect with her heritage as well as a way to share Slavic folktales in the same way her ancestors did centuries prior.

Since Michelle's spirituality heavily revolves around living alongside nature, she has come to terms with the fact that her practice is unsustainable. As someone who was primarily an oil painter, she now works to filter out unethical mediums from her practice and is learning about more eco-friendly mediums.

Instagram: [@michellearialla](https://www.instagram.com/michellearialla)



"Serpent's Touch" a rendition of Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam"
2021, Oil on stretched canvas, 3' x 4'



Nightly Stroll, 2022, Oil Paint and Glitter on Canvas, 4' x 3'



A Mother's Bond, 2022, Gouache on Arches Watercolor Paper, 9" x 12"



Baba Yaga's Hut on the Run, 2022, Watercolor and Gouache on Strathmore watercolor paper, 22" x 18"



Rises the Moon, 2022, Watercolor and Colored Pencil on Strathmore Watercolor Paper, 22" x 18"



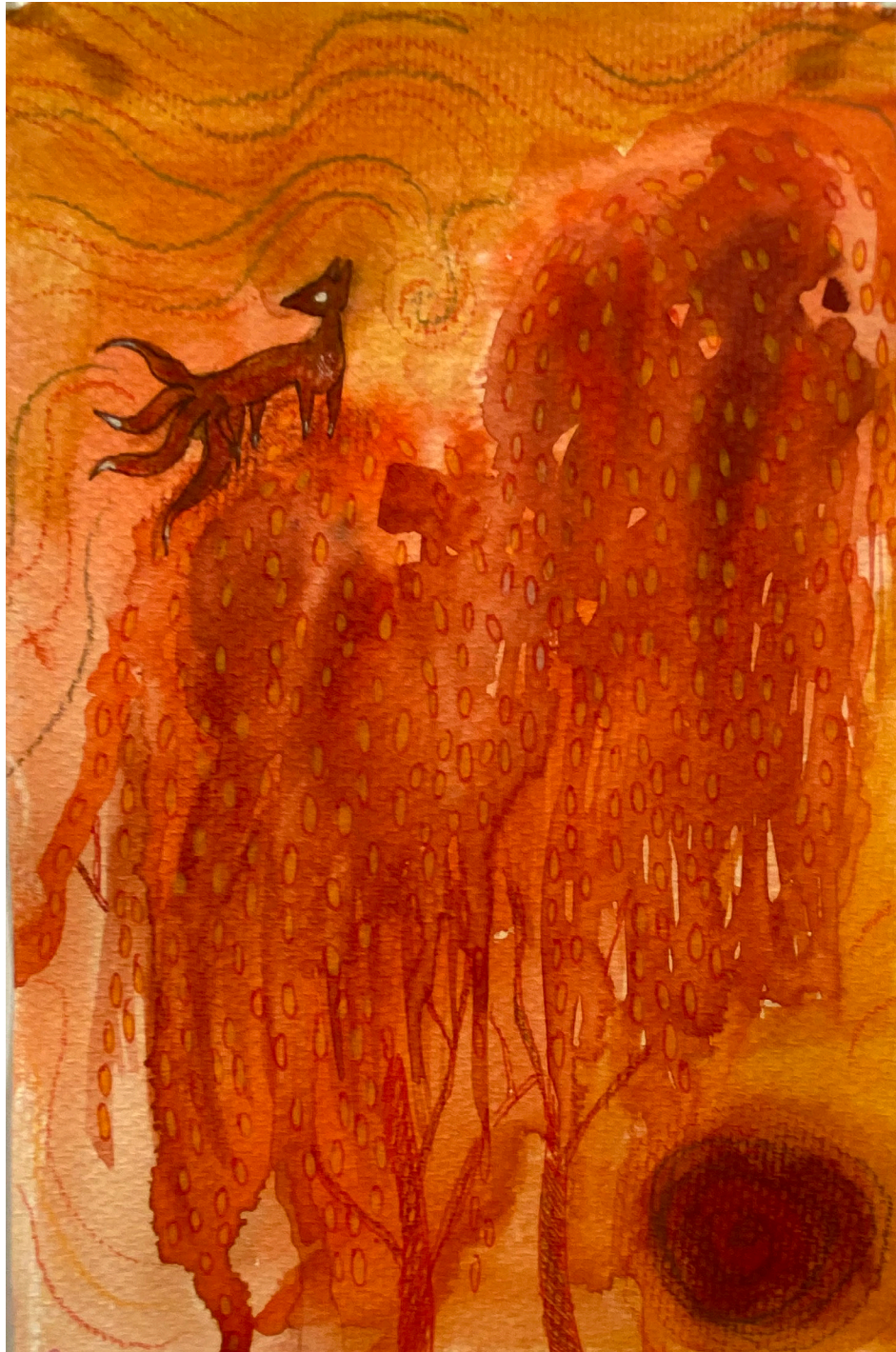
The Last Dragon, 2023, Watercolor, Colored Pencil, and India Ink on watercolor paper, 9" x 12"



Guidance, 2023, Sigil on Watercolor on paper, 8.5" x 5.5"



Untitled, 2023, Future Oil Painting on Canvas, 4' x 3'



Burning Bright, 2023, Watercolor, Ink, and Colored Pencil, 8" x 5.5"



Into the Woods, 2023, Watercolor, ink, and Colored Pencil, 8" x 5.5"

INTERVIEW WITH MICHELLE GOLDSHMIDT

Conducted by Rachel Manlubatan

Rachel Manlubatan: How has your Slavic ancestry impacted the ways in which you perceive your current behaviors and ideas, even outside of your art? Have you always wanted to explore this part of your identity within your craft, or were there other areas that you used prior to express your interest in Slavic history?

Michelle Goldshmidt: I was born to a Ukrainian Mother and a Moldovan Father, both were born in the USSR and immigrated with their families to America as teenagers. I was raised in a household where English and Russian were intertwined, eating Slavic foods, my family held on to a lot of Slavic superstitions which I feel was my first introduction into meddling with fate and manifestation. My art and my heritage had always been kept separate until recently. I have always loved looking at illustrations of Baba Yaga huts and recently developed a slight obsession with illustrating how her hut might look. Illustrating Baba Yaga's house on legs had sparked an interest in illustrating other characters in Slavic folklore. My interest in expressing my Slavic roots were initially in witchcraft, a big portion of witchcraft is practicing with and honoring your ancestors, so naturally I explored pagan traditions in Slavic history before Catholicism had become the predominant practice in Eastern Europe.

RM: What has your process been like now that you are trying to shift to eco-friendly mediums? What have you learned so far, and how does it differ from your initial practices?

MG: Shifting to a more eco-friendly art practice has been daunting, I have had to completely rethink the mediums I purchase, and set up a plan for my future art making process. In the past I have unfortunately failed to maintain a sustainable art practice, it was only recently

that I realized the hypocrisy in painting the natural world with materials so harmful to it. As of right now, I am still using the painting mediums that I already have in my collection. I will continue to be more mindful of how much paint I use in a sitting as well as continuing to dispose of any leftover paint properly. Luckily, depending on the ingredients, certain watercolor and gouache paints are eco-friendly. I would love to eventually create my own paint. I am looking into companies that source natural pigments that are sustainable and eco-friendly such as Natural Earth Pigments. I hope to have the funds in the near future to begin upgrading my painting materials so that my practice aligns with my core values of protecting the environment. My plan is to donate any leftover paint that I have after graduating and no longer having access to Columbia's rag disposal services. Once shifting to more eco-friendly paints, I will still have to continue my current paint disposal process of soaking up paint filled water with rags (for my water based oil paint) and with paper towels (for gouache and watercolor) to ensure that no paint goes into our waterways.

RM: Your subject matter covers a large range of animals in their varying habitats. How has this influenced the style of your art or the mediums you've chosen to practice with? What research do you conduct in order to become more knowledgeable about the nature that you are depicting?

MG: I have always enjoyed learning about animals, insects and plants. Originally, my style was focused towards being realistic and studying anatomy. In recent years other artists such as Shanna Van Maurik have inspired me to adopt a more illustrative style when painting the natural world. When I paint different fauna and flora I make sure to research the relationships between the two. When are these plants growing? Shall I paint how grass looks

INTERVIEW CONTINUED

in the spring or fall? I enjoy painting animals surrounded by the plants that are native to their location. I want to paint what our urbanized world should look like. Along with staying true to realistic environment settings I look into the spiritual meaning behind each plant and animal to influence the emotion I would like to portray through color, subjects and positioning.

RM: Can you speak on the common themes of Slavic folklore that inform your exhibit? Do you feel as if your art showcases the messages behind these folktales in a traditional sense, or do you utilize techniques that exhibit the stories in a new light?

MG: Slavic myths are endless, almost every aspect of life can be explained away by a spiritual entity. People share stories of spirits like the protective house spirit, Domovoy, or of Leshy, a shapeshifter that protects the forest. My exhibition highlights several powerful female goddesses and entities that roam the forests of Eastern Europe, some are driven by revenge, some rule over the cycles of nature and some are simply magical beings. My art showcases these folktales in a traditional sense, I wanted to depict these women as closely to their original descriptors as possible.

RM: Your use of movement and environment work together to prompt viewers into reflecting on their own lifestyle choices. What other artistic approaches do you integrate into your paintings to foster symbolism and introspection? What reflections do people typically voice when experiencing your work, and what reflections have you discovered yourself?

MG: Symbolism is a major component in my art practice. I research the symbolism behind colors, animals, and plants when creating my artworks. Utilizing color combinations to create

a mood is vital to my practice. Blue tends to be the dominant color in my practice, blue is the color of insight, intuition, and emotions which I feel is a common theme in my paintings. I've come to realize that perhaps I gravitate towards painting with blue due to these associated traits as I am someone who values being sensitive and intuitive. People have told me that my paintings of animals and nature spark memories of a time when they felt connected to the natural world, or a time when they had seen a certain animal. As someone who grew up with stories of different Slavic folktales, I tend to forget that many people don't know who characters like Baba Yaga are. It is always exciting for me to explain the different characters that I paint and their place in Slavic mythology/folklore.



THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan and Sierra Delamarter. Graphic design is also managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: colum.edu/deps

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Gallery Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.