



# “Kids”: A Solo Exhibition by Anna Navasardian

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Armenian-born, New York-based young artist Anna Navasardian, 24, is exhibiting a solo show entitled “*Kids*” at Michael Janssen Singapore. Consisting of life-size paintings featuring intimate portraits of adult and school-aged subjects, Navasardian’s work demonstrates incredible weight and depth far beyond her years. A number of the works on display are from the artist’s title series which explores themes such as identity, puberty, growing up, memory and recollection.

Navasardian talks to The Muse about her childhood and her latest exhibition.

## **Can you tell us about your childhood and adolescent years?**

I moved to the US from Armenia when I was three years old so I’ve grown up in New York, although I think I have traveled back to Armenia enough for it to have an influence. I spent six years in a Catholic school before transferring to an arts high school. That’s where I really started painting. As a kid I was always drawing with any materials I could find, but I got into painting in high school. Growing up in New York I was lucky enough to be able to see amazing shows constantly, always going to the Met and the Whitney especially, I feel like I was able to really appreciate and explore painting early on.



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**How did your experiences inspire this “Kids” series?**

I think my Catholic school experience must have some influence over this series. The first kids painting I did was actually based on my fourth grade class portrait. The photo was of rows of girls wearing baby blue plaid skirts, even the socks all the same length, in a beautiful wood paneled room. The repetition was striking which is what I was immediately drawn to, but eventually it got me thinking about the experience of school and adolescence, which is what really spurred the series.

**Who were the subjects of these paintings?**

At first I got all the subjects for the kids paintings from my own class pictures. Now I use a wider range of sources. A lot of them come from Soviet class photos from my family. I have all my mom’s old class portraits that I draw from a lot. Most recently, I’ve been finding old yearbook pictures and military portraits from thrift stores and places like that.



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**What did you hope to capture in your portraits?**

What the portraits are really about is the tension between how kids are presented and how they actually exist. I try to illuminate this middle ground through paint. I think it's an interesting area to explore because although it's a painting of kids, the ideas of the institution, society, and even parents, are present through these posed scenes.



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**What specific techniques did you employ when you painted this series?**

This series is all acrylic. I really like the immediacy of acrylic, it allows me to paint many layers fairly quickly so I don't feel that the paintings get stale in the process. I also like to leave the canvas raw to represent light, which is something I can't do with oil because it needs a full layer of paint to start. For some of my work, I paint directly from life using a live model, but for the kids series, all the subjects are taken from source photographs.



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**You use a lot of rich, dark colors in this series, like cobalt blue and deep shades of red. What is it that you want to convey with your color palette?**

I like to use rich colors to communicate the otherwise invisible, psychological elements of the subjects and the scenes in general. Most of the source photos are black and white so the color is a really subjective decision. Sometimes though, some of the kids in the original photographs are strong enough characters that they really seem to emanate a particular color, that's basically when the paintings going well.



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**Tell us more about the artists that personally inspired and influenced you over the years.**

I've always been drawn to German Expressionism, maybe because of the energy of it, so I've looked at a lot of Max Beckmann, Kirchner, and Otto Mueller. I really like George Grosz as well, his subjects have a really strong sense of character but are rendered so simply which is something I always try for. I also look to some Armenian artists, Sarian and Gorky especially. I think I can recognize a familiar strain in the work that I've always been attracted to.

**What feeling or emotion do you want to evoke with your portraits?**

I don't want so much to evoke any particular emotions or feelings, but more so to convey the weight of feeling in general. I strive for the paintings to communicate more openly with the viewer if possible, rather than represent a specific emotion or statement.

Don't miss out on your last chance to catch Anna Navasardian's first solo exhibition at Michael Janseen Singapore, Gillman Barracks, which ends this Sunday, May 5 2013.

*IMAGES COURTESY OF GALERIE MICHAEL JANSSEN SINGAPORE*

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