

# Bryan Ida

## About the Artwork

For the past five years, Bryan Ida has been engaged in a body of work that examines historic events in the context of the current social and political climate and raises awareness of past abuse and injustice by a government against historically targeted minority groups called *con.Text*.

Ida uses contemporary subjects with a connection to historic events to point out that man's inhumanity toward man is universal and seemingly unending. The challenge is to express outrage to this injustice in a manner that can express as Ida states, "who I am and the way I want to communicate. I want to shout without screaming and inspire an emotional response from the viewer." Emotions not of fear, hate and vengeance, but of compassion, respect, and a desire to right the wrongs that have been perpetrated on so many marginalized people in our society.

Ida uses people's personal stories and then researches and references text from government documents, declarations, or other forms of institutional communication, and uses the words as his mark to render each person with the very words that affect them. Using the words as a building block in the formation of the image does not define the subject by the words being used, instead, the words are blended and blurred and are transformed from a label to a broader gesture that is used to define a new visual language of strength and beauty.

Ida chooses to represent America with no filter and depict how it is perceived today, but with reverence and respect for history and what brought us to this moment in time. Ida has always had a deep love of history and is intrigued by the fact that we do not always learn from history's lessons and are constantly repeating past injustices.

His goal is for the work to be in a place where it can garner the most public interaction and contemplation. Where viewers can connect on an emotional level so that they may see the reality of our past and the ramifications in our present. Ida believes the work can be used as an entry point for further study in the curriculum of a student body. His portraits convey a sense of commonality and community shared within the narratives of people's lives. They offer a unique passageway to learn from history and apply the lessons of the past to solve today's problems. In the past 30 years, Ida has shown extensively in Europe, the US, and in Asia. He is represented in Los Angeles at the George Billis Gallery, and in Taiwan and Singapore at Bluerider Art.

## About the Artist

Ida was born and raised in Palo Alto, California, and as a child, grew up playing music and participating in youth symphony and band. His friends while growing up were the sons of a gallery owner named Paula Kirkeby who owned a fine art press and gallery named Smith Andersen. Through my friendship with this family, Ida was exposed to the small but important art world of Palo Alto in the 70s and 80s. Kirkeby was in many ways the world around which the peninsula art scene rotated. Being based in Palo Alto she worked with many faculty at Stanford and other bay area institutions and she represented many luminary artists such as Sam Francis, Bruce Conner, Nathan Oliveira, Frank Lobdell, and Joe Zirker. Ida didn't know it at the time but meeting these people in



Photo Courtesy of the Artist

this informal setting would have a great influence on him and on the direction of my life.

He has always had a need to express himself in a uniquely creative manner and in his youth his outlet was music. This passion led to studying electronic music composition and computer sound design in college.

After college in 1988, Ida went to work for Sam Francis, the noted Abstract Expressionist painter, as his studio assistant. Prior to working for him, Ida had known Sam for many years through his connection with Paula. In his Palo Alto studio, Francis was painting a large commission for the new United Government building in Bonn, Germany. The painting was approximately 20 x 40 ft. —a very large mural. Ida recalls, "I felt privileged to be in the studio while Sam worked. I vividly recall helping him with buckets of paint and painting tools, taking photographs, and archiving this period. Working side by side with Sam, I had the opportunity to absorb some of his knowledge and to instinctively understand his perspective and we would often talk about the correlation between music and painting and how it is the expression of the same consciousness but is conveyed through different senses."

In the early 90s, Francis moved him down to Los Angeles into his big studio in Venice and he would be instrumental in the change of Ida's artistic expression from music to painting. In working closely with Francis, Ida realized that the 'artistic language' that was most natural to him was 'the visual.' Ida found that he had the ability to put together visual thoughts and phrases much easier than with music. Through Francis' generosity, Ida was given the opportunity to paint in his Venice studio that he no longer used, and in doing so started his lifelong journey into visual arts.

