

Spencer Feature Interview

PETER TRIANTOS

a
Contemporary
abstract
ARTIST
with a
Monumental
body of work

By Joseph Edward Schur

It seems to me that many artists, young and old, are prisoners of their emotions. Not Triantos; I can imagine this brilliant painter scaling a 12 foot barbed wire fence just to face his emotions, and welcoming the chance to share them with joy and love. In fact, when I asked him how he faces a blank canvas, he responds: "My energy transfers onto the canvas. It's the energy, passion, vibrance, speed, stuff like that, immediate thinking. I don't ponder and fixate on things. I have zero fear and I immediately attack."

No fear. I like that. And I can see it in his work. He has a certain je ne sais quoi. So, of course, I had to dig deeper into who this incredibly popular artist, Peter Triantos, really is.

"Toronto, Ontario has a lot to offer to an artist, to anyone. It's the versatility of the city, the blend of so many different people. It's a unique place where everything is a mix. It's the mix that makes everything so special and gives for a lot of creativity."

Peter Triantos

ARTS & CULTURE

Triantos was born in Romiri, a small, tranquil village in the mountains of Greece, where the olive trees grow in abundance. He immigrated with his family to Canada at the age of 5. He recalls the trans-atlantic voyage with great enthusiasm, arriving in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1966. What an adventure for a young boy! Even at that tender age he could see the *magical dreamland in art*.

Little did he know that his journey would take him to be one of the most highly respected and admired Canadian artists of our time.

In middle school, playing with paint and colour in art class, he knew that he was destined to be an

artist. While most of us were simply playing with crayons (I was not half-bad with finger painting!), Peter was planning his future. From the very first moment that he touched paint, it brought him tremendous joy. And he already had a grasp on the power and influence that continues to define his life: ART.

However, like the Beatles song of 1970, it was a "Long and Winding Road" for Peter. There were challenges. I'm reminded of a powerful quote by Maya Angelou:

"Life is pure adventure, and the sooner we realize that, the quicker we will be able to treat life as art."



Installation of Painting from the "Jelly Bean" Series, #69

Opposite: Artist Peter Triantos with one of his Jelly Bean Paintings





Triantos dropped out of high school and joined the honorable ranks of the construction trade, as a carpenter. He worked tirelessly for many years building multi-million dollar homes. For most people, that would have been enough. But he craved the joy that art brought him and besides, he always had bigger plans.

Like many of us, he eventually reached a fork in the road: go left or right? To choose from the security of remaining a carpenter to the unknown of facing the blank canvas as an artist. It takes courage to choose the right path. And through the brushstrokes of faith and fate, I'm glad that he made the right choice.



Above: Installation of Painting from the "Splash of Colour 2" Series, #177

Below: Painting from the "Splash of Colour 2" Series, #177



Opposite: Artist Peter Triantos with an Iconic Painting from the "Storm" Series

Fast forward 30 years and this brings us right up to *now*.

And *now* could not be more exciting for this passionate artist, earning international attention with his enchanting, neo-abstract expressionist style. I suggest that he is changing the course of contemporary abstract art by looking at life with a different kind of lens.

There is nothing static about his paintings. They are bold, striking, electric, expanding beyond the canvas with an invisible energy that seems to... no, it actually draws you in.

Is this the "magical dreamland of art" that Triantos envisioned as a child?



Painting of "A Woman and a Cat Screaming"



Abstract Portrait, 2018

Perhaps. This magical dreamland that he shares with us now has provided success, both creatively and financially. His relationship with designers, architects, developers and loyal collectors is enviable. And yet he remains incredibly humble. Recognition as a star artist hasn't blinded him, and keeps his works exciting and compelling!

There is a high demand globally for his work. As such, Triantos has become a prolific artist, working on multiple paintings and commissions at any

given time. You can find him working in his 20,000 square foot gallery/studio in downtown Toronto. This is where he exercises his artistic muscle. I'm intrigued with his creative process:

"Basically throughout the day I'm always thinking, storing stuff... always trying to put things together but in the end when I start on a painting it takes on a life of it's own," he says. "Everything that you wish... it's like going on a field trip. You have an idea of what it's going to be like but in the end



Above & Opposite: Installation of Painting from the "Black & White" Series, #98

it's a million times better. It's always fascinating when you can let go and let it take you for a journey. If you want to control the canvas, I don't think you're going for a ride."

A ride, indeed. The resulting works transform standard notions of abstraction into a uniquely expressive form. Akin to a hurricane, intense energy on the outside, yet calm and cerebral in the eye of the storm.

I asked him what makes his paintings unique,

uncommon, and his response was quick: "You don't eat the same thing every day, and I don't paint the same every day."

That may explain why his monumental body of work appears so random and unpredictable. Dealers and gallery owners can't understand this. He's like a lone wolf. And yet, he has a distinctive signature. Wandering through any gallery, whether in Shaghai, New York, or elsewhere, you would likely recognize a Triantos painting.



Installation of Painting "Venus Cries"

I was curious about how he uses art to communicate to the world, and what his motivation was.

"Originally the motivation was a true passion for art but later I realized that it's now starting to give me a voice and that motivates me even more," he says. "I can get young kids to believe in themselves and build a strong foundation going forward, so that's the motivation... the motivation is getting the youth of the future to build a strong foundation and do what they want regardless of education, financial wealth or whatever the situation where they live and build a strong core."

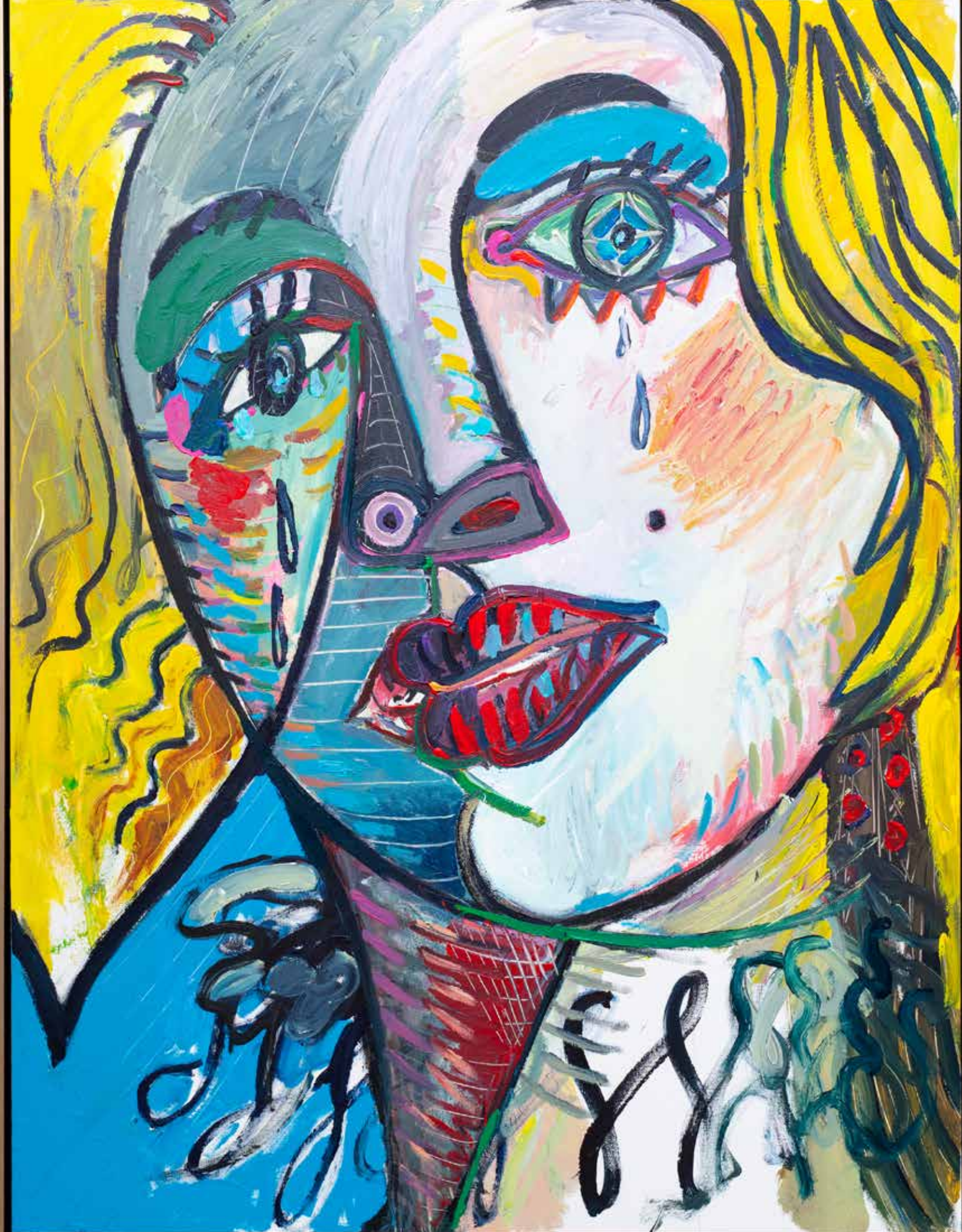
"I can get young kids to believe in themselves and build a strong foundation going forward, so that's the motivation."

Looking closely at his paintings, I realize that he has brought objects from different eras and levels of existence together, in scenes that take place outside any average conception of time. His style

seems to push abstraction toward the future, and so I asked him a rather relevant question, to imagine the future, 200 years from now... how would he expect a person to react to one of his paintings, or one of his collections.

"This is probably how I would envision it: they're going to see the time that we're living in, that's what I'd like them to see," he says. "I don't want to be painting paintings where I'm misleading in the wrong century... I'm not painting 17th century paintings, I'm not painting 19th century paintings... I'm painting in this time so I want them to see, so I want to read or see stuff in my art that represents and tells the time, tells the story, tells the period. That's the truth I want them to know. What we're going through and what we're enjoying and what we're in love with."

For Triantos, it's all about truth, authenticity.





Installation of Painting from the "Storm" Series, 2018 #5

He's convinced that everyone is an artist. As long as they can remain authentic to their vision, beauty can be created. Encouraging words of wisdom from a person who didn't receive a lot of direction at the beginning of his art career.

"I wasn't really given much advice. I never had a lot of artist friends," he says. "You take anything you can and put it together and try to become a better person, a better artist. I'm not going to say that one person is going to change your life, it's an amalgamation of many things that makes you great and the best that you can be."

Many artists struggle with knowing when a piece is finished and then letting go of their work. Triantos, probably a reflection of his maturity, knows the moment when a painting is finished and he's fine with that. He doesn't fixate on letting go. "It's like having sex, when it's done it's done," he exclaims confidently. "It's like a good meal."

He admits that being an artist has been an incredible journey for him, but that it always looks brighter from the outside.



*Installation of Painting
"Blue Gorilla" 2020*

"The amount of work is a lot more than people can imagine and age doesn't guarantee success. I hear some young artists say "Oh, when I'm your age I will have all..." but age doesn't guarantee anything. You have to work towards goals that are achievable. You've got to have dreams and try hard to make them happen. Only you can make them happen because if you leave it in other people's hands I believe you will be let down. So make that dream happen. Try as hard as you can."

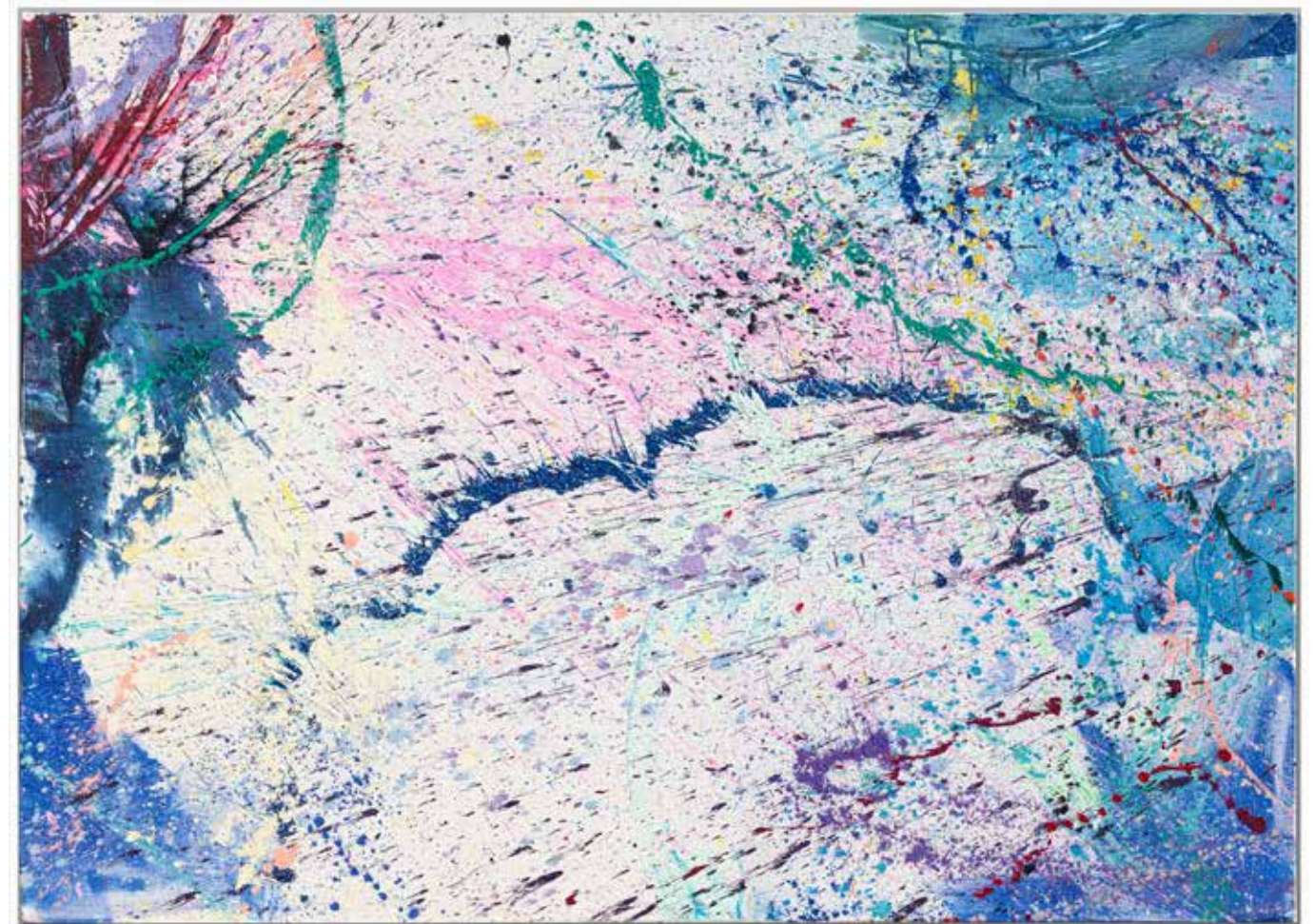
It also helps if you have amazing people in your corner, supporting you, and especially your significant other, right?

A few years ago, he was enjoying a coffee on the patio of a cafe in Toronto. When he caught a glimpse of a beautiful woman entering the shop, he couldn't resist introducing himself. As they surrendered to destiny, this special woman became his wife and partner!

And now, Seraphina, his wife of eight years, is the art curator and director at their galleries. She's intelligent, fashionable and loves art. A winning combination!



Installation of Painting from the "Napa Valley" Series, #77, 2019



Painting from the "Napa Valley" Series, #77, 2019. Above: Home Installation of Painting

Not surprisingly, there are many layers to his character. Triantos is a humanitarian and a philanthropist, and as such is incredibly generous and doesn't hesitate to give back.

"How can you not give when someone comes to you and we give to everybody," he states emphatically. "Imagine enjoying the warmth of the sun, seeing grasshoppers... that great childhood vision and dream... philanthropy is a natural thing. I'm no different than anyone else. I give as much as I can with open arms and immediately. I mean, there are just so many great causes."

No kidding. Just a few of his generous contributions include the Bay Crest Foundation's Brain Project, the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, Mount Sinai Hospital, Gold Medal Plates Olympic Foundation, CIBC Fundraising, Camp Oochigeas for Childhood Cancer, the Annual Charity Bowl in support of the Serge Ibaka Foundation, the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research, the Sick Kids Foundation, and Gilda's Club.



He also plans to return to Greece soon, too, for an exhibition in Mykonos.

Now, what's a story without a bit of trivia? The world isn't so big after all. Meghan Markle used to live on Peter's and Seraphina's street, and they ran into each other often, before she married Prince Harry. And just as interesting, some of the Triantos paintings were featured on the hit television show that Meghan starred in - Suits.

For all of you artists reading this article, I lay down the gauntlet and challenge you to pursue your dreams, as Triantos did. No risk, no reward, as the saying goes.

I'm constantly on a mission of discovery. And now that I've found this outstanding artist, Peter Triantos, I want to share the discovery with you.



Photo Credits: Peter Triantos Gallery

I'm inspired, and yet at the same time feeling embarrassed that I don't contribute as much as I should. Peter holds the bar pretty high.

As time has unfolded, there have been many exhibitions for Triantos, including Art Auckland in New Zealand, Hong Kong, Scope NYC, Basel, Miami, Palm Beach, Napa Valley, California and even a collaboration with Drake, Jessie Reyez and Shaggy at the exclusive Apres Noir events in Toronto.

So what's next for Peter Triantos?! As it happens, a lot. The future is looking even brighter for him than the past.

He recently returned from a successful show in Korea, at the prestigious BOK Art Center in Se Jong.

Along with expanding his galleries, there are exhibitions scheduled in several places around the world, including California, Seoul, Dubai, London and Miami.



Installation of Painting from the "Napa Valley" Series, #60, 2018



Above: Installation of Painting by Triantos "Homage to Basquiat" - Also on the Following page

