

chris zaccaria / fine art

portfolio



chris zaccaria



artist biography

I am an LGBT artist based in NYC who self-identifies as a zany person. As a child in suburban Philadelphia, I developed a keen imagination and a propensity to escape the reality of being an LGBT child by going into my mind. My imagination – overactive at times – was fostered by my loving mother who encouraged creativity and expression. Her tragic death is what drove me to finally launch my art career.

Since then, I have worked to portray the realities of my life in acrylic on canvas from my studio in Brooklyn. Formally trained in data analysis, I apply a similar skillset to my art and am known for my ability to take complex concepts or emotions and break them down into a relatable image that tells a story. Just be sure to pay attention to the details, as sometimes something is nothing, but other times it is something... I consider my inspirations to be Dr. Seuss, Spirituality, Eastern European religious iconography and the everyday happenings of life.

artist statement

My mind has always been a refuge from the scariest parts of reality – facing rejection, loss or invisibility. The art that I create is a window into my mind and how I use different characters that I created to sort through the lessons life is trying to teach me. The characters allow me to understand how those forces impact my everyday life. The creatures tell a story – my story – in a way that allows me to explain it to others while feeling safe from judgment. My hope is that by sharing my story with others that I can help another person to realize a life lesson with that same sense of safety.

a moment of joy and happiness

mural, exterior paint

114' x 7'



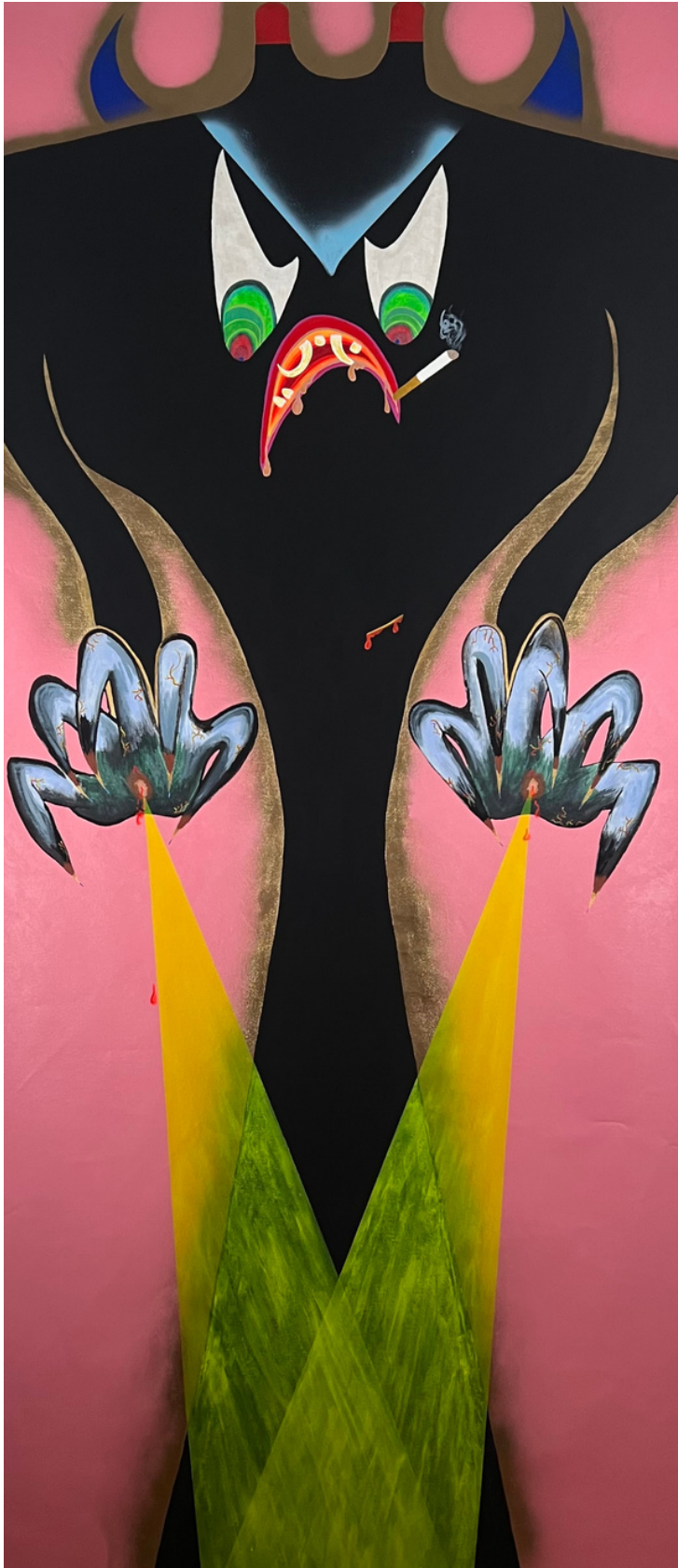
The mural is the birthplace of Schnerds, my latest project. Schnerds were born in September 2023 in Belgrade, Serbia – on a 114' (38m) long mural – designed to give passersby a moment of joy and happiness no matter what was going on in their lives that day. Schnerds are loving and curious creatures who are focused on one another in that moment alongside their fellow Schnerds. They share in experiences and help one another – when a Schnerd is having a tough time they talk about what is going on, are curious about what the other Schnerd is feeling and want to understand how they can work together to raise the frequency of the Schnerdverse.

When we see a Schnerd it is supposed to be a reminder to be present and to be loving to those around us. So we invite all of you with open arms into the Schnerdverse. Schnerds. Join the Herd.

the shadow monster

acrylic on canvas

9.5' x 4'



Part of my spiritual journey has included shadow work. I dredged and, in the process, learned that after the death of my mother and the end of a long relationship that I was holding all my love in a box. I was hoarding it because it was, "all the love that I had left". Via the shadow work process, I learned to share love again – to allow myself to love and be loved. This realization had such an impact on my life that I painted my shadow in oversized dimensions to show just how much he had overwhelmed me. Gazing somewhat off to the side, he cannot look you in the eyes, embarrassed by what he deprived me of.



my anxiety

acrylic on canvas

20" x 24"

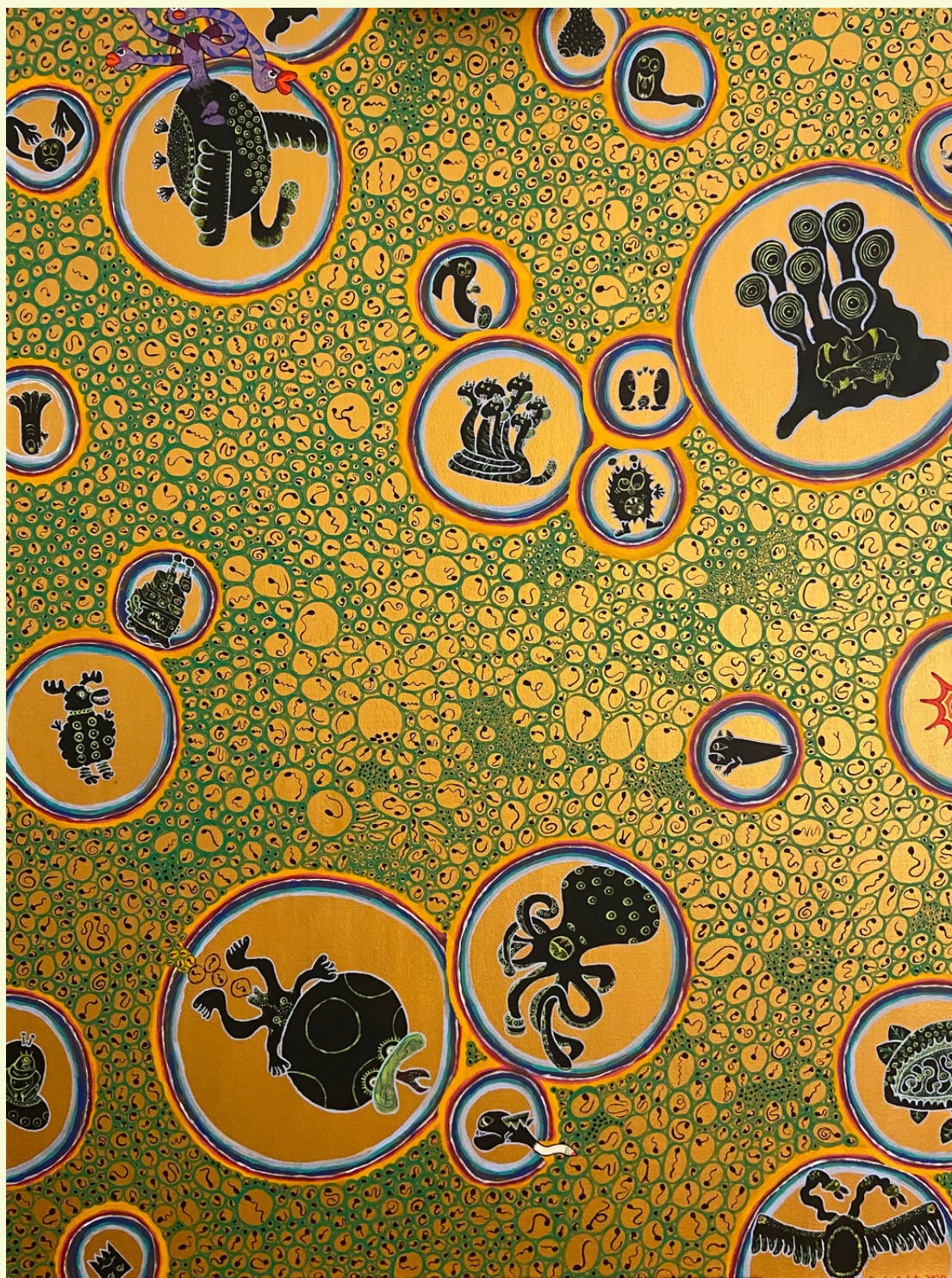


I often find that my anxiety about a situation starts small and then grows and grows, taking on many different forms throughout its life. This painting is what my anxiety looks like – unavoidably bright, ever growing and surrounded by darkness.

the birth of everything

acrylic on canvas

36" x 48"



The Birth of Everything represents the creation or “big bang” of the dystopian universe that all of the creatures in my paintings live in. This big bang event is a metaphor for the death of my mother, which was the precipitating event for my life falling apart and having to be completely rebuilt.

disarm

acrylic on canvas

48" x 48"



In *Disarm*, The Breakup Monster is resurrected after having been crucified for his evil ways in *Nail Me One Last Time* (listed on page 10). He is resurrected into the Garden of Gethsemane where he encounters a butterfly. The butterfly represents the possibility of an evolved, beautiful future — one where the world is free of The Breakup Monster and his evil ways. The Breakup Monster is so taken by the beauty of the butterfly and the possibility of an evolved future that he is disarmed and becomes benign. The butterfly is reflected from a different perspective in each of The Breakup Monster's eyes, since a "beautiful and evolved future" means something different to each of us. The clouds of smoke are a private moment that we are not supposed to be witnessing, peering through the smoke to catch a glimpse of this intimate moment. Or are they clouds of pesticide being sprayed on the garden, there to destroy the possibility of a beautiful future?

confirmation bias

acrylic and gold leaf on canvas

48" x 48"



Confirmation Bias is made entirely out of eyes and can only exist in the context of the TV test spectrum. However, despite being entirely made of eyes and having access to the full spectrum of information, Confirmation Bias still only sees what he wants to — and with laser focus.

dj cevapi

acrylic on canvas

26" x 26"



My take on the Kafana (Serbian community meeting place with live music and food). I recently had an exhibition in Belgrade. There I was very impressed with Serbia's marriage of culture, food and live music at the Kafana – something that I have never seen on such a large scale. DJ Cevapi is spinning a plate of cevapi (Serbia's national dish) instead of a record and adjusting some pickles with his other hand, all while enjoying a bite!

nail me one last time

acrylic and gold leaf on canvas

36" x 48"



The Breakup Monster in *Nail Me One Last Time* first came to me when I was looking to paint a picture for my now ex. I thought that if I painted him a picture then it would show how much I loved him and save our relationship. I painted him the monster above, surrounded in flames – the flames of passion. The smoke from the flames spelled out “love,” symbolizing love going up in smoke. Shortly thereafter we broke up. Years later while living with another serious boyfriend, The Breakup Monster appeared to me when I was trying to figure out what I wanted to paint next. Weeks later that relationship also failed. Tiring of starting over in the love department, I decided to crucify The Breakup Monster and put him to rest so that he may never appear to me again. I am tired of looking for love.

self-hatred in the 1990's

acrylic on canvas

36" x 48"



In this piece, the bird, Tinitir, represents me as an artist. Tinitir is a closeted gay child growing up in the 1990's. Unable to accept that he hates himself for being gay, and therefore is a miserable, self-loathing teenager, Tinitir distracts himself with all the gossip and news of the 1990's. He focuses his unhappiness outside himself instead of dealing with his internalized self-hatred and homophobia. From the Balkan Wars, to Heaven's Gate to Y2K, Tinitir is surrounded by a whirlwind of events that he deems the "source" of his misery. All the while he is only attacking and killing himself.

the dawn of a new beginning

acrylic on canvas


36" x 48"



The Dawn of a New Beginning tells a story about my struggle with feeling unseen and unnoticed in the gay community. In a last-ditch effort to be seen, the Party Octopus (who also represents excessive partying) blows up his home town, as he is that desperate for attention. The irony is that when you look at this painting, all you see is the explosion and not the Party Octopus. The Party Octopus also represents my propensity to hide from my problems with alcohol and weed (I'm sober and in active recovery). Substances allowed me to act without fear of being perceived as "less than" for my stature, etc. and often led to bolder actions, of course with consequences.

thank you!



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