

### Sadness in the Pursuit of Happiness Two Inspirations of a Living Artist

Historians of Art usually study artists of the past and they let the art critics comment on the works of the living artists. However, as Picasso's inspiration changed throughout the years of his artistic production, similarly a living artist's conceptions about art may change. This transition from one mood to another is evident in the artist's work. Sadness as a feeling before happiness has inspired a contemporary artist to create two different works in style, color, and technique.

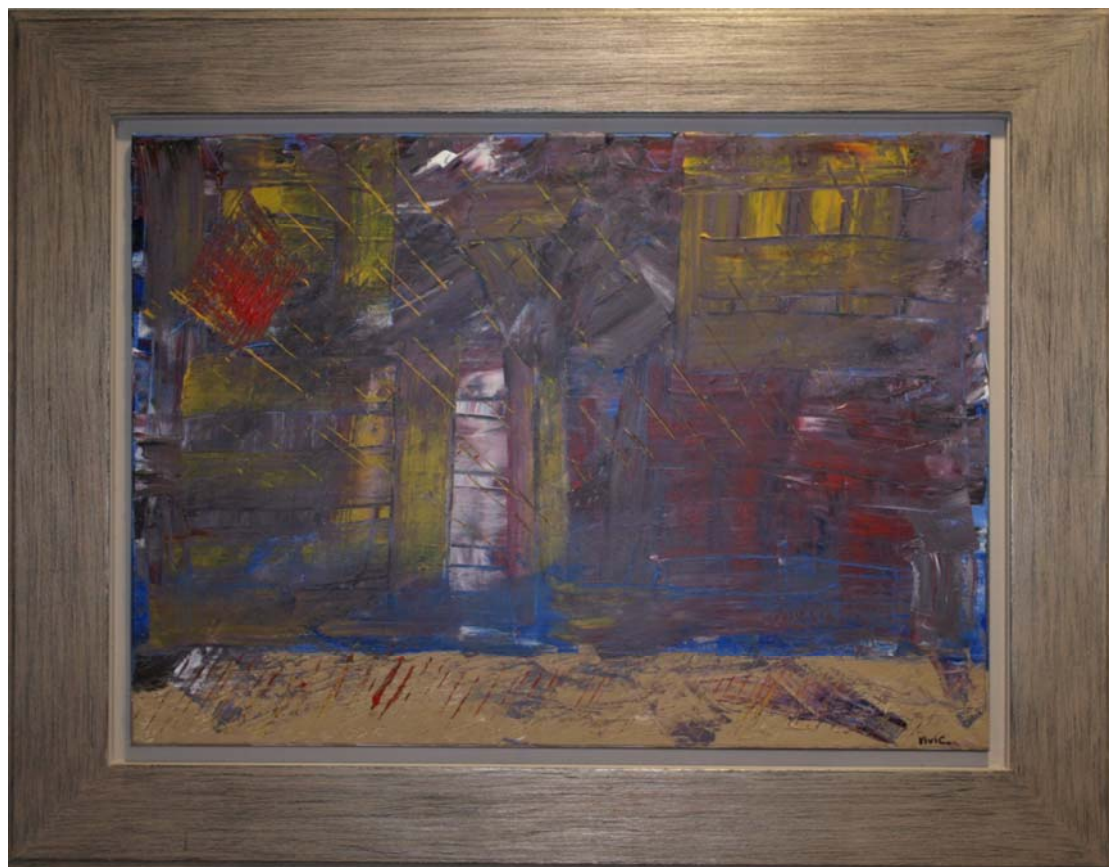
Ms Vivi Consta is a living artist who has mainly focused on painting. Like so many artists of today, art is not her main source of income. She has a regular job at an institution of higher education but she devotes a great deal of her spare time on thinking about and studying art but above all painting. She lives in Athens, Greece and she attends a weekly art seminar where she creates in the company of other living artists.

In the past in Classical Greece and in modern times during the Renaissance artists worked in groups. In some cases, talented pupils gathered and worked along with a master artist. A typical example is Tisian ([Tiziano Vecelli or Tiziano Vecellio \(1488/1490-1576\)](#)) who had many assistants of a variety of artistic caliber in his workshop. Some of these pupils eventually became independent artists themselves and one outstanding example is Bonifazio Veronese (1487 – 1553). In the late 19th and in the early 20th century it had become a habit for artists who shared the same or similar artistic interests to work together either *en plein air* or in studios. [Édouard Manet](#) (1832–1883) and [Claude Monet](#) (1840-1926) painted together on the banks of the Seine or on a boat in Paris and they exchanged ideas and views (<http://www.artandarchitecture.org.uk/fourpaintings/manet/life/impressionism.html>). It is a pity that the great majority of artists nowadays usually graduate from a school of fine arts and begin to travel in the streams and rivers of art all by themselves. Vivi is an exception and actually using two of her works I will show how this exploration of art along with other artists has caused a change in her artistic view.

Vivi has been painting on a regular basis for the last six years. Her work ranges from typical but non-photographic landscapes like a small orthodox church somewhere in the countryside to linear abstractions and to cubistic-like collages combined with painting. In this essay, I will compare and contrast the painting “God's Tears” which was created in 2009 and the collage-painting “The Path of Happiness. I Hesitate” which was finished in 2012.

“God's Tears” is a composition with acrylics on a canvas of 50 by 70 cm. It was inspired after a novel and actually depicts a whorehouse. At a first glance, the painting is not impressive at all and might be seen by exhibition goers as just a blurred piece of brown paint with some white, yellow, and red. However, the conscious and careful observer will see an entirely different piece of art. A general viewing reveals the blurred image of a structure, a building. The title of the painting points to the fact that this must be a whorehouse. Left to right slashed lines imply rain. The dark brown color and the rain immediately create a very moody atmosphere. The viewer should come to this emotional state before studying the painting any further. The next important artistic element is the red lights on the left and the right sides of the structure. They are not just oval bulbs but they break into the thick brown color of the wall and the impression is that of red lights flashing in the heavy rain. A small flash on the left part hides a big red bulb and a larger flash impression on the right part implies a red “Hotel” sign. The red dancing color is finally diffused on the brown wall

of the building. Indeed, there is a movement from the top left to the bottom right following the rain and the heaviness of the red color. But what actually gives this painting a momentum is the white color/light on three different spots of the work. White light comes from an attic window on the upper floor, white light comes out of the door of the ground floor and what actually adds to the total emotion is the reflection of the white light on the pavement. The breaking out of the white light on those three spots of the painting creates an entirely different painting theme compared to the initial just brown impression. The yellow color of the windows on the upper and lower floors shows and hides the rooms of paid love.



After the viewer has examined and understood the reason for the use of the four different colors, s/he can understand the moment in time that the artist wants to convey. It's a very dark night. I'm standing across a whorehouse on the sidewalk under heavy rain. The red light and 'Hotel' sign on the building flash every so often and I experience the moment that the door opens and bright light breaks out in the total darkness. This white light is intensified by the darkness of the night and matches with the light of the attic window on the upper floor. All the rooms with the prostitutes and their clients are dark or in yellow light. This love is made in the dark, in low light; it is forbidden; illegal; unethical; maybe happy; maybe traumatic. Nobody appears at the doorstep but I sense and I know that there are men and women inside. Vivi has managed to capture this fraction of the second when there is life and absence of life in a whorehouse, sadness in the pursuit of happiness.

Recently Vivi has been attempting collage and painting and I will study a 2012 work entitled "The Path of Happiness. I Hesitate". This is created on a 50 by 70 cm. aquarelle paper and the material used is printed paper (from a color printer), oil pastels, and acrylics. The printed paper was originally the photograph of a woman's

face. Vivi cut the A4 size paper into triangles and the face, soul, feeling disappeared as a being. Then, she arranged the cut pieces in the form of a large open *lambda* shaped arrow with the woman's face still recognizable. Pieces of a photograph float on a small river. The small river becomes a narrow stream and the pieces of floating paper at the top of the work get closer together by the force of the water in the form of an arrow. Obstacles ahead do not allow the photograph pieces to move any further. The artist hesitates to overcome the obstacle, reconstruct the face and be happy again. The colors are about to dissolve in the water and red, yellow, and white color islands have already been formed around. If time goes by the paper will eventually be soaked and disappear from sight. Vivi has captured a second in the history of personal hesitation for happiness. There can be no happiness if the cut into pieces personality, heart, *psyche* can not be reconstructed again. She has no chance. Her life is up. She is destined to vanish. Hesitation might kill her; not the person itself but what the person represents, what the cut into pieces face is, happiness itself.





At first sight, the work might seem too simplistic or childish. However, the strength of the work is its naïveté *per se*. Vivi has used a very common feeling as her theme for this work, she has deconstructed it in space on a cubistic basis and she has dissolved it in time. The art lover will need to stand before this work and let it flood the heart and soul. It is only then that one can feel the artistic strength of “The Path of Happiness. I Hesitate.”

Both works analyzed above generate and reflect sadness in the pursuit of happiness. “God’s Tears” brings about this feeling with its gloomy atmosphere while “The Path of Happiness. I Hesitate” achieves the same goal with collage and bright colors. This antithesis shows Vivi’s ability to produce the same effect to the beholder using a different technique and range of colors in each work. In the earlier painting the artist uses a brown diffused picture of reality but in the second work she decomposes the theme in bright colors in order to produce the same effect: sadness. Many of these internal processes are unconscious.

Vivi Consta is not mimicking any specific artist or style. Her work is like the voice of Maria Callas, it may not be perfect but it vibrates our artistic chords and floods our heart and soul with feelings. She does not create using her brain and a pre-designed plan and reason as it has been the case with artists since the times of the “[Venus of Willendorf](#)” (about 25000 years ago). Her works are original and spontaneous artistic conceptions. She does not comply with Claude Monet’s belief that “no one is an artist unless he carries his picture in his head before painting it” (*Artists on Art*, p. 313). She is driven by her impulse. External stimuli such as a novel theme, a film, a thought, an event in everyday life guide her unconscious artistic mind and eventually her paint brush. This is how she creates artistic compositions that are fresh in today’s so repetitive landscape of contemporary art. “In my opinion to search means nothing in painting. To find is the thing,” (*Artists on Art*, p. 416) said Picasso in an interview in 1923 and Vivi Consta is practicing it in every new work she creates.

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Venus of Willendorf: Exaggerated Beauty. PBS-. <http://www.pbs.org/howartmadetheworld/episodes/human/venus/>