

A man with dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt with a pink and blue pocket, stands in profile looking out a window. His hands are clasped in front of him, and he wears a watch on his left wrist. The background is bright and out of focus, showing a plant and a chair.

Ali Banisadr

The work of New York-based Ali Banisadr draws on a vast art historical canon, from his Iranian roots to psychology, politics, literature and history. From Hieronymus Bosch, to whom he is often compared, through to the great Dutch Masters, Picasso and beyond, his work is encyclopaedic in scope. *Canvas* visits his studio in Brooklyn in the lead up to his exhibition at Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, opening on 28 November in Paris. Photography by Fernando Sancho.

STUDIO VISIT

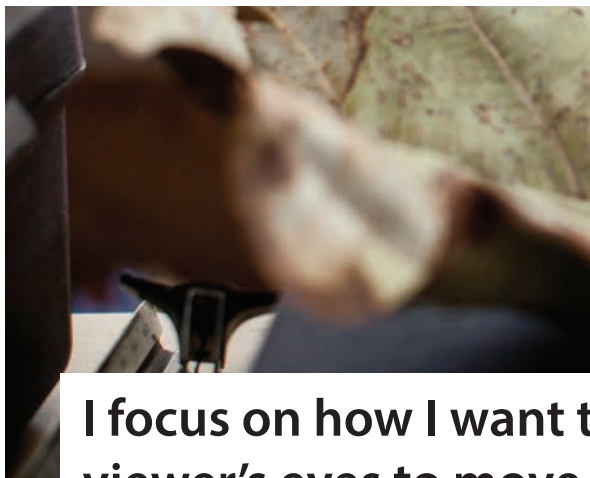
I like to work on one painting at a time, since I get very involved with the painting and it takes time to be able to find the dialogue with the work. Each painting that I make comes out of the previous one.



New York has a very gritty feel to it, unlike San Francisco, where everything is colourful and beautiful, and perhaps this grittiness has influenced my work.

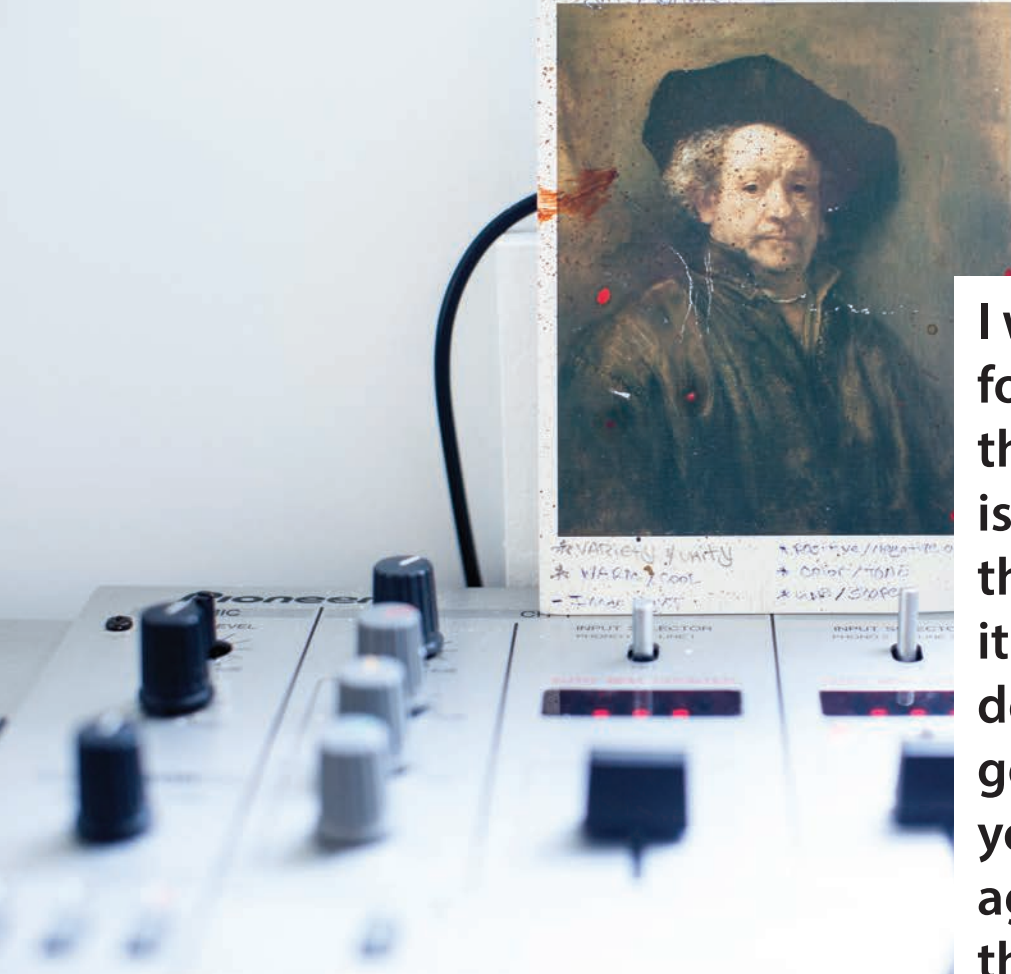


My paintings are never based on a specific event – there is no straight, linear narrative to them. They are a reflection of where I am at the time, what I'm reading, where my mind is – they're very encyclopaedic. Rather than being based on a certain time, they are about time coming and going.



I focus on how I want the viewer's eyes to move around the painting, how I want my eyes to move around it. By putting different elements across the canvas, in the composition, they guide you, like building blocks, from one point to the next.





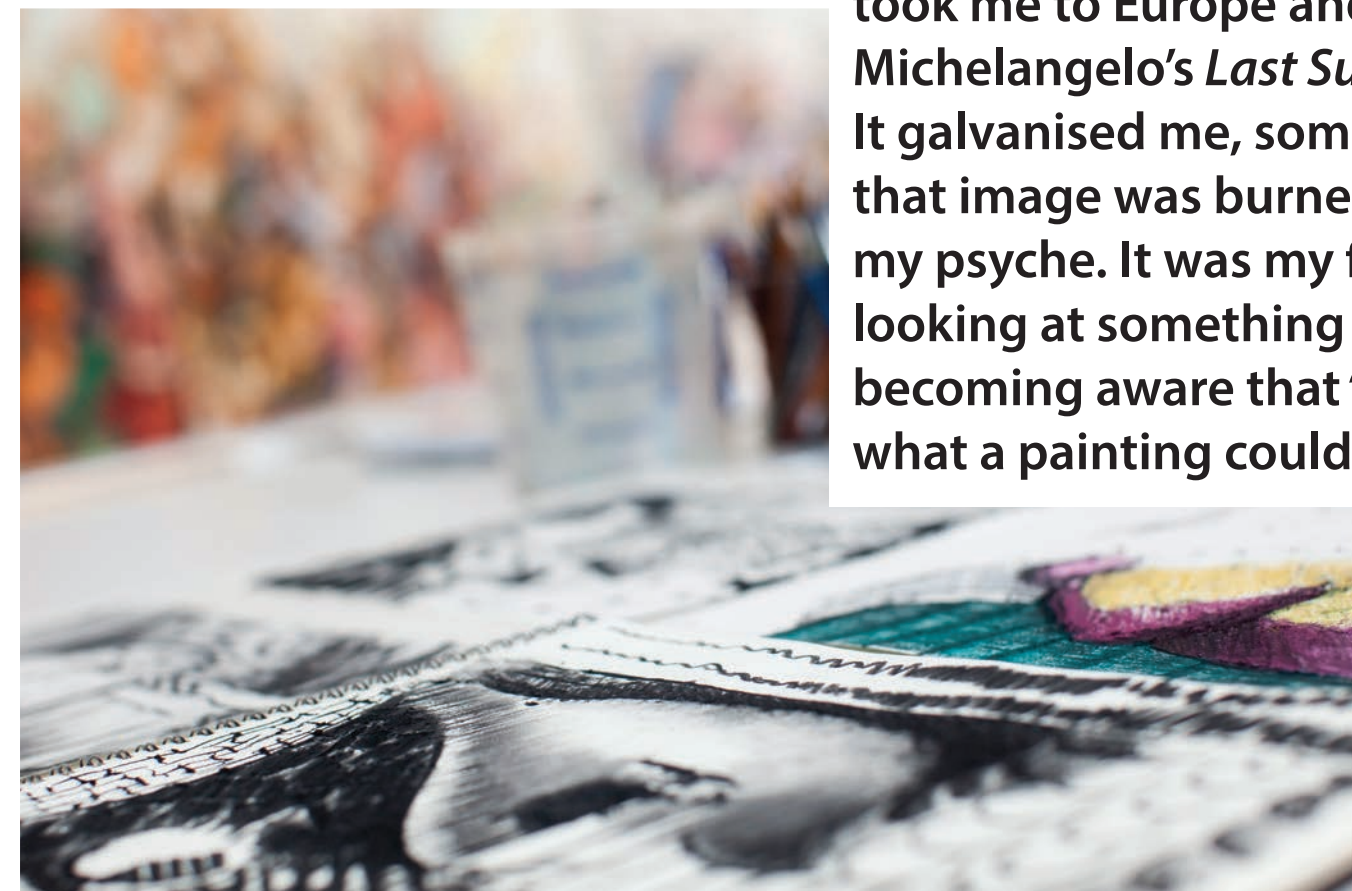
I work by going back and forth, up close and far from the canvas. The painting is abstract from far away, then you get closer and it starts to look really detailed. Then, when you get right up close, with your nose nearly pressed against the canvas, all those details start to dissolve again. I like that.




I always liked that play between something being really theatrical and costume-like yet also being serious.



When I was five or six my parents took me to Europe and I saw Michelangelo's *Last Supper*. It galvanised me, somehow – that image was burned into my psyche. It was my first time looking at something and becoming aware that “this is what a painting could be.”



A man with dark hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and dark trousers, is sitting on a white chair. He is looking to his left with a slight smile. His hands are clasped in his lap. The background is a vibrant, abstract painting with various colors like blue, purple, red, and green. There are large, out-of-focus green leaves in the foreground, partially obscuring the view. The overall scene is bright and artistic.

The figures in my work are not preconceived; they come spontaneously out of abstraction, so I have no idea who's going to come out where and why. It's more interesting for me to be surprised than to know "OK, that figure's going to go right there."