

Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

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#REBELWOMEN IS INGA GUZYTE'S FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION AT SULLIVAN GOSS

FROM LITHUANIA -> GERMANY -> SANTA BARBARA & FROM THE STREET -> THE STUDIO -> THE GALLERY

OPENING RECEPTION: THURSDAY, JUNE 6TH | 5 - 8:00pm

SANTA BARBARA - How? That's the recurring question attending Inga Guzyte's upcoming exhibition at Sullivan Goss. How did a girl born in communist Lithuania end up in Santa Barbara? How did an exhibition full of shredded skateboards end up on the walls of a gallery known for historic American paintings? How on Earth does Inga Guzyte make these things? The question "why" barely enters into it. Why skateboards? (It's a long story. Keep reading.) Why make images of **#REBELWOMEN**? If it's not obvious, Inga decided to celebrate women who, like her, have had to make their own way. If the door wasn't open, they either broke it down or cut a new one.

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Inga Guzyte was born in Lithuania when it was a Russian Soviet client state suffering under communist rule. After her family managed to emigrate, she was raised in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. At age 17, she started skating. Skateboarding was freedom, and coming from where she did, freedom was transgressive. While still in Germany, she even met a few legends on loan from California. She met Ronnie Craeger at a skateboarding event and met Ryan Sheckler when he was just 13!

At twenty-one, she made her way to the United States to be closer to the birthplace of skate culture. In 2006, Inga made her way to California, where she began to focus her passion for art. She studied under sculptor Ed Inks at Santa Barbara City College where her major had an emphasis in Art Studio. While she was still at City College, she began using old skateboards as materials for making sculpture. She started by drawing imaginary “characters” who had stories that echoed her real life. Eventually she began using band saws, scroll saws, and nail guns to create these figures out of old decks.

In 2010, she had her first exhibition in Santa Barbara. Future gallery owner Nathan Vonk bought a piece. In early 2011, she had her second show. Gallery Director Jeremy Tessmer was invited by local curator / patron Nancy Gifford and bought one for himself. Contemporary Director Susan Bush has also purchased work. Around that time, she met and befriended David Flores – one time designer for Shorty’s Skateboards – and current globe-trotting muralist.

Soon after, she left for New York City, where she was able to mount exhibitions in both Manhattan and Brooklyn. After that, she went to live in Switzerland. She also did an artist residency in Vienna. While she was in Switzerland, Sullivan Goss exhibited its first Guzyte piece in its second *10 UNDER 30* exhibition. The gallery began regularly including her work in group exhibitions in 2017. Every piece sold.

So, why **#REBELWOMEN**? Pop cultural references to skating tend to feature men. Meanwhile, the handful of women artists who’ve broken into the top echelon of street art – think: Margaret Kilgallen, SWOON, OLEK, MISS VAN, Maya Hayuk, and FAITH47, to name a few – only remind us of what a boy’s club that segment of the artworld used to be. Inga Guzyte doesn’t care. She’s willing to work harder to get beyond the bias. For her first solo exhibition at Santa Barbara’s largest gallery, she will celebrate a new level in her craftsmanship and a heroic lineup of women who broke out. Among those to be featured: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Frida Kahlo, Sonita Alizadeh, Malala Yousafzai, Josephine Kulea, and Amy Winehouse.

According to gallery owner Nathan Vonk, “While her pieces are made from brutal, broken materials, the finished products are both sophisticated and delicate. With her **#REBELWOMEN** series, she has added to that appeal by including a message that is powerful, important, and uplifting. As soon as I heard about this new work, I asked her if we could debut it at Sullivan Goss. ...I think the sky's the limit for her career.”