

# S L O W

THE MAGAZINE FOR EXTREMELY BUSY PEOPLE

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Reinventing  
Art

# Evolve, Morph AND PROGRESS

Karl Gustav

With artworks in galleries from Miami to Monaco, onboard yachts and in private collections in Europe and Dubai, Karl Gustav has digitised his way onto the global art scene.

**M**eeting Karl Gustav is like exploring an endless well of excitement and passion. Gustav has morphed from being a research assistant to IT professional to world-renowned digital artist. He is constantly exploring innovative ways in which to express his creativity through technology and new media.

Gustav made his artistic debut using a graphic tablet and computer software, experimenting with various photographs, shapes and formats to create artworks that both stun and surprise. What makes his art so different is the assortment of materials used when printing. In the early days of his career, Gustav would print his artwork onto commercial canvases. As technology progressed, so did the quality of the substrate and he started using more sophisticated materials to ensure the longevity of his work. He has printed some of his artworks onto Perspex and recently started using Plexiglass as well. Furthermore, Gustav only makes one print of each artwork, thereby ensuring the exclusivity and authenticity of each piece.

"I started working on canvas and then discovered Perspex. As technology improved, the substrate also improved. My first collection was printed on an inferior canvas. So I continued to research the

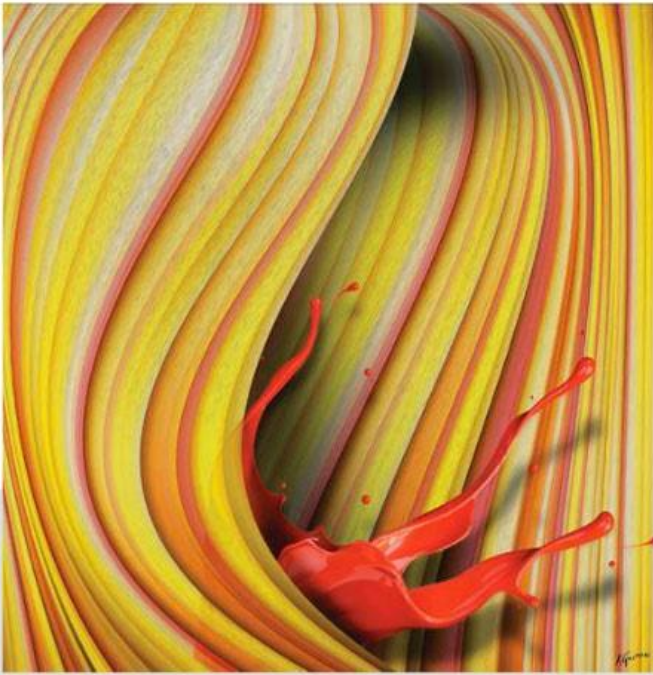
various substrates and improvements. The process changes constantly," says Gustav. "Technology fascinates me. It is another brush, it is another palette knife, and it is another technique. I am currently exploring ways in which I can add animation and 3D printing to my creative work."

Gustav experiments with various dimensionalities, and has added videos to some of his canvasses. "To include video artwork to form part of a greater artwork comes with its own challenges. It is very exciting, yet technical in nature," he says. Technicality has challenged artists for centuries. "The personal daily experience of someone like Rembrandt was worlds removed from what we experience today," he says. "Their creative challenge was to get the correct colour paint, to mix all the various elements to get the ideal colour oil paint. How is that different from crafting video art or animation elements? There is craftsmanship in doing that. The technicalities were equally technical then, as they are now in creating digital art. These challenges have simply evolved."

Evolving is something at which Gustav excels and is evident in his artwork, *Human Condition*. "We morph constantly. Our environment morphs the whole time. There is constant media coverage of things like murder trials, world politics, social media and everyone has an opinion about

everything. You constantly have to position yourself in terms of what your opinion is," he says. "This is a very personal work of art for me. It has to do with re-identifying. You have to regroup yourself constantly. It is like a puzzle, but the puzzle does not have the right or the wrong pieces, yet it is complete and takes on new forms. It is part of the morphing process."

Gustav's artwork, *Selfie*, is a very minimalist self-portrait. "I enjoy excluding the obvious because the obvious is what is known to us. I don't enjoy doing photo realistic artworks because that is what a camera is for. You can take a photo," he says. "I only appreciate realistic art when it becomes surrealistic. There is more thought behind surrealism than just pure realism. *Selfie* is a self-portrait that happened on the sideline. It is something personal which has dark elements and portrays how I perceived myself at that moment." He contemplates before adding, "It dawned on me that a self-portrait these days is a 'selfie'. A selfie is almost a form of narcissistic glorification, yet it is not necessarily always so. People take a selfie in front of an important landmark, to say to the world, 'look, I was here'. If it were only about narcissistic glorification then you would take the photo into Photoshop and retouch it to perfection. It has become a form of



Top Left: *Engagement*  
Above: Karl Gustav in front of his artwork of Maria Callas

**Central Art**

Central Art is Cape Town's largest contemporary art gallery exhibiting an excellent selection of paintings by leading South African artists in a variety of media and subjects. These include works by Dennis van Rensburg, Peter van der Westhuizen, Andre van Vuuren, David Rennie, David Rogers, Ryan Smart, Warren Elmer, Hollinghurst, Gavin Collins, Franz Claassen, Wyn Brindley, Tyrone Agapie, Colin Smith, Neil Giffen and many others. Central Art is located on Level 2 at Cape Quarter Square, 47 Grosvenor Road, Green Point, Cape Town.

Tel: +27 21 462 2296 / 0800 1000000 / Email: [centralart@centralart.co.za](mailto:centralart@centralart.co.za) / Website: [www.centralart.co.za](http://www.centralart.co.za)

**The Cape Gallery**

Central is the tradition of South African painting in an exciting form of the best. Early Cape painters were "impressionists" who described the topography, flora and fauna of the fascinating land, a conservative approach which is still favoured by the gallery's clients today. The gallery focuses on showcasing addresses which showcase the country's finest painters, sculptors, engravers, and graphic artists. Recently, the emergence of abstract street art has added an essentially African character to the work on display. The Cape Gallery is situated at 47 Church Street, Cape Town.

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expression and yet selfies give identity because social media and the Internet have a very strong element of anonymity. It is almost a fake personality that we portray to the world via social media and the Internet, a perceived personality of what we want the world to perceive us to be. You can present yourself as anyone. It is easy to find a platform on social media, especially if you don't have a lot of self-confidence, and all of a sudden, by posting pictures of yourself, you have a 'voice'. People do and say things on social media which they won't necessarily do in real life. The irony is, what is a selfie other than a traditional self-portrait? Why do artists paint self-portraits?"

Gustav stresses that being an artist means you are part of a greater community. "You are not the wheel, but merely a spoke in it," he says. "You have

to work with galleries, the media and a whole community of people in order to get your art into the world and to get commissions." A wealthy Russian family recently commissioned Gustav to create works for their yacht, while an affluent British banker regularly commissions works for his homes.

When asked what would be written in the history books about Karl Gustav, the artist considers for several moments before answering, "He pushed some boundaries, he pushed new technologies..."

Karl Gustav's artworks can be viewed at Art Eye Gallery in The Design Quarter, Fourways. Visit [www.arteye.co.za](http://www.arteye.co.za) or [www.karlgustav.co.za](http://www.karlgustav.co.za).

Text Liesel van der Schyf  
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