



— Art & design

From the Family Album to the Canvas: How a Native of Únětice Captivated a New York Gallery

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She exhibited at Art Basel Miami and is currently preparing her second solo exhibition for her representative gallery in Manhattan. Who is Anastazie Anderson, an artist who returns to her childhood in her work and takes us back to the 1990s through her paintings?

She is wearing a white sweater with gray stripes and a large, striking pink down jacket. Her face cannot be seen, but her red gloves and the yellow-colored face of the little girl standing next to her stand out even more on the canvas. We do not know where they are going or what awaits them, but we can say with a certain degree of exaggeration that this is a truly universal scene.

Most of us will find a similar photograph, based on which Anastazie Anderson created the painting titled *Pink Coat*, in our family albums: parents or grandparents in – from today's perspective, retro – coats taking their little ones to playgroup, accompanying them on their first day of school, or keeping them company on a winter bobsledding expedition.

"This is a truly quintessentially Czech photo in a way," says British-Czech artist Anastazie Anderson from her London studio, whose walls are covered with her smaller-format works. She herself depicted her younger self and her grandmother in the aforementioned painting. No further context – situation or event – needs to be added.

The native of Únětice does not tell specific stories on her canvases. On the contrary, through a look into the past, she conveys universal symbols of her adolescence, brings typical iconography closer, and explores how strongly photography influences our imagination, memories, and thinking.

Anastazie Anderson's method and style naturally developed over many years. However, the photographic models from her youth have accompanied her work from the beginning. That is, from the time when, after graduating from the British High School in Prague, she took a year off, earned money as an au pair, and when she first began to work systematically on her painting portfolio.

"I don't have a clear answer to why the past draws me so much. Maybe it's because I'm a very nostalgic person by nature," says the thirty-year-old painter. Her parents, especially her father, an amateur artist himself, introduced her to art from a young age, who often visited the National Gallery with his daughter.

From the memories of her father, who is British, Anastazie Anderson reconstructs the possible beginnings of her interest in art. From the story, she knows that as a child she fell in love with a Picasso painting in the Veletržní Palace. It apparently captivated her so much that – although she was studying at a general grammar school – she decided to devote herself to painting full-time.

But she didn't go to either the Academy of Fine Arts or the Academy of Fine Arts. "I was almost certain they wouldn't take me. I had no technical background, I kind of learned everything on my own," she recalls. So her steps led her to the British Isles, specifically to the Falmouth School of Art, where, according to her, the teaching was more relaxed.



The painting *Pink Coat*. In the photo, it is exhibited at the West Bund Art & Design fair in Shanghai, China. Anastazie Anderson's work was brought here by her representing gallery, which, thanks to its founder, has strong ties to the local art market. After all, it is Chinese collectors who most often have paintings by the Czech-British painter in their collections.

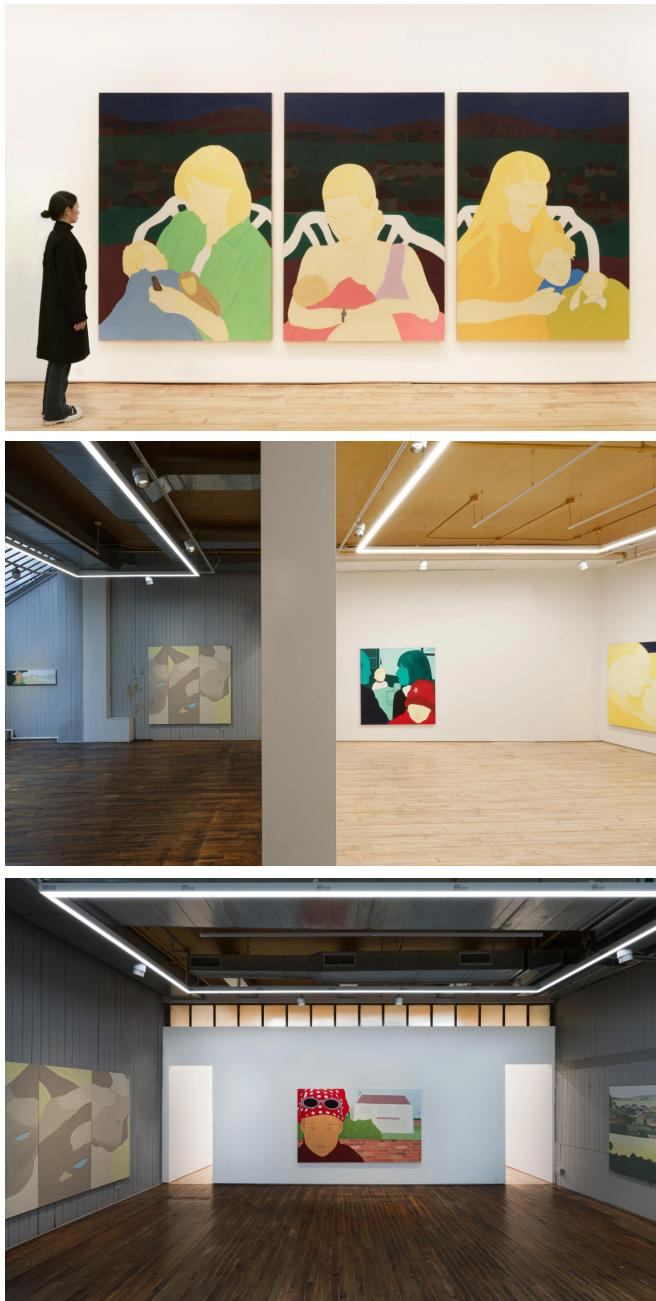
From the southern tip of England, she then headed to London for her master's degree, specifically at the prestigious Royal College of Art, which is considered one of the best institutions in the field. She got in on her fourth attempt, which she considers an advantage in retrospect – she started school in the British capital with an already developed handwriting.

While in her first year she started with "more naive figuration" in semi-black and white colors and transferred literal prints of childhood photographs onto canvas, she ended her studies with paintings with strong colors and compositions that were only inspired by the photographs. It was through the modification of photographs that the canvas with the grandmother in the oversized jacket was created.

The method that Anastazie Anderson creates is as follows: in the research period before starting to paint a new series, the artist studies hundreds of scanned childhood photographs from her archive. Then, in her head, during hours of visual recollection, she creates new cutouts or compositions based on multiple images.

"It's not so much about specific moments from the photos, but rather about a specific visual aesthetic. Photographs, especially homemade, amateur ones, fascinate me. They are not perfect, they have garish colors, and especially those from the 1990s evoke great melancholy in me. Moreover, all of us, my peers, understand them, we know their language," says the painter.

The aforementioned nostalgia permeates all of her work. On the canvases we find the author's family home, her beloved cat, as well as the water tower in Únětice, where she grew up. There are also white plastic chairs, a typical addition to many a Czech garden, as well as children's clothing characteristic of today's millennial generation.



Photographs from the exhibition *Imitation of Life*, which Anastasija Anderson had in 2024 at the New York commercial gallery YveY-ANG. The paintings feature scenes from her childhood and her native Únětice. | Photo YveYANG

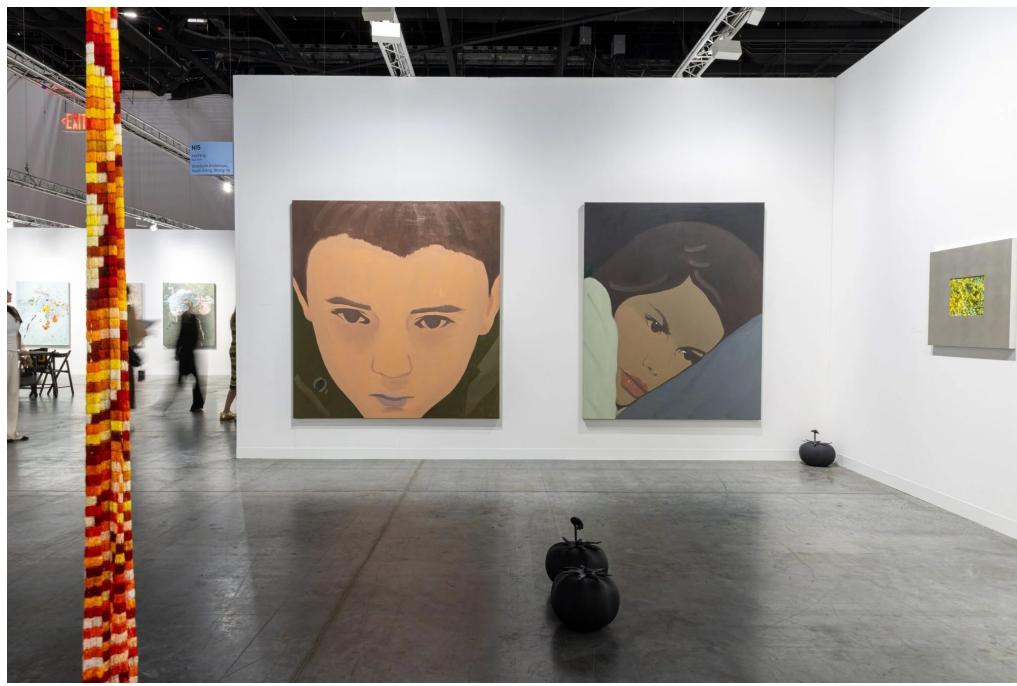
By the way – the painting we described at the beginning has a crucial role in the artist's career. She presented it as part of her graduation presentation at the Royal College of Art, where each graduate could only exhibit one work. It seems that Anastazie Anderson made the right choice – thanks to it, she came into the sights of the New York commercial gallery YveYANG, located in Manhattan.

She also had her first solo exhibition there a few months after graduating. "Having an exhibition in New York was surreal. After all, I'm a girl from Únětice! After several rejections at the Royal College of Art, it was quite a great satisfaction," says the Czech-British painter about the experience.

The gallery also presented her at the Art Basel Miami Beach fair at the end of last year. Here, the Czech native presented paintings from the *Children of Paradise* series, on which she worked for almost a year. Children's faces are at the core of her work. And, as in her previous work, they are based on real-life prototypes.

Instead of photographs, Anastasija Anderson turned to films this time. "The idea of focusing on a child's face was brought to me not only by the desire to simplify the composition, but also by the film *Sátántangó* by the recently deceased director Béla Tarr, where there is an incredibly interesting child character named Estike. She has terribly special features and a face," she says of her latest inspiration.

The artist has expanded this to include other children's characters from films. In her latest paintings, we can find, for example, the characters Ana and Isabela from the film *The Ghost of the Hive* by Spanish director Víctor Eric.



Paintings from the *Children of Paradise* series. They are exhibited at Art Basel Miami Beach in December.

The painter is now preparing for another solo exhibition, which her representative gallery should host this fall. She still wants to stick to figurative painting, but she would like – after seeing the works of the American painter Franz Kline – to bring it into dialogue with the abstract this time.

And the long-term goals? Not only to build a position so that the artist can continue to make a living from painting, but also to have greater connections with the Czech Republic. "I would like to penetrate the market there more, I have no connections there. I would like to return there with my paintings and for my family to see them."

Whatever the case, the work of the young Czech-British artist is worth following. As the successful Czech painter Vojtěch Kovařík recently showed us, even commercial success abroad can eventually lead to institutional success.